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E-News March 2017



It's that time of year when things are buzzing at the State House. Last year was crossover – the deadline for bills to pass out of committee in order to remain active for the rest of the session – and a number of VNRC priorities moved forward. VNRC, with the support of our members, activists, and partners, have been helping lawmakers make progress on key priorities like funding the state's efforts to clean up our waterways, protecting Vermonters against toxic chemical exposure, and committing to our clean energy goals – but there is plenty of work left to do. Your support for VNRC's work on these vital issues is more important than ever with the Trump administration proposing massive cuts to the EPA, denying the stark reality of climate change, and threatening to roll back protections for clean air, water, and public lands.

VNRC will need your help to keep the pressure on our elected officials in the coming weeks to ensure they take action to protect Vermont's environment. Stay tuned for time opportunities to make your voice heard! Below, you can find a brief legislative update and some great events coming up soon.

Legislative Update

Water

VNRC is pleased the Legislature appears to be moving forward with short-term funding to implement the Vermont Clean Water Act, as called for in the Treasurer's [Clean Water Report](#). The two-year funding of \$50 million is designed to support shovel-ready water quality improvement projects. VNRC is disappointed, however, that the House is not proposing a long-term funding solution. VNRC, along with a coalition of environmental, farm, business, and municipal groups, [has asked the House to adopt a long-term funding proposal](#) this year that will ensure we have an on-going source revenue to implement clean water projects for years to come. As the Legislature acknowledged in the Vermont Clean Water Act (Act 64) of 2015, addressing water pollution is essential because "without action, the economic, cultural, and environmental losses to the State will be immeasurable." We cannot continue to kick the can down the road and avoid the need to address long-term water funding now.

Other bills advanced last week that offer avenues to improving water quality, fish habitat and public health across the state. A dam safety bill ([H.92](#)) passed the House Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Committee. The bill requires the identification of all Vermont dams by expanding registration and inspection to cover currently unmonitored dams. The bill, if passed, would address issues related to the threats aging dams pose to public safety, water quality, and fish habitat. Another bill, [H.39](#), aims to reduce stormwater pollution by lowering the threshold under which new developments are required to obtain a stormwater permit (from one to 1/2 acre). While a good step forward, VNRC will be working to strengthen some key provisions in the bill in the Senate.

Toxic Chemical Reform

Lawmakers continue work on the toxic chemical reform bill ([S.103](#)), which takes positive steps to address the threat of toxic chemical exposure by requiring testing of new wells for chemicals like PFOA. However, the bill falls short on delivering the full suite of recommendations from the Legislature's working group report on toxic chemical reform, which VNRC was a member of. We will continue to work with legislators to strengthen the bill to improve disclosure and reporting around chemical use, hold polluters accountable when toxic chemicals are released into our food and water supplies, and provide better tools for keeping toxic substances out of consumer products.

Land Use

As Act 250 approaches its 50-year anniversary of safeguarding our natural resources, lawmakers are looking to bring our signature land use and development law into the 21st century. House bill [H.42](#) would set up a study commission to assess how the law can be updated to account for modern challenges like climate change and forest fragmentation, as well as improvements to the application and appeals process. [Read more here.](#)

Climate and Energy

It's our hope that Vermont lawmakers will take testimony on [S.51/H.316](#), a bill that aims to enshrine the state's 90 percent renewable energy by 2050 goal into law. At a time when the federal administration is working to undermine U.S. clean energy and climate policies, and [calling climate change funding a waste of money](#), it's essential the state affirm our commitment to transitioning off of fossil fuels.

Lawmakers are also working on measures to maintain and promote energy efficiency in Vermont through a number of bills. [H.411](#) sets measures to maintain energy efficiency standards even if the Trump administration rolls back efficiency standards on appliances. Another bill, [S.118](#), will help make building energy performance more visible through a voluntary labeling program. And another bill, [S.52](#), will make small but important changes to the Public Service Board process with the goal of fostering better public engagement.

VNRC NEWS

Good Luck to Departing Staff, Seeking Director of Communications



VNRC has an exciting opportunity for an outgoing person who wants to have a significant impact on the future of Vermont. We are looking for a motivated individual with a minimum of 5+ years of experience in communications and marketing to serve as Director of Communications.

Current Communications and Outreach Coordinator Keil Corey will be leaving VNRC to pursue his master's degree in Sustainable Entrepreneurship, exploring a range of opportunities, including at the University of Vermont, and taking some time to travel this summer. "While I'm excited about my next move, I'm truly going to miss working at VNRC. The organization is doing amazing work with an incredible staff. I look forward to supporting VNRC as a member an activist in the years ahead," said Keil. VNRC wishes Keil the best of luck with his plans and future endeavors.

Read the full job announcement [here](#) and email a letter of interest, resume, and three references to bshupe@vnrc.org, no later than **Friday, April 8th**. Letters should be addressed to Brian Shupe Executive Director, VNRC, 9 Bailey Ave., Montpelier, VT 05602. VNRC is an EOE.

VNRC Questions Agency on Black Gum Swamp



After nearly two years of work, on the eve of a legislative vote to designate four wetland resources as Class 1 – the highest level of protection under Vermont’s Wetland Rules – the Agency of Natural Resources pulled the Black Gum Swamp petition from the slated list, citing local concerns about the designation. “It baffles me that it took until this moment for these concerns to come to light, and to be so significant that they needed to be reaped almost two years of work,” said VNRC’s Jon Groveman.

When VNRC sent a request to ANR for documentation related to the withdrawal in an effort to glean the reasoning behind the move, the Department of Environmental Conservation denied the request claiming the attorney-client privilege exemption. VNRC [appealed the decision](#) and has subsequently received documentation that will be subject to further review in the coming weeks.

[Read more on the story here.](#)

(Photo: Town of Vernon)

VERMONT NEWS

VNRC Joins Sen. Leahy to Call Out Cuts to EPA



VNRC’s Brian Shupe joined [Senator Patrick Leahy](#) and other environmental leaders in Burlington earlier this month to speak out in opposition of President Trump’s proposal to cut funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. “Make no mistake, President Trump’s proposal to slash EPA’s budget puts Vermont’s natural resources and the health of Vermont at risk,” said Shupe. [Read more.](#)

New Vermont Energy Case Studies on Community Energy Dashboard Tool



VNRC’s AmeriCorps Member Katie Emerson works with energy committees from across the state on a range of energy and climate initiatives. Recently, she shared a number of energy success stories from committees in Hartford, Milton, and Glover on the Community Energy Dashboard, an online tool developed to support the state’s ambitious goal of meeting 90 percent of energy needs through energy efficiency and renewable sources by 2050. [Read more here.](#)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Clean Water Day



Save the date for Clean Water Day on **Wednesday, March 29th**, from 8:30am-1pm at the State House. Join VNRC, partners and fellow clean water activists to celebrate our waters and call on lawmakers to invest in this invaluable resource.

[Find more information and RSVP here.](#)

Youth Climate Lobby Day



Save the date for **Youth Climate Lobby Day on April 12th from 9am-2pm at the State House**. Students will have an opportunity to speak with lawmakers, learn more about the issue of climate change and how to be part of the solution, hear from amazing speakers and march for climate action. Plus, enjoy plenty of Ben and Jerry's ice cream. [More info](#)

LEAP Energy Fair



The LEAP Energy fair is Vermont's largest energy fair. It is completely free and will be happening on **Saturday, April 8, 2017 from 9 AM - 3 PM at the Crossett Brook Middle School Gym, Duxbury, VT** (5672 VT Route 100). The fair includes 75 exhibits and dozens of experts on solar power, heat pumps, weatherization, energy audits, geothermal, biomass, pellet stoves, electric vehicles, and much more. For more information visit www.waterburyleap.org.

People's Climate March



As a perk of being a member of VNRC, you're invited to have a seat on or bus to Washington, D.C. for the People's Climate March on April 29th! B tickets for current members are \$125. If you're not a member, or need to renew your membership, you can do so [here](#).

Reserve your seat(s) by emailing climatemarch@vnrc.org with the following information for every rider: name, cell phone number, email address, and town. **Payment is due by Friday, April 7th.** For more information visit vnrc.org.

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