
July 2018 E-News: Updates from VNRC



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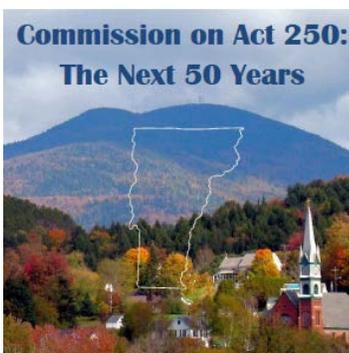
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With the Legislative Session now over, and temperatures rapidly rising, you could say the slow march of summer has arrived. But it hasn't kept us from moving forward, and we have many recent successes to celebrate.

Read on for updates on our advocacy and organizing work, a chance to get involved in a series of public forums to shape the future of Act 250, and some opportunities to share among your networks. We wish you an enjoyable July 4th and some relief from this sweltering weather. As always, we welcome your feedback and continued support!

VNRC NEWS

We Need Your Input: Act 250 Public Forums Across Vermont



The Commission on Act 250: The Next 50 Years was established by the Vermont Legislature to modernize Act 250, the landmark environmental review law that has shaped development in the state since June 1970. Now, the Commission is holding a series of public forums to engage Vermonters on their priorities for the future of our landscape and how to maintain Vermont's unique environment and sense of place. We need you!

Coming Up: The next forum will be held in Manchester, VT on Wednesday, July 11 at the Inn at Manchester. Find more info at the Facebook event page by clicking [here](#).

Join Us: We can't stress how important it is that engaged Vermonters join us in fighting for an enduring, and improved, Act 250. We really need your help to make sure this important law lives on, ready to take on the challenges of the future! Further forums will be held in Randolph (7/25), Island Pond (8/22), Rutland (9/5), and Burlington (9/10). Find the event schedule [here](#) and keep up with the meeting locations on the Commission's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Act250Next50/>.

Developer Pulls Plug on NewVistas



On June 26, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the central Vermont towns of Royalton, Sharon, Strafford, and Tunbridge a "Watch Status Site" on its [annual list of the most endangered historic places in America](#). The inclusion was a result of a Utah-based developer's plans to construct NewVistas, a 5,000-acre intentional community he envisioned would attract twenty

thousand new residents to the four-town region of Vermont.

By the time the National Trust's list came out, the developer had already acquired over 1,500 acres in the area. The very next day, [he announced he would be selling the land and abandoning his plans in Vermont](#).

VNRC and other groups, like the Alliance for Vermont Communities and The Preservation Trust of Vermont, worked together to stop the planned development, expecting that it would irreversibly disrupt the character of the four rural communities and the surrounding region. Read our statement [here](#). This victory behind us, we are now working on ensuring that the lands are sold to new owners who will appropriately develop and conserve them.

Photo credit: [Magicpiano via Wikimedia Commons](#)

VNRC Secures Funding for Dam Removal in Lake Champlain Watershed



Last month the [Lake Champlain Basin Program](#) awarded VNRC (a [Free VT Rivers](#) partner) a grant of \$210,700 for dam removal in the Lake Champlain watershed. The funding will be available in January 2019 and will support both engineering and construction for projects we have identified. We're thankful for this grant, and for Senator Patrick Leahy's continued efforts to secure federal funding to clean up Lake Champlain, which are outlined [here](#). The Lake Champlain Basin Program recently released its [State of the Lake report](#), which analyzes the current state of the waters and surrounding ecosystem.

VNRC Receives 4-Star Rating from Charity Navigator



We're proud to report that VNRC has received a 4-star rating (the highest possible) this year from Charity Navigator for demonstrating strong financial health and a commitment to accountability and transparency! See [our profile](#) to learn more about the metrics behind our rating, and learn more about Charity Navigator at <https://www.charitynavigator.org>.

Like Us, Bernie Believes in the Power of Town Energy Committees



For over a decade, the [Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network \(VECAN\)](#), which is coordinated by VNRC, has worked with town energy committees across Vermont, supporting their grassroots efforts to implement energy innovation projects in their communities. We recently asked Senator Bernie Sanders to weigh in on the crucial role town energy committees can play in helping Vermont reach our energy goals. It turns out he's a total believer!

“If we are serious about addressing the crisis of climate change, it is going to take people coming together and organizing at the local level to demand bold policies to transform our

energy system away from fossil fuels,” Sanders said. “Active energy committees are making our communities more energy efficient, educating Vermonters about climate change, and engaging in climate advocacy.” The Senator also noted that their efforts are saving taxpayer money on municipal energy bills, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating many local jobs, and commended VECAN and VNRC for helping Vermont move toward a clean energy future. We couldn't agree more with Senator Sanders' thoughts on the power of local energy leadership, and we're very thankful for his support!

Getting Ready for Winter (Yes, in a Heat Wave!)



Button Up Vermont is a statewide effort to cut energy use and keep families warm and healthy, and VECAN is among the partners who make the initiative possible. It's hard to imagine we'll ever have cold weather again, but we're already preparing. Do you want to bring Button Up to your town this winter? [Fill out a quick survey online and let us know how you're willing to help.](#) Then, we'll tell you how we can support you, like by providing you with free energy efficient products and energy-saving checklists to give to your neighbors.

VERMONT NEWS

Energy Action Network Releases Annual Report



In June, the Energy Action Network (EAN) released its [Annual Report](#), which draws on state and federal data to illustrate Vermont's progress towards its energy and climate commitments. The main takeaway: Vermont is falling short of its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and generate renewable energy. At our current trajectory, we will not achieve 90% renewable by 2050. On the bright side, electric vehicle ownership in Vermont doubled in 2017, and there's been impressive growth in the clean energy jobs sector. Download the report at <http://eanvt.org/2017annualreport/>.

Vermont Performs Nicely on AARP Livability Index



The AARP Public Policy Institute recently updated its Livability Index, which provides scores for overall livability and for seven major livability categories: housing, neighborhood, transportation, environment, health, engagement, and opportunity. Burlington, VT might not have made the list of top ten most livable small communities (25,000 to 99,999 people), but its score of 63 puts it on par with several cities that *did* make the cut. In particular, the Queen City ranked highly in health (prevention, access, and equality), engagement (civic and social involvement), and environment (clean air and water). See how your town fared: <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/livability-defined>.

Better Late Than Never: New EPA Report Reveals Increased PFAS Danger



On June 20, a [federal study on the health dangers of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances \(PFAS\)](#), suppressed by the EPA since January, dropped the PFAS safety level into single digits, or seven to ten times lower than current thresholds. Rep. Peter Welch was one of a group of 13 bipartisan lawmakers who sent a letter last month demanding that this report be released. The federal findings could force the state to amend its safe drinking water standard. [Read the full story at VPR.](#)

JOIN OUR TEAM

VNRC/VECAN Hiring an AmeriCorps Community Energy Coordinator!



Know anyone who might be looking for an opportunity make a difference, helping Vermont towns and Vermonters chart a more efficient, clean energy future? Please spread the word or apply yourself! VNRC/VECAN seeks a motivated individual with interest and expertise in community outreach, communications, clean energy, and climate action to help start and strengthen town energy committees. In part, the position will support project implementation efforts around weatherization, efficiency, conservation, renewable energy projects, and transportation innovation. Find out more and apply [here](#). With any questions, please contact Johanna Miller, Energy and Climate Program Director & VECAN Coordinator, at jmiller@vnrc.org or 802.223.2328 ext. 112.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the Date: VNRC Annual Meeting Is September 20



It's that time of year again! Our annual meeting is coming up on Thursday, September 20 at American Flatbread in Waitsfield. Join us from 5:30 – 8:30pm as we review our year in environmental advocacy and vote on new board members. We'll also present this year's Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership to Paul Costello, Executive Director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Enjoy light dinner and a cash bar.

RSVP to Colin Keegan at ckeegan@vnrc.org or by calling 802-223-2328, ext. 119.

Vermont Community Leadership Summit: Making It Happen



On October 1, the Vermont Council on Rural Development will host **Making It Happen**, a community leadership summit for local organizers and leaders working to improve quality of life in their communities. Included are skills workshops on economic development, downtown revitalization, managing conflict, and other topics, as well as group dialogues on diversity and

inclusion, advancing women in leadership, and more. Registration opens in August. Learn more here: <https://www.vtrural.org/Summit18>.

ABOUT VNRC

Protecting Vermont's natural resources and communities since 1963. For more than fifty years, VNRC has been Vermont's leader in protecting our natural resources and communities. 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. From the State House to your town hall, VNRC keeps Vermonters informed on the environmental issues that you and your family care about most.

Support from VNRC's members is critical to our work. Join today!