

VNRC

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Environmental Report

VNRC in Your Community



Summer
2018

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As much as we love winter activities in Vermont, summer here is a prized commodity. We're rarely found missing a moment of sunshine in the warmer months, as we enjoy our state's waterways, hiking trails, farmers' markets, and scenic roads. This summer, think about the natural spaces and places in Vermont you cherish most. Together, we'll try our best to make sure future generations can enjoy them, too, as you and your loved ones have.

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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 is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

VNRC membership includes a subscription to the Vermont Environmental Report magazine. Join VNRC in protecting Vermont with your membership of \$40.

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Communities Define Vermont

By Brian Shupe, Executive Director



Several years ago, the person who had been the Town Moderator in my community for over 20 years moved to another town. With no one eager to step into that role, I was talked into being nominated and have been presiding over our Town Meetings ever since.

Being an introvert, I continue to be a little surprised that I've grown comfortable in this role. The structure and formality of Roberts' Rules of Order provide a certain amount of comfort and, even more importantly, so does the respect that my neighbors have – not necessarily for me, but for the long tradition of civil debate and neighborliness that guides Town Meeting in most Vermont communities. This form of direct local democracy adds to the long list of things that sets Vermont apart from most other states.

Another important feature on that list is Vermont's distinctive landscape, which is really a composite of approximately 250 small cities, towns and gores, each with its own unique character and sense of place. With few exceptions, they all share a human scale, where you are never far from a walk in the woods or a dip in a nearby swimhole, and where local institutions – town government, schools, social, and service organizations – are generally accessible and inclusive.

A challenge of these typically small communities (the median population of Vermont municipalities is 1,271 people) is that responsibility for maintaining their unique character – the foundation of Vermont's brand – rests primarily with volunteer local officials, often with no or limited staff and few resources.

Despite this challenge, hundreds of Vermonters spend thousands of hours every week serving on selectboards and city councils, planning commissions, development review boards, energy committees, conservation commissions, watershed organizations, and other local groups working on myriad important projects. These include updating zoning bylaws, reviewing development proposals, expanding a town forest, weatherizing a historic town hall, and scores of other important efforts to maintain the character of their community and address the challenges of our times, including forest fragmentation, water pollution, sprawl, and climate change.

From a cumulative standpoint, these hundreds of local decisions are every bit as important as the big decisions made in Montpelier when it comes to stewarding the state's natural resources and supporting local economies and communities. VNRC takes these decisions very seriously, and we've spent the past 55 years engaging with communities in a variety of ways. This issue of the VER explores a few of the tools we use and highlights a couple of recent accomplishments we've achieved with community leaders.

The day-to-day, sometimes mundane local work might not get the attention of the legislative battles fought in the statehouse, or the big legal battles carried out in courthouses across the state. But this work and the people who do it are critical to Vermont's future.

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VNRC in Your Community

Vermont is defined by the unique character of its approximately 250 cities, towns and gores. The combination of human scale, civic engagement, and convenient access to natural areas combine to create a sense of place unlike other states. We also rely heavily on communities to manage and protect this unique character, leaving many decisions about community development, infrastructure, and land use up to municipalities. With a median population of only 1,271 residents, many of these communities take on these responsibilities with volunteer governments and little or no professional staff.

For more than 50 years, VNRC has advocated for solutions to the environmental issues you and your family care most about. We have a constant presence in the Vermont State House, and an eye on policies, both statewide and national, that affect Vermonters and our natural resources. But there's a lot more to VNRC than our work on state policy in Montpelier. We're also dedicated to empowering local groups and communities with the tools they need to take action in ways that

work best for them. From equipping town energy committees with resources to lead the transition to a clean energy future, to providing legal advice to groups fighting poorly planned development projects, VNRC plays a crucial role in helping Vermonters enact lasting change at the local level, and in turn, statewide as well.

Harnessing Local Energy

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. The Thetford Energy Committee, for instance, has gone door-to-door to help people weatherize their homes and save money. The town of Hartford, led by its energy committee, has saved thousands of dollars by removing and replacing inefficient street lighting, even hiring a municipal energy coordinator as part of its town staff last year. This expert,



who is the first full-time municipal energy coordinator in Vermont, saved the town enough money in less than eight months to cover the cost of his first year's salary. Other energy committees, from Plainfield to Underhill, have worked with municipal officials, schools, businesses, and neighbors to deploy solar projects, install heat pumps, expand transportation options, and much more.

These dynamic groups have the drive to enact lasting change at the community level, and by extension for Vermont as a whole. Since they are comprised of all volunteers, however, VNRC plays a role in helping them – directly and indirectly – with planning and implementation. As the coordinator of VECAN, the umbrella of over 120 energy committees and other partner organizations who support them, VNRC offers networking, communications, capacity building, and direct technical assistance to support local groups. This includes providing turnkey resources, like model solar contracts, that energy committees can use to move projects forward more easily.

Connecting local leaders to each other and to potential partners is another important element of VNRC's work with VECAN. Hosting regional events focused on timely topics or project opportunities, often in partnership with Regional Planning Commissions, is a particularly efficient way VNRC has found to support networking, inter-community coordination, and resource sharing. These are also fundamental tenets of the "Community Energy & Climate Action Conference" VECAN convenes every year on the first Saturday in December, which is tailored specifically to support and empower grassroots energy action. The event celebrates and builds the collective power of people working at the local level to do what they can to transform Vermont's energy system to one that is more affordable, clean, and accessible.

"Town energy committees are the boots on the ground confronting climate change in Vermont. Our role is to help set the policy and project framework for them to succeed and

to identify key partners to support their work," says Johanna Miller, Energy and Climate Program Director at VNRC and VECAN coordinator. "Ultimately, we make sure our 'doers' at the local level have the connections they need to thrive."

An important piece of VNRC's work with energy committees is in ensuring that their successes, perspectives, and priorities inform state policy. Each year, VNRC organizes a legislative lobby day for energy committee leaders. This has taken the form of an evening of testimony from dozens of energy committee members before joint House and Senate Natural Resource and Energy Committees, for instance, and a dozen energy committee representatives coming to the State House to meet with legislative leadership, the Legislature's "Climate Caucus" and key committees.



"State policy either helps or hinders the ability of energy committees, communities, and Vermonters to move clean energy projects forward and, by extension, the ability to meet our state's critical climate and energy commitments," said Miller. "If Vermont is going to meet its statewide goal of securing 90 percent of all energy needs through renewable supplies by 2050, we will need both good policies and the partnership of all Vermonters."

Town energy committees are a pivotal player in this equation. Not only are these often-municipally-appointed groups viewed as trusted advisors to their municipalities and residents; they're also getting real projects done. "Their work is demonstrating the significant financial and environmental value of moving off of fossil fuels, and it's inspiring and essential. It's a true privilege to work with these local leaders in so many ways," noted Miller.

Senator Bernie Sanders is a believer, too. "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," he said. "Active energy committees are making our communities more energy efficient, educating Vermonters about climate change, and engaging in climate advocacy. Their efforts are saving taxpayer money on municipal energy bills, reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, and creating many local jobs here in Vermont – a real win-win-win."

"I commend all of the Vermonters involved in these grassroots efforts, as well as organizations like VECAN and VNRC that are helping us move toward a clean energy future," Senator Sanders added.

Are you interested in joining an energy committee in your community or getting involved in an upcoming energy project? Go to www.vecan.net and click on the "Energy Committees" tab to see if your town has one you can join or turn to for trusted information on energy issues. If not, contact us about starting your own! Ian Hitchcock, AmeriCorps Member and Community Energy and Climate Action Coordinator, can gladly assist: ihitchcock@vnrc.org or (802) 223-2328, x118.

Forest Connections

Just as local energy groups looking for a boost can turn to VECAN, Vermonters dedicated to maintaining healthy forests and protecting wildlife habitat in their communities can rely on VNRC for guidance and technical assistance.

Consider, for example, a story out of southern Vermont. In 2013, when the town of Marlboro, which lies between Brattleboro and Bennington, began mapping its numerous wildlife crossing areas with the aim of better protecting wildlife habitat through new zoning bylaws, town officials and local residents asked VNRC for help. Our program staff led a community presentation on options for the town to consider. Then, in cooperation with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, we worked with the Marlboro Planning Commission to draft suggested bylaw updates for the town. A handful of years passed as Marlboro town officials worked on updating their town plan; when ready to translate that plan into action with zoning changes, they reached out again to VNRC, prompting further feedback and support from our experts.

The long collaboration paid off: Marlboro adopted a Wildlife Habitat Overlay District – an area in which district boundaries are drawn to support “core” forest blocks that have been identified for special consideration – at its March 2018 town meeting. The town now has a comprehensive plan in place to better support animal habitats, maintain habitat connectivity, and reduce forest fragmentation. VNRC has since assisted Bolton, Jericho, Huntington, Marshfield, and Richmond in updating their town plans and/or bylaws with similar goals.

“It’s important for municipalities to plan and execute projects in ways that are right for them,” said VNRC’s Sustainable Communities Program Director Kate McCarthy, commenting on the five-year period between Marlboro expressing a commitment to addressing wildlife habitat, and actually modifying its bylaws. “The Marlboro project moved at the pace it needed to, and there’s no discounting the long-term benefits that resulted, not only for nearby forests and wildlife, but for the community’s overall ecological health,” McCarthy added.

The developments out of Marlboro were not the only positive gains this year. Beginning in 2018, Act 171,

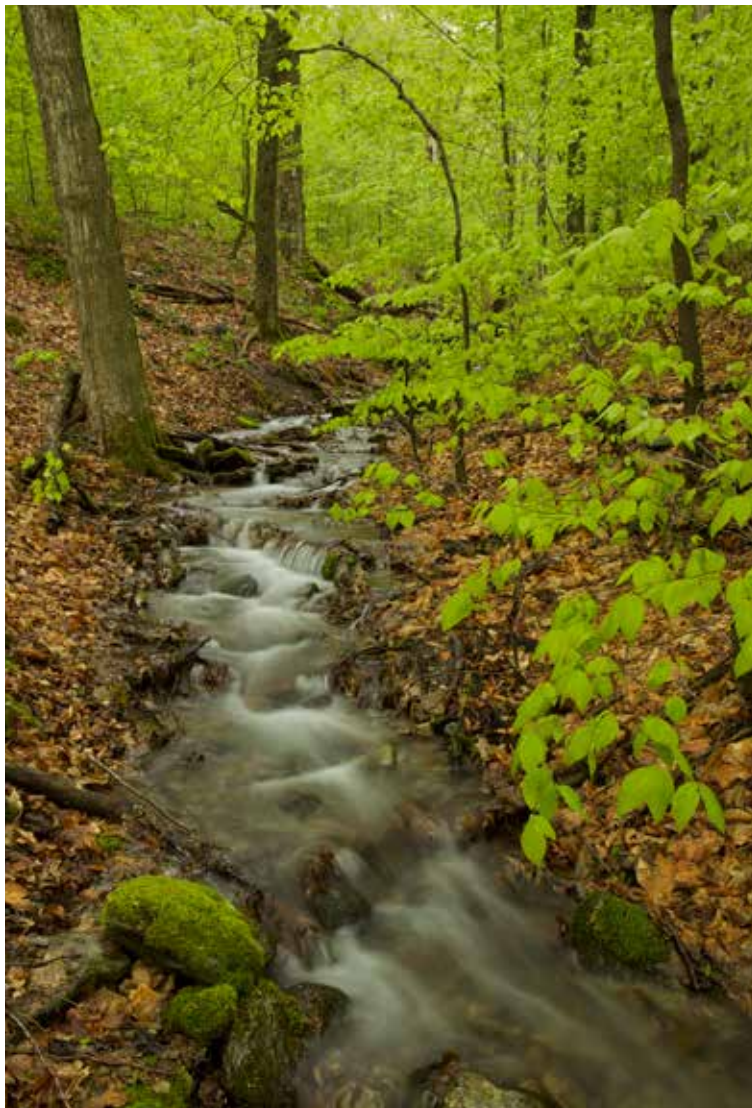
a law that VNRC worked hard to support in the legislature, requires municipalities and regions to identify areas that are important as forest blocks and habitat connectors and to plan for development in these areas to minimize forest fragmentation. However, it’s one thing for a planning requirement to be enacted at the statewide level, and quite another for municipalities to determine how best to implement local strategies to meet the new requirement. That’s why, in collaboration with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, VNRC helped to develop and present a series of webinars to educate municipalities and regional planners on how communities can implement Act 171. Through this format, we’ve reached hundreds of planners and town officials.

We also played a role this spring in creating an Act 171 planning guide, which gives municipalities concrete guidance on how to revise their zoning. The free resource can be accessed via the Agency of Natural Resources website at http://anr.vermont.gov/Planning/Forest_Blocks_And_Habitat_Connectors. The Act 171 planning guide comes on the heels of VNRC’s 2014 publication, “Community Strategies for Vermont’s Forests and Wildlife: A Guide for Local Action,” which offers communities proactive solutions to reduce forest fragmentation and parcelization, with real-world examples of various regulatory and non-regulatory strategies to keep forests and wildlife habitats

intact. If you haven’t yet read it, we encourage you to find it at vnrc.org/programs/forests-wildlife/guide/.

“It’s critical to work one-on-one with towns to help them achieve their goals, but we are limited in our ability to provide technical assistance across Vermont,” says Jamey Fidel, Forest and Wildlife Program Director at VNRC. “Our strategy has been to provide detailed guides to make it possible to walk as many towns as possible through different approaches to making lasting change in their communities.”

VNRC’s technical assistance helps conservation and planning commissions turn their hopes and ideas into tangible, vital community improvements. “Sometimes, we all need a little help thinking beyond what’s close to us,” said Kate McCarthy of VNRC’s role supporting municipalities in these endeavors. “Thinking beyond your town’s borders to the communities around



you, and the resources you ultimately share – as watersheds, as regions, as wildlife habitats – is essential to enacting local change. We help towns connect those dots. We give them the tools to think bigger.”

Your Local Advocates

Of course, local leaders often need a more specific type of guidance to accomplish goals in their municipalities: legal help. VNRC is there for them, too. Our attorneys on staff have advised Vermonters through various legal battles over the years, such as reaching a settlement with the developer of a Wal-Mart

expansion in Bennington in 2013 that secured funds to help support downtown economic development and the water quality of the Walloomsac River, two priorities for local residents. “We worked for years with a dedicated group of residents to represent their concerns and find solutions to mitigate impacts,” said Jamey Fidel, who also serves as General Counsel at VNRC. Once a settlement was secured, VNRC staff continued to stay active with local leaders to distribute funds to organizations working to improve the Bennington community.

A more recent case arose in the fall of 2017, when the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) proposed a

Coalitions: Bringing Vermonters Together to Solve Problems

A key theme of VNRC’s work on the local level is empowering community groups by connecting them with the partners and resources they need. But we’re also dedicated to providing ways for professionals and advocates to connect, to share knowledge and skillsets as we tackle local and statewide challenges together. Here are a few areas we focus on most:



Transportation: Currently, transportation is Vermont’s least renewable energy sector. It makes up the largest source of climate pollution in the state, generating 42% of our greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT) advocates for forward-looking solutions that help make Vermont’s transportation system more affordable, accessible, and sustainable. VNRC coordinated the formation of the coalition in the fall of 2017, with fellow founding members ranging from AARP-VT to Capstone Community Action to the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC).

Since then, T4VT has advocated for replacing inefficient diesel school or transit buses, which get only 4.5 miles per gallon, with electric buses. In January 2018, the coalition submitted comments to the Agency of Natural Resources arguing that Vermont should use its \$18.7 million in VW Environmental Mitigation Trust funds to advance innovations in bus fleet electrification, avoiding investment in new “clean” diesel technology, which actually only supports the continued use of fossil fuels.

Water policy: VNRC has always worked to safeguard Vermont’s ground and surface waters, but the more advocates and diverse perspectives we can bring together, the better equipped we are to achieve our goals. We created the VNRC Water Caucus as a way to better involve environmental advocates and watershed groups in the development and implementation of sound water policy and legislation. We foster discussion and encourage engagement around a

range of issues, including clean water funding, stormwater management, dam regulation, and more. The Water Caucus currently includes members from, among other organizations, the Lake Champlain Committee, Lake Champlain International, Watershed United of Vermont, the Nature Conservancy, and the Vermont chapter of the Sierra Club. We meet most often during the Legislative Session, to keep

apprised of how bills related to waterways in Vermont are moving through the State House.

Forests: VNRC is a member of the Forest Partnership, a coalition of organizations focused on the development of sound policy and opportunities to conserve important forestland, and public awareness about the risks of increasing forest fragmentation. For the past three years, we’ve joined with the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Vermont Land Trust, Audubon Vermont, the Trust for Public Land, and Vermont Conservation Voters to bring our collective backgrounds together to inform policy and conservation funding opportunities. Recent work includes advocating for a forest omnibus bill (which eventually passed as Act 171) to boost planning to maintain intact forest blocks and wildlife connectivity areas, and for strategies to help landowners carry out long-term (successional) planning for the future ownership of their forests. The Forest Partnership makes it possible for various organizations to raise awareness and coordinate with a unified voice. We have become a known entity in the State House, with legislators relying on us to inform them on forest-related policy and issues. Overall, we help Vermont take a long-term view on the maintenance and protection of our forests.

¹ Energy Action Network 2017 Annual Report, available for download at <http://eanvt.org/2017annualreport/>

rule that would heavily restrict non-motorized boating on Great Hosmer Pond in Craftsbury, one of Vermont's most treasured bodies of water, in the interest of powerboaters. VNRC found that the proposal violated state law regarding the use of public waters by prioritizing the use of motor boats over non-motorized uses of public waters.

So, we got vocal... and we made waves. When VNRC began to write and speak out publicly against DEC's proposal, our advocacy caught the attention of a group, the Friends of Great Hosmer Pond, who asked for us to get directly involved in helping them contest the proposed rule. Policy and Water Program Director Jon Groveman met with the local residents to review the rule with them, better understand their concerns, and develop a plan of action. Together, both parties submitted a letter to DEC Commissioner Emily Boedecker outlining the legal deficiencies with the rule and demanding that it be withdrawn, making it clear that otherwise, VNRC would object on behalf of the complainants throughout the rulemaking process and challenge the rule in court if necessary.

Again, our collaboration with local groups paid off. Early this year, in January 2018, DEC withdrew its proposed rule for Great

Hosmer Pond, citing the need for other paths to a resolution, including imposing a permitting process for group use of public waters. "It was a privilege to be able to bring our legal expertise to bear in this case," said Groveman. "Not only were we able to help local residents win a fight that was important to them; we also prevented the state from violating the law and setting very poor precedent for the use of our public trust waters throughout Vermont."

How Can We Help Your Town?

Whether we're supporting the work of town energy committees to help shape Vermont's energy future, providing municipalities with the tools they need to better protect their forests, or offering legal advisement to activists, VNRC is committed to helping fuel local change by nurturing the critical work already taking place in communities across the state. How can we help your town? Email Stephanie Gomory at sgomory@vnrc.org, or call (802) 223-2328, x121, if there's a project you'd like us to consider getting involved in. If we can't assist directly, we'll try our best to help connect you with organizations and resources that can. 🌱

A Little Goes a Long Way

In 2018, VNRC launched a new program, Small Grants for Smart Growth, which provides seed money for community-based, local initiatives. This year's inaugural grant winners represent a diverse set of projects being implemented in towns across Vermont.

The Rich Earth Institute in Brattleboro, working with the Windham Regional Commission, will use its \$1,500 small grant for a pilot project that implements a Nutrient Reclamation Project, the nation's first community-scale urine recycling program, transforming waste into legally-approved fertilizer for agricultural use. The South Hero Land Trust, working with the South Hero Trails Committee and other local partners, will use its grant of \$1,500 to plan the creation of a non-motorized, multi-use trail network to connect important community resources and natural areas in the core of South Hero. And the Lewis Creek Association in Hinesburg used its \$250 grant to promote village land use strategies to avoid pollution of local streams and burdens on community services.

Eligible grant recipients are those focused on advocacy for better land use through municipal planning, regulation, or advocacy in the permit process,



and projects in the following areas provided they related to smart growth: transportation, housing, conservation (including agriculture, forestry, and historic preservation), and downtown and/or village center development or revitalization. Projects that integrate several smart growth objectives at once, such as housing, transportation, and land use, are especially encouraged.

"We know that even small amounts of funding can help local officials and community groups develop their ideas, so we're thrilled to help spark these efforts across the state," said Kate McCarthy, Sustainable Communities Program Director at VNRC, who administers the grant program.

The Small Grants for Smart Growth Program is made possible with assistance from Beth

Humstone, co-founder of the Vermont Forum on Sprawl and former VNRC board chair, and her son, Chris Gignoux. VNRC will be accepting applications on a rolling basis throughout the year. Visit <http://vnrc.org/programs/sustainable-communities/small-grants-for-smart-growth-program/> for application details or contact Kate McCarthy at kmccarthy@vnrc.org or (802) 223-2328, x114.

What is Smart Growth?

Smart growth describes a pattern of land development that uses land efficiently, reinforces community vitality, and protects natural resources. Key benefits include the creation of diverse housing options, the protection of farm and forest land, increased transportation options, low cost public services, and more.

News & Notes

Act 250 Conference Gathers Experts from Across the State

VNRC played a leading role in organizing the Act 250: What's Next? conference at Vermont Law School, which took place on May 24. Panelists addressed the past, present, and future of Act 250, and how we can improve on this landmark land use legislation from an interdisciplinary standpoint. Plus, participants had time to discuss key issues in small groups. Not only was the conference standing room only; 500+ people tuned into the live stream! Watch the footage at <https://livestream.com/vermontlawschool/Act250>. Not to miss: a panel moderated by VNRC's executive director Brian Shupe about other states' perspectives on Vermont's challenges.



Paul Costello to Receive Arthur Gibb Award

This year's Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership, which VNRC has given annually since 2006, will be presented to Paul Costello, Executive Director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development. Established in honor of the late Arthur "Art" Gibb, who was first elected to the Vermont Legislature in 1962 and went on to be deeply involved in passing key environmental and land use legislation, the award honors a Vermont resident who has made a lasting contribution to his or her community, region, or state in advancing smart growth policies. The accolade will be presented at VNRC's annual meeting in Waitsfield on Thursday, September 20 (see back cover for more information).

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 leading advocacy to stop the planned development, expecting that it would irreversibly disrupt the character of its rural Vermont surroundings, historic and otherwise. 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.

Welcome, Stephanie Gomory, to the VNRC Team

We were happy to welcome Stephanie Gomory as our new Communications Director in April. Stephanie brings with her several years of experience helping a diverse portfolio of organizations, including nonprofits and investigative journalists, tell their stories to the media and to the public. She has also worked in book publishing and as a copywriter. Stephanie holds a Master's in Public Administration from Baruch College, City University of New York. Outside the office, she enjoys cooking, crafts, and social justice volunteer work. Welcome, Stephanie!



Farewell, Hannah Huber

In December 2015, VNRC hired Hannah Huber as Energy & Climate Community Organizer. After discussing carbon pollution pricing with countless Vermonters, organizing a "climate solutions dance party" float for a parade, helping to expand VNRC's video portfolio, and much more, Hannah is moving on to grad school. We wish her the best as she pursues a self-designed master's in Applied Mycology (study of fungi) and Ecological Restoration at Antioch University New England. You can email her at hhuber@antioch.edu to stay tuned about her soon-coming mushroom blog. Happy trails, Hannah!



Program Updates

Below is a brief rundown of VNRC's programs, a few recent highlights of our work, and program director contact information.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE ACTION PROGRAM

Works to advance conservation, efficiency, renewable energy, and transportation solutions that reduce fossil fuel usage and save Vermonters money.

- Worked to help usher a few modest but important climate and clean energy policy initiatives through the Legislature, including a “climate package” in the budget, and kept Vermonters abreast of action (and inaction) in the State House via our weekly Climate Dispatch video series.
- Continued our work on the Climate Action Commission, pushing for bold and needed solutions and results from this effort.
- Continued our work with energy committees and VECAN partners to expand grassroots energy action, including a new partnership with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR:
Johanna Miller, jmiller@vnrc.org



FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM

Works to maintain and enhance the ecological and economic vitality of Vermont's forests.

- Conducted webinars for municipal officials and land use planners on strategies to identify important forest blocks and habitat connectors and plan development to minimize the fragmentation of these areas in accordance with Act 171.
- Tracked legislation to support the rural economy, working forests and Act 250 improvements to keep priority forest blocks intact.
- Continued building a website to provide access to statewide parcelization trend information to assist land use planning and conservation efforts across Vermont.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR:
Jamey Fidel, jfidel@vnrc.org



SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

Works to protect and promote Vermont's traditional development patterns of compact settlements – with options for transportation, housing, and employment – surrounded by farms, forests, and unique natural areas.

- Cosponsored and played a leading role in organizing Act 250: What's Next?, the Vermont Planning Association's 2018 spring conference.
- Selected, with the Preservation Trust of Vermont and the Conservation Law Fund, a farmer to steward the farmland at Exit 4 in Randolph. VNRC and these partners worked to conserve the land, and have continued to provide support in the land transfer process.
- Continued work to coordinate and build Transportation for Vermonters (T4VT). Contributed legislative testimony advocating for the use of VW Environmental Mitigation Funds to help Vermont invest in electric school and transit buses.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR:
Kate McCarthy, kmccarthy@vnrc.org



WATER PROGRAM

Aims to protect and enhance the quality of Vermont's streams, rivers, lakes and ponds, wetlands, and groundwater.

- Successfully advocated for testing new wells for toxics, and for the oversight of smaller dams that have been thus far un-regulated in Vermont, both achieved with the signing into law of H.554.
- Participated in two weeks of a Vermont environmental court trial around the appeal of a certification issued to Morrisville Water and Light for the operation of two dams on the Lamoille River and another on the Green River.
- Spurred on by our petition under the Vermont Wetland Rules, the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) filed the final rule to designate LaPlatte River Wetland with Class 1 status, providing the area with the highest level of protection under Vermont law.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR:
Jon Groveman, jgroveman@vnrc.org



VNRC Member Profile: Duncan McDougall

How did you initially become involved with VNRC?

I first connected with VNRC twelve years ago when we were starting Waterbury LEAP (Local Energy Action Partnership), Waterbury's all-volunteer town energy committee. I have been an enthusiastic VNRC supporter ever since.

How has VNRC affected you and your community?

Johanna Miller of VNRC and the Vermont Energy & Climate Action Network (VECAN), Bob Walker of Vital Communities (formerly of SERG, the Sustainable Energy Research Group), and many others have always been a huge help to LEAP and our work. In our early years, they also connected us to many town energy committees who offered us advice. Since then, LEAP has been very happy to return the favor by assisting many other towns in getting their committees started, too.

What environmental efforts are you most proud of in your community?

In 2012, LEAP conducted an extensive campaign to expand solar installations in Waterbury and Duxbury and we helped quadruple local solar capacity in only 23 months. We work with local schools on energy projects, give annual awards to local

students for the best green energy projects, and hold regular community events educating local residents about topics such as heat pumps, solar, and weatherization. And our annual LEAP Energy Fair has grown into the largest in Vermont with 75 exhibitors and up to 700 attendees from more than 35 local communities.

If you had it your way, how would Vermont's energy use look in 2050?

Vermont would succeed in meeting its stated goal of 90% renewables by 2050. Unfortunately, we are already measurably behind in our necessary progress towards that goal. Vermont needs to pick up its pace!

Why is community activism important to you?

Tragically, on the national level the US is actually going backwards when it comes to environmental and green energy issues. By acting locally, we all ensure progress continues to be made in these critical areas. I am proud that the actions of thousands of dedicated Vermonters, many of them volunteers, allow our state to serve as a model and inspiration for many other states that are also trying to move forward.

You also support VNRC financially. Why is it important to you to be a member?

As they say, there is no Planet B. VNRC does a tremendous job of protecting the Vermont environment that we all cherish, and it is very generous in its support of other Vermonters who are trying to do the same. It only makes sense to help the organization continue its great work.

What advice or tips do you have for Vermonters looking to start their own energy committees for the first time?

Just do it! There are currently more than 100 Vermont town energy committees (TECs), almost all run by local volunteers, and they are doing essential work supporting and inspiring neighbors, businesses, schools, and town leaders to embrace renewable energy and energy and transportation efficiency. The VECAN website (<https://vecan.net>) has a map showing all current TECs, as well as a document I prepared describing how to start and run a town energy committee. If your town doesn't have a TEC, go for it! Feel free to contact me at duncan@clifonline.org if you have any questions.



Duncan McDougall with his hiking partner, Yoshi



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Save the Date: VNRC's 2018 Annual Meeting



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, x119.

Members are crucial to our success. Thank you for your support!
If you haven't already, please join us by visiting vnrc.org and clicking on Join/Renew.

vnrc.org