

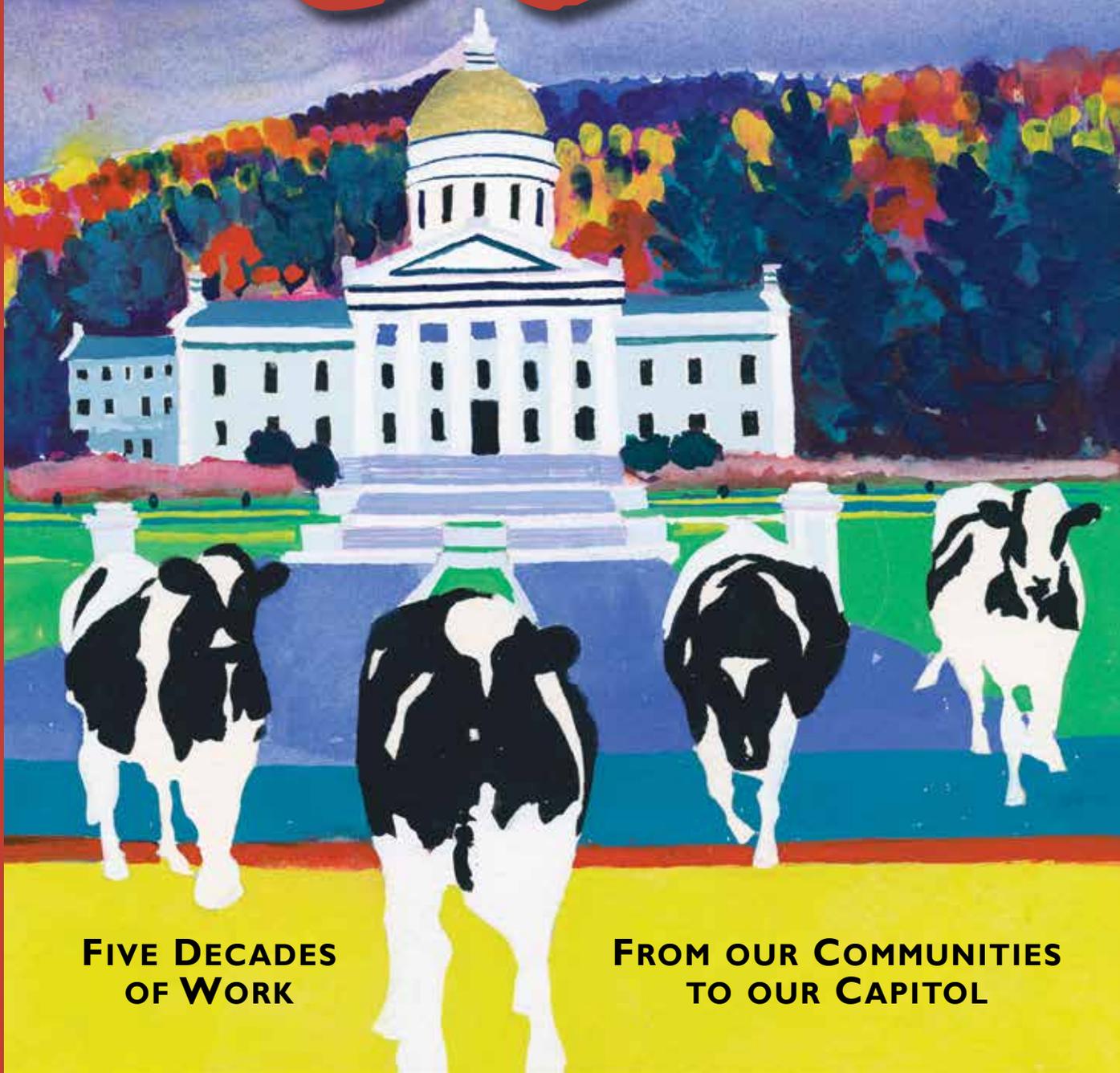
VNRC

Vermont Environmental Report

VNRC AT

50

Published
by the
Vermont
Natural
Resources
Council, Inc.



**FIVE DECADES
OF WORK**

**FROM OUR COMMUNITIES
TO OUR CAPITOL**

Fall
2012

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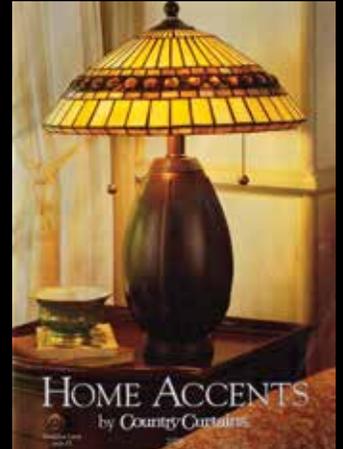
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Natural Resources and Communities

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The Vermont Natural Resources Council, Inc., is a nonprofit environmental organization founded in 1963 to protect and restore Vermont's natural resources and environment for present and future generations through research, education, collaboration and advocacy.

VNRC is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

VNRC membership includes a subscription to the *Bulletin* and the *Vermont Environmental Report* magazine. Join VNRC in protecting Vermont with your membership of \$35.

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Vermont Environmental Report

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Fall 2012

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NAKED HILLSIDES, TURBID WATER: PAST'S LESSONS CAN GUIDE A BRIGHTER FUTURE

BY BRIAN SHUPE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Vermont had learned the hard lesson of rapid growth, untempered resource extraction and, ultimately, ecological collapse in the mid-19th century. What is true then remains true today: the health of Vermont's economy is reliant on the health of the environment.

As the story goes, VNRC was founded 50 years ago “by farmers and foresters” who were concerned that the nascent era of economic expansion, technological advancement, and land development would erode the land base they relied on for their livelihoods.

Farmers and foresters were certainly instrumental in VNRC's conception, but that's only part of the story. There were also people in the tourism industry, scientists and academics, hunters and anglers, state bureaucrats, and even a banker, who saw the need for something like VNRC. These Vermonters were prescient enough to understand – months before Bob Dylan released his third album – that the times were, indeed, “a-changing.”

Vermont had learned the hard lesson of rapid growth, untempered resource extraction and, ultimately, ecological collapse in the mid-19th century. What is true then remains true today: the health of Vermont's economy is reliant on the health of the environment.

Vermont spent nearly a century in relative economic dormancy, largely because of the severe degradation of natural resources. This period was characterized by the abandonment of countless hill farms and the migration of Vermonters both out of state and down into our villages and regional centers, which solidified the state's traditional settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by rural countryside. Thanks to a temperate climate, abundant precipitation, and rich soils, the natural environment healed itself over the course of a hundred years through reforestation and the re-habitation of the landscape by nearly-extirpated wildlife populations.

Then, in 1963, the question that VNRC's founders asked, in part, was this:

Do we have to go through that again, or with long range planning, smart development practices, and a deeper understanding of the interdependency among a healthy economy, a healthy environment, and healthy communities, can we choose a better course?

The founders had faith. They created VNRC and set it to the task. Consequently, the past

50 years have been shaped by many of VNRC's victories, as well as some of our defeats. We've taken a different path than other states, and fared pretty well. Vermont has retained much of its distinct character and environmental well-being, and at the same time built a modern and stable economy that consistently out-performs most other states in economic and quality of life indicators.

Will that always be the case? Many of the same land use and development challenges that were emerging in the early 1960s are still with us today, only at a larger scale and with greater economic force behind them. We've cleaned up waterways with modern sewage treatment facilities, only to degrade them with stormwater run-off from ever-growing parking lots and poorly managed farm-fields. And, for the first time in 100 years, the amount of Vermont's forested land is shrinking as large parcels – and wildlife habitat with it – are converted to other uses.

And then there are the two greatest challenges facing Vermont: climate change and peak oil. Not even obscure theories when VNRC was formed, these issues are sure to dominate our future.

Looking forward, what can VNRC do to address the threats we face and build greater resilience at the community and state level?

First, we will continue to understand that our communities – and the people, institutions and human-scale settlement patterns that define them – remain one of our greatest strengths. Vermont is not as tight-knit as it once was, but our collective response to Tropical Storm Irene proved that civic pride and basic neighborliness remain fundamental virtues that will serve us well in the future.

VNRC is working directly with communities to make homes and municipal buildings more energy efficient, plan for smart growth, maintain wildlife habitat and protect ground and surface waters. We are providing the tools that communities can use to manage their future and adapt to the changing reality of a warming planet.

In addition, we will continue to apply the lessons we learn at the community level to shape state policy. VNRC's legacy of providing bold solutions

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TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY: *How Vermont Got a Head Start*

BY ELIZABETH COURTNEY AND ERIC ZENCEY

Neither of us can claim native status in our adopted home, but as long-term residents we've witnessed change – both sweeping and incremental – in the environmental policies and the physical landscape of Vermont. Some of



those changes have been positive, some not. The positive changes are, we think, sufficient enough that the answer to the question “can humans achieve a sustainable balance with nature in Vermont?” is a hopeful, if cautious, “yes.” We have work to do, but we have a relatively solid foundation on which to build.

As we celebrate VNRC's 50th year and look forward to the next 50, it's appropriate to pause and take stock.

In the past 50 years, Vermont managed to hang on to much of its natural and social character. As a matter of geography, economics, and cultural predisposition, in Vermont the Hydrocarbon Revolution – that rapid exploitation of the ancient solar energy stored in fossil fuels like coal and oil – arrived late. With no sources of coal or oil of its own, and far from the seaports and transportation hubs through which such energy sources might have been imported in large quantities, Vermont remained, through the early days of the Age of Oil, what it had been long before: an agricultural society that subsisted on the solar and renewable energies offered by its own forests and fields and rivers.

This difference in its history helped to make Vermont a place apart. Vermont retained its historic settlement pattern of compact town centers surrounded by working farms and forests. The forces of oil and coal didn't spin apart the natural and social character of Vermont as thoroughly as they did in other states.

But the conservation of Vermont's working landscape into the twenty-first century was not solely a matter

of geographical and geological circumstance. Vision, hard work, difficult compromise, and some truly notable successes on the part of the state's conservation, historic preservation, and environmental movements were necessary to get

where we are today.

Even if it seems that the Green Mountain State is on a path toward doing its part to achieve a sustainable state, clearly there is still work to be done. Sprawl has come to the Green Mountains, taking established farmland and ecosystems out of production and degrading the commercial viability of town and village centers. Even landscapes and waterways that look pure and appealing to the human eye can be troubled by ecological problems that aren't readily seen.

And to a degree that Vermonters couldn't have foreseen half a century ago, other threats have arisen from outside the state's borders. Climate change, water scarcity, deforestation and desertification, a burgeoning global population, and the symptoms of withdrawal that the global economy will experience as it is forced to give up cheap oil – these global-scale problems are cumulating into an unprecedented planetary crisis that can't be solved by any one state or nation acting alone. But Vermont can and must (and we think will) do its part to achieve a sustainable human culture in the Green Mountains. Vermonters generally are self-reliant and disinclined to wait for others to fix things or tell them what to do, and this characteristic will continue to serve us well.

The transition to a more sustainable state won't be easy. But one thing is clear: we can do it through a conscious decision to ground our economy on efficiency, conservation and renewable energy, or sustainability will be thrust upon us by

system breakdown, incremental collapse, and frantic patching. The first path gives us more of what we want; the second leads to a great deal of avoidable human pain and suffering. Either way, change will come, even as powerful forces and loud voices insist that such change is not needed, wanted, or likely to happen.

There are many Vermonters who have worked to give Vermont a head start.

Many, many individuals – and, since the 1960s, more than thirty statewide, non-profit environmental and conservation-oriented organizations, including VNRC – have played various roles at the state level. And a much larger number of local groups have formed as concerned citizens organized to protect a watershed, to preserve particular landscapes and habitats, and to affect particular decisions about energy use, land use, housing patterns, the siting of a mall or a waste dump.

These people and groups have researched, organized, agitated, legislated and educated; they have written, spoken, argued, collaborated and invented. The collective result has been the evolution of the environmental movement in the Green Mountain State – the movement that gives Vermont its leg up on the difficult task of establishing a sustainable society. And as Vermont continues to make progress toward that goal, we're confident that its environmental movement will continue to serve as a model for a nation in need.

Elizabeth Courtney is the director of VNRC's Legacy Project and served as executive director of VNRC for 14 years. Eric Zencey, a VNRC Board member, is a novelist, essayist, and a Fellow at the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics at the University of Vermont.

This essay is adapted from the introduction to the upcoming book “Greening Vermont: Toward a Sustainable State” (Thistle Hill Publishing and VNRC), available this fall.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES UPDATE

The Sustainable Communities Program is adding to its portfolio of offerings for local officials, by developing a variety of tools that towns can use to assess, and then enhance, the well-being of their communities and environment for 21st century challenges.

For instance, VNRC is expanding and updating the Vermont Smart Growth Scorecard, created in 2000 by the then Vermont Forum on Sprawl (which later became Smart Growth Vermont). The scorecard poses questions that towns can answer to assess how they are growing, and identify strengths and weaknesses in their land use planning. The expanded scorecard will help communities address things like climate change and lack of human physical activity due to sprawl, by including sections on energy and healthy community design.

VNRC is also updating the Community Planning Toolbox, a creation of Smart Growth Vermont. The toolbox complements the Scorecard by introducing users to the issues, techniques and resources — including case studies — for smart growth planning, helping towns decide on the best actions to take after completing an assessment like the scorecard.

The new toolbox section on Healthy Community Design will include topics related to healthy living (physical activity) and food access, and how these can be enhanced by local planning. VNRC will also be

adding information on energy planning and implementation, as well as forestland conservation.

VNRC is, in addition,

involved with two HUD-funded grants focused on sustainability planning. Both ECOS (the planning process in Chittenden County) and the East Central Vermont Sustainability Plan focus on the “three E’s:” environment, economy, and equity, acknowledging that the most sustainable communities are the ones where these purposes reinforce one another. VNRC is providing research and town planning assistance on these grants.

“We are pleased to offer these packages of resources to help communities, if they so choose, map out their future in a way that assures the values of strong downtowns and healthy working landscapes not only coexist but complement each other,” said Kate McCarthy, sustainable communities program director.

For more information, contact Kate McCarthy, kmccarthy@vnrc.org.



Blake Gardner

WATER UPDATE



Blake Gardner

The VNRC water program has been doing lots of public outreach recently. This past spring in Montpelier, VNRC organized a successful and very well-attended conference on rivers with the help of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc. The gathering, called Living with our Rivers, examined river management science, particularly in light of extreme weather like the floods of Irene.

Outreach will continue this fall as VNRC holds forums across the state in September to describe the state's pending "anti-degradation" implementation rule. The objective is to let people know what this complicated but important regulation means and what it means for Vermonters who want to protect those extra-clean waters in their region from

pollution. The events will be held in Montpelier, Burlington, Brattleboro and Dorset. Visit vnrc.org for details.

VNRC also recently published a groundwater guide for municipalities to help them understand how they may take action, if they choose, to manage their local groundwater resources. The guide offers an overview of groundwater and its properties, a summary of relevant state law relating to groundwater, new ways that municipalities may protect groundwater, and draft groundwater management language for town plans and bylaws for local officials to consider. You can download the manual for free at vnrc.org.

In other water news, a stream restoration effort VNRC has been involved in for years in Stratton is bearing fruit. Since Act 250 codified an agreement with VNRC

and the Stratton Area Citizens Committee several years ago, the Stratton ski area has been installing measures to clean up two polluted streams at the same time they move forward with expansion plans. One of those streams is now slated to be removed from the "impaired waters list."

"It's taken longer than anyone expected – and there's a

lesson in that — but this stream restoration effort has been successful due in part to the productive working relationship between VNRC, Act 250, Stratton and a dogged citizens group," said Kim Greenwood, water program director at VNRC.

For more information, contact Kim Greenwood, kgreenwood@vnrc.org. 

ENERGY UPDATE

The VNRC energy and climate action program is knee deep in conversations, research, collaboration, planning and implementation of clean energy and climate action strategies.

VNRC is continuing to support and start new energy committees across Vermont, including helping organize this year's annual "Community Energy and Climate Action

Conference." (Save the date for this event: December 1 at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee.)

We are serving on the Department of Public Service-convened Thermal Energy Task Force, which is charged with making recommendations on how the state can meet its goal of significantly improving the energy fitness of 80,000 Vermont homes by 2020. To support this effort

further, VNRC is compiling a compendium of "case studies" or stories of Vermonters who have made home energy efficiency improvements.

We are also setting up a series of focused forums this fall, in partnership with the Vermont Department of Public Service, Vermont Climate Cabinet and Regional Planning Commissions, on the Comprehensive Energy Plan. And we are continuing our work to identify, package and produce "turnkey" programs for energy committees and others interested in advancing and implementing clean energy solutions. This includes work to help communities

successfully push the PACE energy financing program, working with Efficiency Vermont to conceptualize and help launch a "home weatherization challenge" later this year and beginning to put together a guide to help communities go solar.

Finally, we have been working with a broad-based New England-wide coalition to proactively halt a potential plan to ship dirty, dangerous tar sands oil through an old, existing pipeline in the Northeast Kingdom.

For more information, contact Johanna Miller, jmiller@vnrc.org. 

FOREST AND WILDLIFE UPDATE



VNRC continues to be working hard at policy aimed at keeping Vermont's forests as forests.

On various fronts, VNRC is engaged at the community level on forest and habitat conservation planning. We are also in the midst of researching land use and development patterns to better develop tailored strategies for regional and local land use plans and zoning bylaws to conserve forestland. As part of this work, we will be partnering with regional planning commissions to develop a Priority Action Plan for addressing forest and wildlife policy.

One strategy is to implement regional or landscape level conservation planning to promote coordination across town boundaries. VNRC is partnering with three towns in the Mad River Valley as part of an initiative called the Forests, Wildlife, and Communities Project. VNRC is also working with Bolton, Hinesburg, Huntington, Jericho, Richmond, and Williston to promote natural resource protection at a landscape level. The Chittenden County Regional

Planning Commission and Vermont Agency of Natural resources are key partners in this effort.

In addition, VNRC has begun offering training to real estate professionals and engineers to outline ways that impacts to natural resources can be minimized in real estate development, and we continue to participate with a cross-section of groups as part of the Current Use Tax Coalition in an effort to assure the long-term health of Current Use, one of the state's most successful land conservation and management programs.

And we continue to convene the Forest Roundtable on a quarterly basis. The Forest Roundtable, comprised of individuals with a wide variety of expertise and perspectives on Vermont's forests, continues to meet to examine critical issues relating to keeping our forests healthy and intact. There are multiple strategies being implemented across Vermont, but the common thread is that we are working through partnerships to achieve direct results on the ground.

For more information, contact Jamey Fidel, jfidel@vnrc.org.



Blake Gardner

The Inside Word

continued from page 2

to contemporary problems, from banning billboards to protecting groundwater, will be central to our work in the

coming years.

Most of all, however, VNRC will seek continued and expanded engagement with our members. Our membership has been the fiber of VNRC over the last

50 years, not only because of your financial support but also because of the value of your collective voices. During the recent recession, in particular, members have demonstrated extraordinary loyalty and faith

in our relationship.

Over the next half century, as we embark on an ever more relevant and critical mission, we look forward to a continued partnership with our members and friends.



VNRC at 50: Perspective on an Enduring Mission

This year, VNRC turns 50. In this special section of the *Vermont Environmental Report*, we look back, and we look forward. We reflect on a few of the successes we've achieved with some of our partners, and we try to predict a little bit of the future.

Founded in 1963 — the same year Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, the Clean Air Act was passed, and 10 years before the Clean Water Act was enacted — VNRC began as an all-volunteer entity organized to educate the public about the relationships between natural systems and mankind, promote the intelligent use and preservation of natural resources and provide a means for groups and individuals interested in natural resources to present their views to the broader public.

The organization hired its first executive director, Justin Brande, in 1969 and established its first formal place of business by renting a two-room office across from what is today's Capitol Plaza Hotel, at 97 State Street in Montpelier.

Today, located just blocks from State Street in a building of our own, VNRC is one of Vermont's foremost environmental groups and is believed to be the oldest statewide independent environmental group in Vermont.

A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, VNRC is funded through grants, memberships, and the generosity of donors. A 14-member board of directors oversees the operation of the organization while a staff of 10 carries out the day-to-day work. Interns and volunteers are critical in helping VNRC as well.

As we have prepared to celebrate our 50th year, we have taken a pause to look into the past. We have rustled through dusty boxes in a steamy attic and pored through old files in a dank cellar. We have interviewed friends, former staff members, and others; we have delved into ancient computer files and we have reached back into our own collective institutional memories here at the office to help reconstruct the past.

Material we have unearthed has been assembled,

and we are sharing a small bit of that material in this VER. (See center spread this section.) This material is being compiled into a new book to be released this fall entitled *VNRC: 50 Years of Environmental Stewardship*.

As editor of this VER publication, I owe tremendous gratitude to former staff member Steve Holmes, long-time VNRC Sustainable Communities Director, who compiled a tremendous amount of historical information before he retired from VNRC in 2010. And recognition also goes to James Sharp, our office manager, for compiling that information so it's easily accessible.

I also want to recognize the hard work in recent months of Legacy Project director and former executive director Elizabeth Courtney as she prepares, with the help of Board member Eric Zencey, to publish the upcoming book, *Greening Vermont: Toward a Sustainable State*.

As I spent the last few months reviewing VNRC's past, I've been struck by the foresight of the founders of the organization, who skillfully identified the challenges facing the state. I have been struck by the deep commitment to the mission that board members and staff have exhibited even when times have been tough. And I have noted that over five decades, VNRC has kept its eyes on the prize of a bright and healthy future for Vermont's natural resources and communities.

When I fly in an airplane and see the earth from above, I can't help but be reminded of scale. Similarly, as I looked back over VNRC's 50 years, I was reminded of my own small place in this big VNRC mission. I recognize that those of us working here today, in partnership with our members, are parts of a broad and deep VNRC legacy and future. VNRC is an institution that is now, after a half-decade, firmly rooted in Vermont. And it is an institution whose mission, I am confident, will find continued strength and relevance over the next 50 years.

— Jake Brown

PARTNERSHIPS:

Building Sustainable Communities

Vermont's historic development pattern of compact town centers surrounded by open countryside is recognized and admired nationally. VNRC works to guide development in ways that reinforce our existing downtowns and village centers, while also maintaining the economic vitality of the farms and forests that define Vermont's working landscape. We also work to ensure that these areas are served by transportation alternatives that support our energy goals.

Over the last decade, VNRC has, with a variety of partners, worked to enhance this historic pattern of development.

Connie Snow, of the Windham and Windsor Housing Trust, is a VNRC member, and also the recipient of the first Art Gibb Award given by Smart Growth Vermont (which merged with VNRC last year). Her leadership in the affordable housing arena does more than just help Vermonters by promoting homeownership, housing security, and housing affordability. The work of WWHT also supports the community, improves local transportation options, and bolsters the local economy by building within or near our downtowns and villages.

An exciting new example of WWHT's good work is the recently completed Upper Story Housing/Brattleboro Food Co-op Redevelopment project. This project replaced the old co-op building – a single story structure at the back of a parking lot – with a new, energy-efficient building

that rounds out the downtown streetscape and embodies smart growth principles like walkability, density through good design, and mixed-use. What's more, the two top

levels of the building provide 24 affordable rental units for a wide range of people, including young people, people with disabilities, and seniors.

We thank Connie, her colleagues and many collaborators, and the countless others innovating around the state to keep our downtowns, villages, and communities vital.



Blake Gardner

Connie Snow in front of a recent redevelopment project in Brattleboro.

PARTNERSHIPS:

Convening on Vermont's Forests

The Forest Roundtable, Six Years and Counting

On June 27, 2006, about 30 people gathered in Montpelier for an initial meeting of the Forest Roundtable. Conceived of and convened by VNRC, the Roundtable is a venue for the exchange of information relating to keeping Vermont's forests as forests, with particular attention focused on addressing parcelization and forest fragmentation. Over the course of the last six years, the Roundtable has grown in participation and interest, with over 180 people now tracking its progress. Participants have included consulting foresters, professional planners, government officials, landowners, sportsmen, representatives from the forest products industry, conservation groups, biomass energy organizations, and public and private universities and colleges.

VNRC's goal as convener of the

A sample of Forest Roundtable participants: from left to right: Ann Ingerson, resource economist with the Wilderness Society; Put Blodgett, president of the Vermont Woodlands Association; Deb Brighton, fiscal analyst; Jamey Fidel, forest and wildlife program director for VNRC; Michael Snyder, commissioner of the Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation; John Meyer, consulting forester.

Roundtable has been to create an open forum to which people with a wide range of perspectives could exchange information and, where possible, develop recommendations for policy changes. In fact in May of 2007 the Roundtable issued a report outlining policy suggestions to curtail the rate and mitigate the effects of parcelization and forest fragmentation.

Roundtable meetings have addressed multiple topics, including trends in Vermont's real estate market and rising forestland values, property tax policy, land use and conservation planning, estate planning, landowner incentive

programs such as the Current-Use Program, and the long-term sustainability of the forest products industry. Beyond fostering dialogue, Roundtable meetings have produced tangible results including the following:

- Unified support for keeping Vermont's Current Use Program intact, and making strategic improvements, such as enrollment of ecologically sensitive areas.
- Development of a Landowner Summit, which was attended by 100 landowners seeking input on strategies for promoting long-term forestland ownership across multiple

generations.

- Development of a statewide database for tracking land use trends in forestland ownership and subdivision rates in Vermont.
- Unified support for policies to support the working landscape, such as increasing the weight limit for trucking forest products in Vermont.

Still, there is much work to be done to keep Vermont's forests healthy and intact and VNRC is committed to continuing the Forest Roundtable as a way to bring diverse interests together to support one of Vermont's greatest natural assets.



Blake Gardner

Half a Century

Some Key Events for Vermont, VNRC

1963
VNRC founded.

1967
Regional and Municipal Planning Act enacted.

1968
Vermont legislature passes law to ban billboards.

1970
Vermont legislature passes Act 250, Vermont's development control law.

1971
Seward Weber hired as VNRC's first permanent executive director.

1972
Container redemption law, or "bottle bill" passed.

1974
Short on operating revenues during a deep recession, VNRC nearly ceases to exist. Grant revenues increase in 1975.

1978
Vermont legislature passes the "Current Use" tax law for farm and forestland; VNRC receives \$250,000 gift to start an endowment.

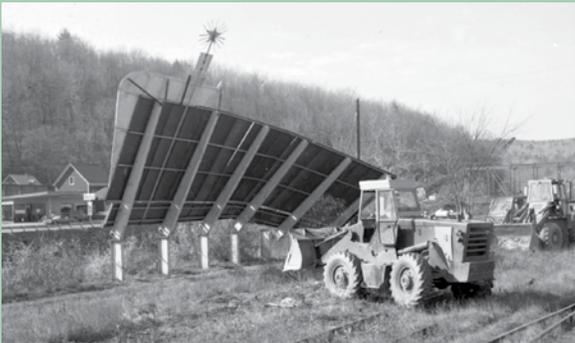
1986
VNRC purchases home at 9 Bailey Ave in Montpelier and converts it to office space for the organization, moving out of rental space. VNRC remains there today.

1987
Vermont legislature passes first comprehensive statewide solid waste law.

1987
Vermont creates the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

1988
Act 200, designed to integrate local, regional and state agency planning, signed into law.

1997
Vermont legislature passes "Heavy Cutting" timber harvesting law.



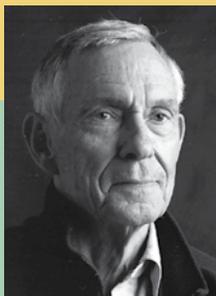
A billboard gets pulled down in Montpelier after a law banning them went into effect.

VNRC Executive Directors

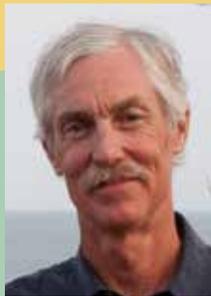
Justin Brande
1969 – 1970



Seward Weber
1971 – 1984



Lou Borie
1984 – 1985



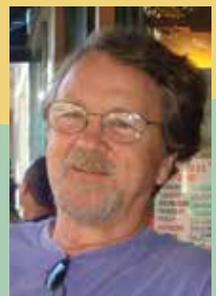
Monty Fischer
1985 – 1989



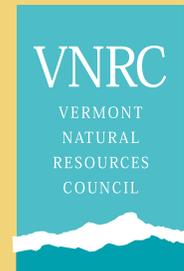
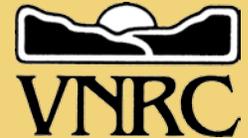
Richard Mixer
(Acting)
1989



Tom Miner
1989



VNRC logos over the years



Mollie Beattie

1996

Mollie Beattie, VNRC Board member and first female director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, dies at 49. VNRC creates internship in her honor.

1998

Vermont legislature passes "Downtown" bill.

2000

VNRC hosts Earth Day celebrations in both Montpelier and Burlington and its first gubernatorial candidates environmental forum at Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier.

2008

Vermont lawmakers declare groundwater to be a public trust resource.

2011

VNRC, Smart Growth Vermont merge.

2012

Vermont Legislature bans "fracking" for oil and natural gas.

2006

VNRC creates the Forest Roundtable

2006

"Growth Centers" law is enacted.

2009

Vermont Legislature passes first-in-the-nation "standard offer" law to promote renewable energy.

2005

Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network, or VECAN, is formed; VNRC later becomes coordinator.

Sarah Muyskens
(Acting)
Spring, 1990



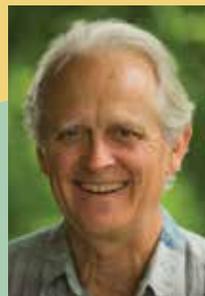
Ned Farquhar
1990 – 1993



Jane Difley
1994 – 1996



Steve Holmes
(Acting)
1997



Elizabeth Courtney
1997 – 2011



Brian Shupe
2011 – present



PARTNERSHIPS:

Taking Action on Energy and Climate

Over the last 10 years, one of the critical changes in Vermont has been the burgeoning interest among Vermonters in gaining control of their community's, and their own, energy future.

Challenged and frustrated by a deeply entrenched fossil fuel industry driving our economy, as well as glacial action at the federal level to move society toward a more sustainable, clean energy-powered future, more and more Vermonters are taking matters into their own hands. Household by household, community by community, they have begun to make shifts in their energy use and generation that will help them and their municipalities be better positioned to weather volatile, and escalating, energy prices and at the same time reduce their impact on the planet.

One leader in this wave of local energy interest and action is Jamie Ervin of Duxbury. For years Jamie had wanted to reduce her family's energy impact. In 2010 and 2011 she did so, installing both a solar photovoltaic system (the solar system that creates electricity) and a solar hot water system. Today, the solar PV system keeps her family's annual electric costs to between \$0 and \$60, and the solar hot water system provides hot water as well as space heating. That system saves 350 gallons of propane a year and two cords of firewood.

Ervin serves on Waterbury's energy committee. The Waterbury Local Energy Action Partnership, known as LEAP, is just one of more than 100 town energy committees

working at the local level and, increasingly in collaboration under the umbrella of the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network, or VECAN. VECAN, the state's foremost, statewide clearinghouse of

local energy groups, initiatives and ideas, is playing an increasingly pivotal role in spurring and driving energy action across Vermont. VNRC has the privilege of serving as coordinator of VECAN,

working closely with other organizations and many motivated Vermonters like Jamie who are helping to demonstrate what's possible and why it's essential. (Learn more at www.vecan.net.)



Blake Gardner

Jamie Ervin at her home in Duxbury.

PARTNERSHIPS:

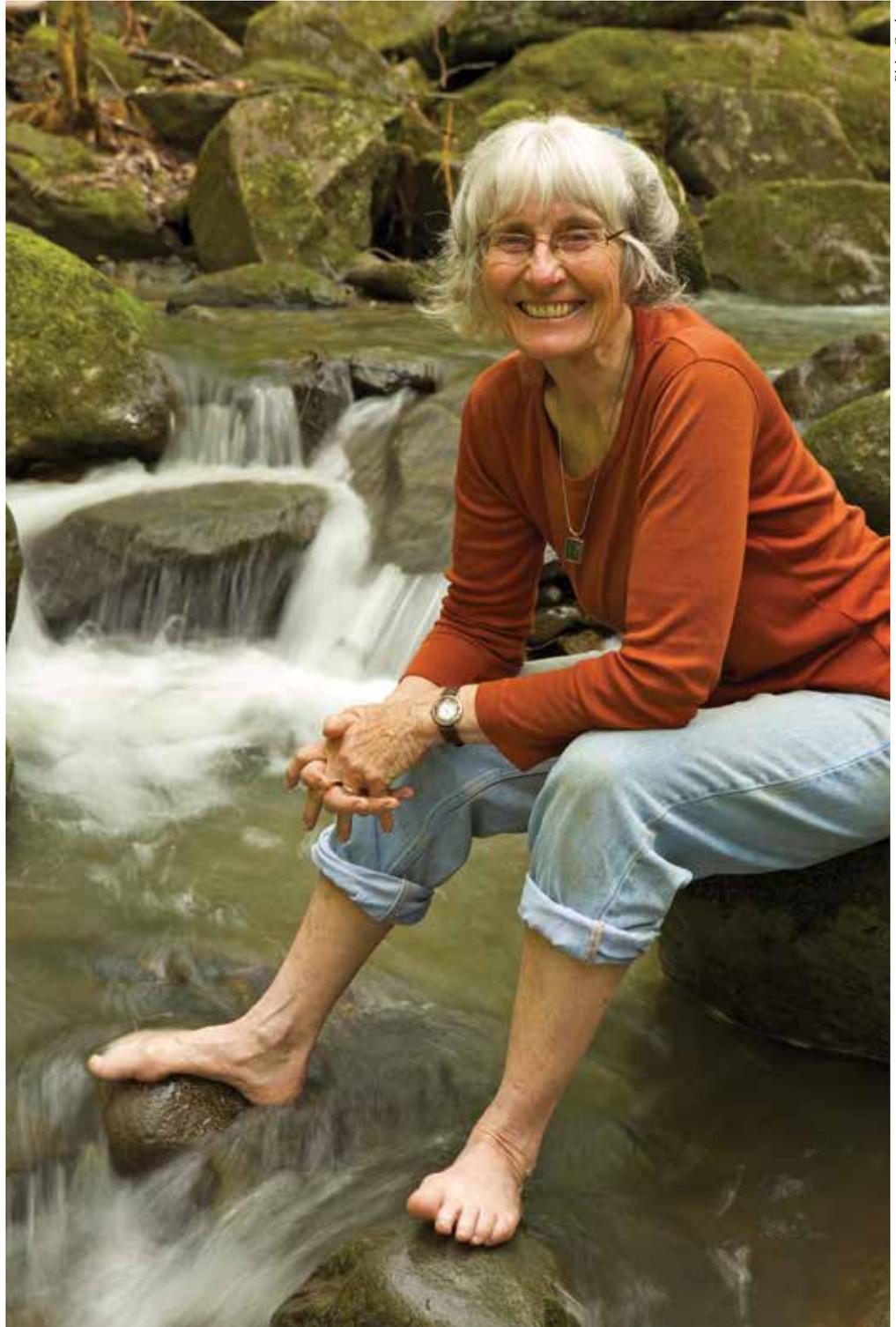
Protecting Local Water Supplies

Over the past decade, one of the gains in water policy in Vermont has been the further protection of groundwater across the state. For the better part of a decade, VNRC, with help from Vermonters for a Clean Environment, has been working with citizens from places like Dorset, Randolph, and East Montpelier all of whom have wanted to protect groundwater supplies in their communities from excessive extractions for bottling and other purposes.

In East Montpelier, Carolyn Shapiro was one of scores of citizens in that town who became worried about a 2007 proposal to extract thousands of gallons of water for bottling from a spring. She and others worried, among other concerns, about how such a proposal would affect neighbors' wells and what it would mean for nearby streams and rivers. At town meeting in 2008, voters passed a moratorium on large groundwater extractions, effectively delaying, if not foreclosing, the possibility of a commercial water bottling operation in East Montpelier.

According to Shapiro, VNRC has been critical in helping her small citizen organization, the East Montpelier Water Committee, understand the regulatory landscape and her town's options for protecting their groundwater. VNRC has continued to meet with the citizen group periodically to discuss the implications of the groundwater law and how they might choose to protect groundwater by amending their town plan.

Citizens like Carolyn Shapiro, and many others like her across Vermont, are critical to VNRC's water work. We are grateful for our continued partnership.



Blake Gardner

Carolyn Shapiro near a spring in East Montpelier that had been eyed for a water bottling operation.

The Decade Ahead: VNRC Program

Forests

JAMEY FIDEL,
FOREST AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

During the next decade, there will continue to be pressure on our forests. These pressures or threats will be varied and complicated and they will range from impacts related to land use development and invasive pests, to stresses from climate change.

In general, Vermont's forests have been recovering from heavy clearing at the turn of the last century. Revitalizing our forest ecosystems has been one of Vermont's success stories. However, for the first time in over a century, we are now beginning to lose our forest base because of development, and the average size of parcel ownership is continuing to decrease. (For example, woodland parcels 50 acres or larger decreased by about four percent, or roughly 34,000 acres, between 2003 and 2009, according to a recent VNRC report on subdivision trends.) Meanwhile, forestland values are increasing, straining landowners' ability to own forestland for values other than development.

As we lose Vermont's forests to development, we lose their inherent values. Forests contribute to our tourism industry, provide recreational opportunities as well as diverse forest products and energy. They also provide vital ecosystem services such as clean water, clean air, carbon storage, flood control, and wildlife habitat.

While ill-advised development can undermine these



important functions, it is not the only threat. Forest pests could alter our forested landscape, and climate change may impact everything from the duration of our sugaring season to the health and viability of our wildlife.

Certain programs in Vermont have been key to reducing the temptation to develop land to pay property taxes and other expenses. Vermont's current use program, which reduces the taxable value of land if landowners enroll and manage their land with a forest management plan, has been a widely successful program, but we need to assure its long-term capacity to accommodate more land.

Many of the policies that we need to implement in Vermont to keep our forests intact, such as programs carried out by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board or Forest Legacy, cost money. Unfortunately, there simply is not a new pot of gold that I have found that will magically get us to where we need to be to adequately conserve our forests.

This is why I see the need to focus on a complimentary suite of strategies that can be accomplished without large amounts of money. Development will continue to occur, but we can be strategic about where we place houses and related infrastructure. Furthermore, communities can plan for healthy wildlife populations and intact forests by identifying and conserving large blocks of forests and critical areas of habitat connectivity. Helping communities understand the options and plan for a healthy future is where VNRC is putting a lot of stock right now.

We will need to be creative on many fronts. However, there is power in building common agendas with diverse stakeholders. VNRC will continue to sponsor the Forest Roundtable, for instance, as one venue for this kind of collaborative work, which is critical to our success if we want to remain the green mountain state.

Sustainable Communities

KATE MCCARTHY,
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM DIRECTOR

In terms of sustainable communities, what do I see in the next decade? A threat and an opportunity. The threat is the same one we've dealt with for years: the subtle phenomenon of incremental development creeping into our forests and agricultural lands. Big boxes may shock the senses, but rural, bit-by-bit development, which is less noticeable, fragments important forest resources and reinforces driving as the main transportation option. This risks undermining both our landscape and the farm and forest economies – economies that could serve us in the future as



we seek to get more of our food and fuel locally. It's something that can be hard to raise alarm bells about, because development here in Vermont is happening more slowly than in many other parts of the country, but we ought not to be complacent.

We have real opportunities, too. Our villages and downtowns are places that people care about. They create pride and sense of place, they inspire people to get involved, and they foster social interaction. That's important and I see continuing support for our downtowns, thanks to the hundreds of community volunteers across the state as well as general state policies that aim to foster healthy downtowns. I also see the aging of Vermont's population as an important force. Today's retirees are, on average, more active than any previous generation, and they want to live in interesting and convenient places. Our compact centers offer this. Last but not least, energy costs, as they continue to generally rise, will underscore the value of communities where our homes, our work, and places like the grocery store, the hardware store, and our kids' schools are all close together.

Directors Offer Their Forecasts

Water

KIM GREENWOOD, WATER PROGRAM DIRECTOR

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act it's important to realize how far we've come in terms of clean water in Vermont. Years ago, stories abounded about rivers being not swimmable. Now, we assume they are swimmable. Yet, we have become aware of new threats that we didn't know about forty years ago: stormwater runoff and pharmaceutical and personal care products for example.

Given what we have learned about cleaning up our waters, I am hopeful that there will be increasing focus in the coming years on keeping clean waters clean rather than cleaning them up after they've been polluted. We have lived through massive clean up efforts – some successful and some not. There's a new awareness of the effort and expense it takes, and our attempts to clean up Lake Champlain are illustrative of that.

More and more people are appreciating the value of clean



water. We're learning it's not a luxury — clean water is critical economically not only from a tourism standpoint but also from a property value standpoint — ask the folks who live and work along Lake Champlain's shores. Clean water is also fundamental to our general well-being and the reasons we all love Vermont: in summer, imagine your favorite swimming hole or pond being so polluted that you can't swim.

Vermonters who live near streams that are polluted are just now starting to realize how expensive mandatory clean ups are – for them and other property owners and taxpayers. It's a real wake-up call to pay attention to our waters before they get polluted.

In the coming years, we will also be wise to remember that two-thirds of Vermonters get their drinking water from groundwater, from wells or springs. In the same way that it's important for us to keep our clean streams clean, we need to continue to watch very carefully for threats to the quality and quantity of groundwater that is available for drinking water.

In the coming years, globally, and in the United States, water will become scarcer and more polluted. Water really is a finite resource.

Energy

JOHANNA MILLER, ENERGY PROGRAM DIRECTOR

On the energy front, I see good news and bad news. Most clearly, I see that tackling the issue effectively — that is, transitioning the global society we built on cheap fossil fuels — will be the biggest and most important challenge of our lives.

I believe there's an opportunity to meet that challenge successfully but it will require leadership, vision, a little pain and a lot of chutzpah.

I see promise, though, in part because I have to . . . for sanity's sake. But I also see promise because of the people of Vermont.

In Vermont, people are swimming against national clean energy inaction and, thankfully, they are making progress. More Vermonters are taking steps to lighten their energy footprint. They are working to get solar on their schools, town offices and homes. They are helping motivate friends and neighbors to invest in energy efficiency. They are trying to tackle the transportation challenges we face, and more.

Nationally, it's a bit of a different story but there are glimmers of hope. More people seem to recognize the high costs of our addiction to oil. With 2012 poised to be the hottest year on record, and defined by some of the most devastating natural disasters to date, climate skepticism seems on the wane.



Unfortunately, though, another fossil fuel — natural gas — is on the rise and relying on it heavily will only worsen climate change and forestall the inevitable truth: that we have to fundamentally realign the energy sources we tap to power our lives.

Over the next 10 years, I believe energy issues will more deeply dominate our lives. Vermont's clean energy businesses will drive our economy and demonstrate what's possible when you turn challenges into opportunity. People will increasingly pair the damaging results of climate-caused catastrophe with our individual and cumulative actions and make changes. Vermont's town energy committees will grow in number and influence, shaping state policy and playing an increasingly vital role as change agents in their communities. These and other forces will come together to motivate more people to solarize their homes, switch to clean heating sources and retrofit their homes for energy efficiency.

These will be powerful strides, but to make the fundamental, full steps forward we must take, it will require hard decisions about our energy future, difficult conversations and shared sacrifice. The reality is that to have any effect on climate change, we need to save significant amounts of energy, create more renewable energy, and we need to do lots of both. Now.

Whether we like it or not, we are on the verge of an energy transition. With mutual respect, proper planning and strategic deployment, I believe a new, clean energy future is possible without sacrificing so much of what we love about Vermont. Let's demonstrate what's possible, and do it while we still can.

Considering VNRC in Estate Planning

“Including VNRC up-front in our will makes us glad. We’re happy that after we’re gone, we’ll have left a living legacy in the form of VNRC’s ongoing work for planetary sanity and sustainability. As we resist embracing our own mortality, knowing that we’re helping VNRC endure gives us real solace.”

— Don and Allison Hooper, Brookfield



The Hooper family on the roof of their Brookfield home celebrating the installation of solar panels: From left to right are Miles, Allison, Don, Jay and Sam. Photo courtesy Don Hooper.

Since 1963, the Vermont Natural Resources Council has been working to preserve Vermont’s precious natural heritage and protect the health and wellbeing of its communities and citizens. We rely on the generosity of thousands of VNRC members and supporters to fuel our challenging environmental advocacy work, and planned giving is an important source of support for VNRC.

Over the years, VNRC has been the grateful recipient of a number of bequests of various amounts, some of them anticipated and some not. All of them have been extremely helpful in furthering our mission.

Planned giving — using bequests in wills or other mechanisms — is a type of charitable giving that can provide the donor’s estate with significant financial and tax advantages, allowing

more of your estate to go to your named recipients.. But there are other tools as well, including life income gifts.

With the assistance of a qualified professional advisor, you can create a special charitable gift that is both personally satisfying and beneficial to you, your family and VNRC.

As a member of VNRC, you are demonstrating an interest and commitment to ensuring Vermont’s rivers,

forests, landscapes and communities are healthy well into the future. Please consider securing this legacy, like Don and Allison Hooper have done, by including a provision in your estate plans.

Please talk to a professional about your wishes, call our Development Director Stephanie Mueller at 802-223-2328 ex 113, or go to vnrc.org to find out about the many planned giving options available to you. 

John T. Ewing: Vermont Smart Growth Pioneer, Community Leader

Recipient of the 2012 Art Gibb Award

This year, VNRC is recognizing John Ewing of Burlington with the Arthur Gibb Award for Individual Leadership.

The award – formerly presented by Smart Growth Vermont, now by VNRC – has been given to a Vermont resident who embodies qualities similar to those of the late Arthur “Art” Gibb, and who has made a lasting contribution to their community, region or state in moving smart growth policies forward.

“John Ewing has been a highly respected and effective force in Vermont for many years and this award is fitting recognition for his good work,” said Brian Shupe,



John Ewing

VNRC’s executive director.

John has been instrumental in recent decades highlighting the social and environmental costs of so-called “sprawl” development. Over the years, he has been a respected and consistent advocate for smart growth planning in Vermont.

He is also known in vari-

ous circles for his many accomplishments and continuing contributions to several non-profit organizations in and around Burlington, as well as across Vermont, and for his years of service on the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

A graduate of Amherst College and Yale Law School, John spent his first professional years in private law practice.

In 1972, he joined Bank of Vermont as general counsel and held various positions, retiring as president in 1995 when he was named by then-Gov. Howard Dean to chair the Vermont Environmental Board.

John has been a committed advocate for Vermont with

an unusual talent for working with a wide variety of people and developing consensus.

Together with Elizabeth Humstone he founded the Vermont Forum on Sprawl in 1997. He saw an urgent need for an organization that would bring together diverse, and at times opposing, interests to discuss how Vermont could have a strong economy and housing options while protecting the farms and forestland that define the state’s working landscape. (The Vermont Forum on Sprawl, which was renamed Smart Growth Vermont 2007, merged with VNRC in 2011.)

“This award represents our collective gratitude to John Ewing for his dedication, inspiration and service to the state of Vermont,” Shupe said.

The Art Gibb Award — Recognition of Leadership, Commitment and Vision

Each year a selection committee composed of members of Art Gibb’s family, community leaders, and VNRC staff, gathers to review the nominees for the Art Gibb Award. The following characteristics, which are qualities that defined Art Gibb, are considered:

- Leadership and the ability to motivate others around shared goals related to community planning, and the preservation of Vermont’s landscape, unique sense of place, and economic wellbeing
- Commitment to public service, including a willingness to work for change without compensation or personal consideration
- Vision to recognize the challenges facing Vermont’s environment, landscape and communities now and in the future and understand how those challenges can best be addressed through public policy and personal initiative
- Creativity in crafting innovative solutions, policies and programs that maintain Vermont’s community life and unique sense of place
- The ability to balance competing interests in order to forge consensus and build bridges between those holding opposing views
- Integrity and steadfastness in public service that earns the respect of colleagues, neighbors and diverse interest groups
- Humility, expressed through respect for others, including those holding opposing viewpoints and a willingness to work cooperatively and share recognition for accomplishments

Art Gibb dedicated much of his life to ensuring that Vermont is a better place for future generations of Vermonters. First elected to the Vermont Legislature in 1962, he was deeply involved in passing legislation to ban billboards, enact the state’s bottle deposit law, regulate junkyards and modernize statutes governing local and regional planning. He served on the commission that laid the groundwork for Act 250 and served 12 years on the Vermont Environmental Board, including one year as Chair.

Art Gibb died in 2005 at the age of 97. 



Brattleboro Project Gets Smart Growth Stamp of Approval

A partnership of organizations that support smart growth in Vermont has awarded a developer special recognition for rehabilitating Brattleboro's historic Brooks House.

The Vermont Smart Growth Collaborative, of which VNRC is a key member, recently recognized Mesabi LLC of Brattleboro with a Smart Growth Housing Endorsement for its proposed redevelopment of the historic downtown building. The project includes 36 market-rate apartments and 40,000 square feet of retail, business and restaurant space on the ground and second floors. The project will feature a third floor terrace for residents, covered bicycle parking, and a location in the heart of Brattleboro's downtown, all of which exemplify smart growth principles.

"This is an exciting project that will bring the Brooks House back to life after it was gutted by fire in April of 2011,"

said Kate McCarthy, VNRC's Sustainable Communities Program director.

The Smart Growth Housing Endorsement Program was established in 2002 to recognize residential development projects that incorporated smart growth principles into their project design. Those principles include locating projects in existing settlements, providing transportation options to residents, and promoting a mix of housing types. Since 2002, 17 projects, comprising more than 700 dwelling units, have received endorsement.

New Website on Tap for VNRC

VNRC has been working with technical experts and a designer over the past few months to update our website. We are updating the look of the site so it will be easier for users, and will have a cleaner look. We hope to go live this fall. Stay tuned. Also, VECAN just launched a new site: www.vecan.net.



Rendering of the rehabilitated Brooks House in Brattleboro. Rendering courtesy Stevens & Associates.

Sign up for E-news

For more than a year now, we've been publishing a monthly

E-newsletter that offers a variety of VNRC, state and national news with additional links, as well as highlights of upcoming events. The E-news has been very

well-received by readers. If you are not currently getting our E-news, you can sign up. Please send an email to vnrc@notter.org.

VNRC Hires Second AmeriCorps Member

AmeriCorps member Keil Corey joined VNRC mid September to support our efforts on energy and climate change issues. Keil, who is from Bristol, will work to advance programs and projects of VNRC and the Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network — the network of energy committees and organizations across Vermont that VNRC coordinates. Keil brings extensive outreach, organizing, communications and social networking experience to this role and we are excited to have him on-board.



Keil Corey

Jake Claro, VNRC's AmeriCorps member who was hired last September, wrapped up his work with VNRC recently and has taken a job at the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund. In his work at VNRC, Jake played a pivotal role in our energy and climate work, including helping create a new and improved VECAN web site — www.vecan.net.

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**Congratulations to VNRC
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MEMBER PROFILE

Ryan Kane: Law Student, VNRC Intern, and VNRC Member



Ryan Kane

Vermont Law School student Ryan Kane worked with VNRC as an intern in the summer of 2011 and subsequently became a member of the organization. He is in his third year of law school and spent this past summer working as a law clerk at the Vermont firm Langrock Sperry & Wool in Burlington and Middlebury. We recently connected with Ryan, who lives in South Royalton, for an update.

a lifelong member. It's important to remember that VNRC is a member-based organization and relies on memberships for revenue.

What are some of the environmental or energy issues facing Vermont that most concern you?

I think environmentally focused energy policies are critical to the country and to Vermont right now. The recent ban on hydrofracking is an important step. I think working against energy policies that degrade our natural environment or contribute to climate change is essential. VNRC has been involved with Vermont Yankee for a long time and continues to work hard on that front to protect Vermont's natural resources from impacts of the plant. These energy issues are very complex and there are no easy answers. That's why it is so critical there is an organization like VNRC in Vermont which has so much experience and knowledge. I also think the work VNRC is doing with regards to smart growth development is important. Sustaining and enhancing Vermont's downtowns and village centers is extremely important to assuring a vibrant future for Vermont, I think.

When you think of VNRC, what adjectives come to mind?

Committed, community-minded, caring, hardworking, fantastic!

What do you like to do for fun?

This time of year I play ultimate Frisbee, do a lot of hiking, and try to get out swimming in as many of Vermont's awesome ponds and swimming holes as I can. In the winter I cross-country ski, snowboard, and play pond hockey. Oh, and law school. 

How did you end up in Vermont?

I was drawn to VLS for the environmental law program and the focus on public interest and community minded work more generally. I had also spent a couple years living in Vermont and fell in love with the landscape and the people. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to intern with VNRC the summer after my first year of law school. That was an amazing opportunity to get some experience working on environmental legal issues here in Vermont.

What prompted you to become a VNRC member?

Having experienced the work that VNRC does firsthand as a summer intern I know how important VNRC is for Vermont. The staff and members of VNRC are doing such great work that I knew I wanted to stay a part of this organization. I plan on staying in Vermont and will definitely be



www.vbsr.org

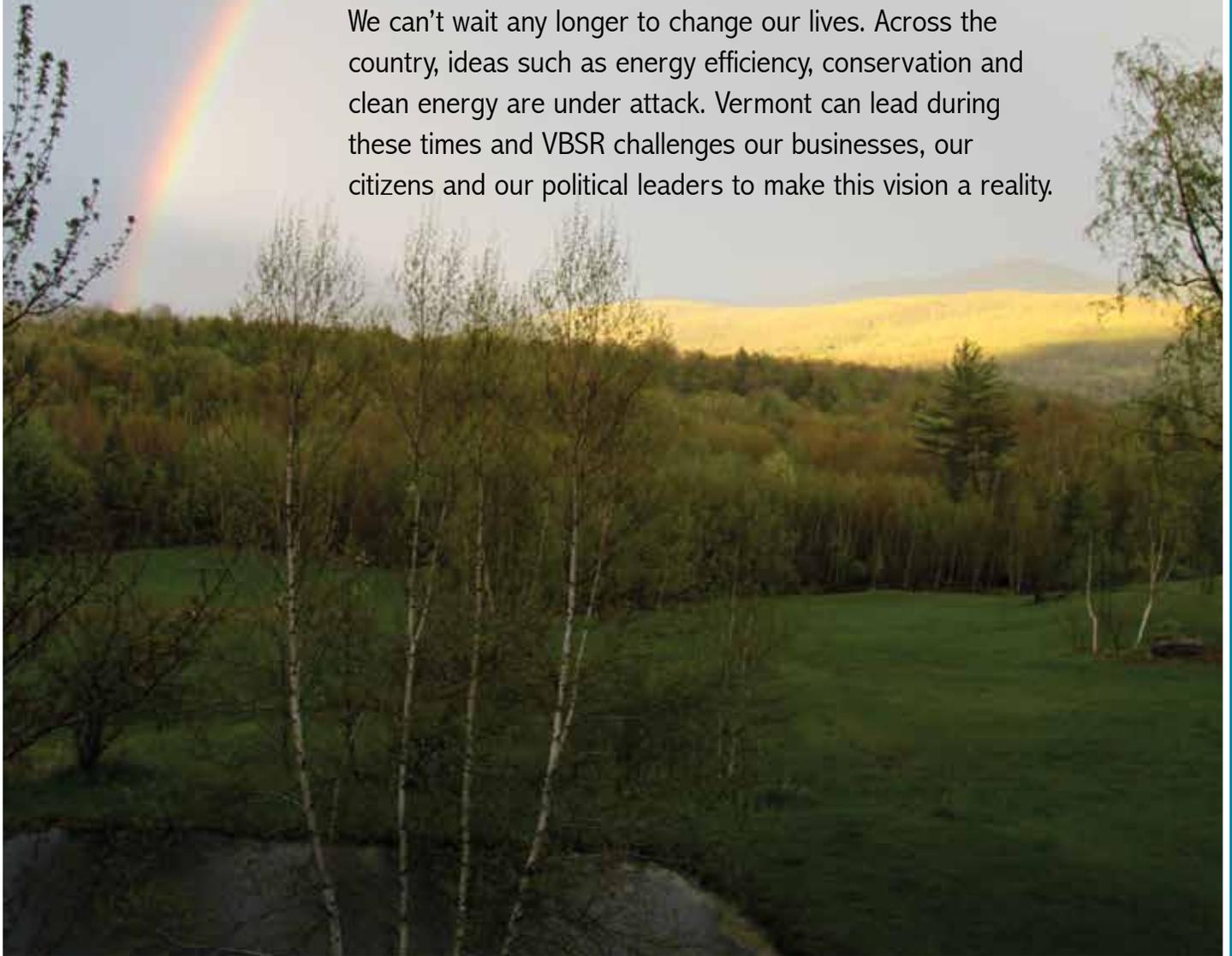
info@vbsr.org

VBSR believes that climate change is real and threatens all aspects of our lives, including the way we do business.

As a group of Vermont businesses dedicated to social responsibility, we know bold and decisive action is needed to address this crisis. All of the energy and environmental problems we face can be addressed in ways that benefit our communities, our environment and our economy.

Vermont's business leaders envision a future when their stores, warehouses and homes are powered by local and clean energy sources; employees travel to work via buses, trains and high-speed Internet; and caring for our workers and our communities is just as important as making a profit.

We can't wait any longer to change our lives. Across the country, ideas such as energy efficiency, conservation and clean energy are under attack. Vermont can lead during these times and VBSR challenges our businesses, our citizens and our political leaders to make this vision a reality.





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Save the Dates!

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

*Where activism gets
inspired!*

November 15
5:30 – 9 pm
Main Street Landing
Performing Arts
Center
60 Lake Street,
Burlington



Join VNRC and Patagonia Burlington to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act at this year's Wild & Scenic Film Festival, always one of the hottest events of the fall.

Don't miss out this year — we are featuring water-inspired films, great food, a raffle and a silent auction.

VNRC Members Special: Bring a non-member, and save on your entrance ticket.

For more information visit vnrc.org
See you at the movies!

The 5th Annual Vermont Community Energy and Climate Action Conference December 1, Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee

Mark your calendars for the annual Vermont Community Energy and Climate Action Conference! This year's fantastic event will be held on Saturday, December 1st once again at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont. This daylong conference is geared largely towards Vermont's inspired and growing network of town energy committees, but it is also targeted towards municipal officials, local and regional planners and anyone interested in reducing energy costs, making the transition to renewables and tackling climate change. Visit www.vecan.net for more information. We hope to see you on December 1!

Remember:
VNRC is a membership organization
and we count on members for support!
Please join us!

vnrc.org

JOIN VNRC!