

Address Correction  
Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
1.7¢ PAID  
Montpelier, Vt.  
Permit No. 285

# NEWS NOTES

## vermont natural resources council

Vol. IX, No. 1  
January 1972



97 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602  
The Vermont Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

(Editor's Note: No, you didn't miss the December issue of News Notes. It didn't happen because the Christmas mail rush caught us by surprise. We decided to skip to early January, when, we speculated, members would have more time to read anyway.)

### FORD SPURS CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS

The Ford Foundation has announced a program of grants to assist municipal conservation commissions in up to 150 communities in New England, New York and New Jersey in their efforts to protect the environment.

A sum of \$385, 000 has been set aside by the Foundation for the program. Each commission will receive up to \$5,000 for such activities as the preparation of open-space plans, small-scale reclamation work, and the writing of ordinances and land-trust documents.

In announcing the grant, a Foundation spokesman said: "The municipal conservation movement has been one of the most positive responses to the growing local concern with environmental problems. With roots deep in their own communities, these commissions are helping to generate informed citizen opinion on the need to protect the environment and to guide the community's response in such areas as highway location, waste disposal, and land preservation."

Under the program, commissions may apply for grants of up to \$5,000. Amounts over \$1,000 will have to be matched by the municipalities on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Activities that might be supported are the preparation of maps, aerial photographs and surveys, or the acquisition of technical publications. Funds could also be used

to obtain the services of consultants including lawyers to prepare land trust documents, easements, title searches, and local ordinances; contractors to provide equipment for reclamation work; and surveyors and planners to help prepare open-space plans.

More than 800 municipal conservation commissions have been organized in the Northeast since the movement began in Massachusetts in 1957. They are established by town ordinance on the basis of state enabling legislation and serve as environmental consultants to town officials. Each commission consists of from three to nine members appointed by the mayor or other appropriate town official. They serve for terms of up to five years without pay.

The conservation commission movement has not taken hold in Vermont although there are scattered across the state a handful of local groups involved in the kinds of activities that conservation commissions typically perform. The Vermont General Assembly has never passed the enabling legislation that sparked the formation of conservation commissions in neighboring states. Despite this it is generally believed by knowledgeable observers of municipal government that cities and towns in Vermont have the authority to establish conservation commissions without a special act by the General Assembly.

### "VERMONTERS ON VERMONT" AVAILABLE

An EPIC booklet summarizes an opinion-attitude survey on environmental problems in Vermont, will be available later this month. Members wishing a copy may obtain one by sending ten cents to EPIC, 97 State St., Montpelier



## LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN AVAILABLE

The VNRC will again publish a legislative bulletin for the benefit of its organization members and others wishing to receive it. This will cover environmental issues before the adjourned session of the Vermont General Assembly. The Bulletin will be incorporated in News Notes when feasible and supplementary numbers will be issued as appropriate and necessary. Members wishing to be placed on the special mailing list for the Bulletin should return the following order form to the Council's office.

VNRC Legislative Bulletin Order Form - 1972  
(mail to 97 State St., Montpelier, Vt. 05602)

Please place me on the special mailing list to receive issues of the VNRC Legislative Bulletin supplemental to those contained in the News Notes.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## STATE TO GAIN LARGE TRACT

The Nature Conservancy again has come to the rescue, buying some 3,215 acres in Mendon, Vermont that includes the summits of two of the state's highest mountains at a cost of \$305,000. The tract, which is near the Killington ski area and includes the summits of Little Killington (3,939 feet) and Mendon Peak (3,840 feet), will become part of the Calvin Coolidge State Forest. The State of Vermont, in turn, will buy the tract from the Conservancy utilizing Land and Water Conservation Funds. According to Commissioner of Forests and Parks Arthur Heitmann, "... trails, off-the-road camping (and) cross-country ski trails...." are among the facilities for the new acquisition.

Vermont Natural Resources Council  
802 229-9496 or 229-9300  
Mrs. Newton C. Garland, Chairman  
Seward Weber, Executive Director  
and NEWS NOTES editor

## EAST-WEST HIGHWAY

After a three-month evaluation, the VNRC in coalition with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, and the Appalachian Mountain Club, has recommended the abandonment of further study for an east-west economic development highway across Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Instead, the coalition urged the New England Regional Commission to consider the development of a program of integrated air and surface transportation, which should be coordinated with the three states' regional land use and capability planning programs.

In studying the impact of the proposed highway on the broad environmental structure of Northern New England, the coalition found that the need for an economic development highway had not been convincingly demonstrated and that critical dangers to the natural environment, i.e., disruption of watersheds, country roads and walking trails, commercialization of lakes and mountains, subdivision of farms, and major changes in patterns of real property ownership, would be posed by construction of the road.

The coalition's recommendations were based on a study conducted by a task force composed of environmentalists, engineers, economists and sociologists from the northern New England states. Richard Brett, VNRC board member, was among them.

## TAX CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AVAILABLE

The generosity of VNRC member John Drysdale has made possible the printing of an edited version of the proceedings of the conference sponsored last August by the VNRC, the Vermont Tax Department and the Vermont Environmental Board on the subject "The Vermont Property Tax and the Conservation of Open Land: What Can Be Done?" Single copies are available and may be requested by sending the Council a self-addressed envelope (preferably a #10 business) and 16¢ postage. Copies will be sent to all those who registered for the conference, members of the Vermont General Assembly and many members of the executive branch of state government.

-printed on recycled paper-



Act 250 Planning Program  
Creative Localism Needed

by William H. Schmidt\*

Seven thirteen-member district task forces have been formed to make the major local contribution to the Act 250 planning program. Led by the chairmen of Vermont's fourteen regional planning and development commissions, the task forces must muster their intelligence, imagination and good common sense to effectively aid Governor Davis, State Planning Director-Environmental Board Chairman Benjamin Partridge and their fellow Montpelier-based Act 250 planners in the development of "a comprehensive state capability and development plan and land use plan (that will) provide guidelines for (the) utilization of the lands and environment of the State and (a definition of) the goals to be achieved through land use and environmental control." (Act 250, Section 1). To do their job, and do it well, the task forces must work quickly: May 1972 is the time when their assignment must be substantially completed, for that is the time when the drafting of the Act 250 plans by the State Planning Office is scheduled to begin.

Task Forces' Job

The task forces are beckoned to participate in the thick and thin of the Act 250 planning program. After reading over 1,500 pages in "homework" documents (if copies can be found!) ranging from Vision and Choice and Challenge and Opportunity to Gerald Witherspoon's Report on Vermont Tax Policy, regional plans and other regional planning commission reports, task force members are to pool their thinking and identify the major problems and issues facing their district and the state on such matters as land use, population growth and settlement patterns, and the lengths and limits of public authority and policy in shaping Vermont's future, not only physically but economically and socially as well.

Having been chosen (at least in part) because they weren't pie-in-the-sky planners, the task force members are challenged to come up with the hard issues facing the state. And having put a finger on the issues, they are to work with Montpelier-collaborators in analyzing them, suggesting solutions, and most necessary of all, pointing out means by which desirable solutions can be put into practice.

In Perspective

From the above it is clear that:

1. The task forces' assignment is demanding and mind-boggling, to say the least, if the task forces are to be anything more than rubber stamps for state planners' ideas.
2. Local thinking is both wanted and needed on the directions Vermont's future should take, and how desirable goals might be realized through public and private, state and local action.
3. The intent of the Act 250 planning program, when fully defined, requires a hard look at local (regional and municipal) plans to make sure that they both harmonize with state plans and supplement them with greater detail.
4. Task forces would do well to work closely with regional commissions to see that the complete Act 250 planning program - state and local - is successfully accomplished.
5. Local governments and the citizenry at large have a role - perhaps the key role - in implementing whatever plans are prepared through the Act 250 planning program.

---

\*Bill Schmidt of Brattleboro is the Executive Director of the Windham Regional Planning and Development Commission. He was chairman of the Vt. Association of Planning and Development Agencies for '68-'70. Currently he is chairman of the Vt. Travel Information Council's Highway District #2 Committee, vice-chairman of the Connecticut Valley Health Compact and chairman of the Brattleboro School Building Needs Committee. The views expressed in this article are his own and not necessarily those of the Vermont Natural Resources Council.



## Creative Localism Opportunities

Governor Davis once said: "Our objective is to give new vitality to local and regional governments, (to) bring more of the decision-making processes of government closer to the people." This is what "creative localism" is all about. As partners in the Act 250 planning program, task forces and regional planning commissions have a special opportunity to practice creative localism.

Creative localism for the task forces and regional planning commissions means recognition that:

1. Regional commissions and their municipal counterparts possess the best organized thinking of local citizens on local problems and issues and what's being done and not being done about them. Such thinking is found in regional and town plans, planning commission files and library shelves, and perhaps most important of all, in the host of people who to a greater or lesser extent have committed themselves on regional and town planning commissions to plan for the future of the area in which they live. Task force members, as knowledgeable and resourceful as they are, might find it useful to make specific requests of regional planning commissions. As a starter, say, a request could be made for a "position paper" on the major issues and problems facing the task force's district. Such a document would not only aid the task forces in completing their first major assignment with greater dispatch and efficiency, but the review might have some feed-back value for the regional commissions' planning programs and activities.
2. As the Act 250 planning program proceeds, the task forces for their part could represent to the regional planning commissions the emerging state goals, policies and interests with the understanding that regional and municipal plans may need to be amended to jell with proposed state plans.
3. Regional planning commissions could provide the task forces with staff support. Such support could involve...
  - ...clerical and administrative assistance in sending out meeting notices, taking minutes at meetings, etc.
  - ...research work on specific problems or questions.
  - ...the organization of task force/regional planning commission technical and citizens' advisory committees, committees of local people who could aid both groups and thereby bring more governmental "decision-making processes closer to the people."
  - ...the setting-up of special meetings, workshops and conferences on items on the task force's agenda; for example, a session on land use tax reform.
  - ...the provision of an educational arm for the task force's program; for example, the establishment of Act 250 planning program shelves in all town and school libraries and the formation of an Act 250 speakers bureau in which some task force members might participate from time to time.
  - ...coordination with the District Environmental Commission and Coordinator to gain their insights into the questions on the task force's desk.Part or all of the approximately \$32,000 available in the Act 250 planning program budget for the task forces could be given to regional planning commissions for such services.
4. Regional planning commissions with task force support could be the key local governmental body in giving local meaning and "workability" to the Act 250 capability and development and land use plans. Through the Act 250 planning program, hopefully not only regional and municipal plans but local land use controls (particularly zoning and subdivision regulations) would be recast in the Act 250 framework.

## Conclusion

In a letter to the task forces' chairmen outlining the task forces' role and responsibility, Governor Davis noted his commitment to the planning program set forth in Act 250. "Its success," he said, "depends on a genuine and meaningful dialogue between the people and my administration. The task forces are to provide the catalyst for this dialogue." Given strong cooperation and support by regional commissions the task forces can fulfill the task Governor Davis has given them.



## EPICGRAM

Two television programs and the first in a contemplated series of regional conferences on land use planning highlighted the December activities of the Council's Environmental Planning Information Center.

A one hour series of five videotaped television interviews was taped in Rutland and played on Channel 12 there during the week of December 20. The interview subjects were Mayor William Foley of Rutland, Selectman Edward Hemmenway of Rutland Town, State Senator Sanborn Partridge of Proctor, Erling Ohmland, business manager of the College of St. Joseph the Provider and Mary Jane Kennedy, a student at the College.

The interviews related to local and regional planning and environmental problems and some of the topics now being explored in the preparation of the Land Capability and Development Plan.

On December 28 an hour-long program on land use planning was broadcast on Vermont Educational Television. The program, co-produced by EPIC and Vermont ETV, including the showing of EPIC's slide-sound film "...So Goes Vermont" and a 25 minute panel discussion involving VNRC Chairman Peg Garland, Ben Partridge, chairman of the Environmental Board and Director of the Vermont Planning Office and three members of the Chittenden-Addison Act 250 planning task force; Fred Smith and Gordon Mills of Burlington and Senator Arthur Gibb of Middlebury.

EPIC and Lyndon State College co-sponsored a conference on the Act 250 plans on December 4. The day-long session, attended by more than eighty persons, explored four major topics of land use management as they relate to the Northeast Kingdom; agriculture, economic development, transportation and recreation. Presentations on these topics were made by John Simpson of Sutton, Doug Kitchel of Passumpsic, John Hooper of Brattleboro and Forrest Orr of Barre.

EPIC's public opinion survey, undertaken by the Becker Research Corporation of Boston, has been completed. A summary of the survey is being prepared and will be distributed next month.

Arthur Ristau

## HIGHWAY BOARD LIMITS ACCESS TO STATE HIGHWAYS

At its meeting October 26, the Vermont State Highway Board approved by unanimous vote the following policy which is quoted in full.

"It is the policy of the Highway Board to limit authorization for entrances and exits to the State Highway System with due consideration for the safety of the traveling public. In the implementation of this policy, permits for entrances and exits will be issued in substantial conformance with the current edition of 'Standards for Residential and Commercial Drives' and 'Standards for Development Roads' as prepared and published by the Department of Highways. Generally, only one access point will be authorized for a single property. Property owners subdividing for any purpose should provide for a collector facility leading to a controlled access or exit to the State Highway System. Costs of developing and installing traffic control facilities considered necessary and made a condition of the permit issued by the Department of Highways, shall be the responsibility of the individual requesting the access."

## VNRC TESTIFIES AT RECENT HEARINGS

Executive Director Seward Weber attended two state sponsored hearings in December to express Council views on Vermont's plan for the implementation of the National Clean Air Act of 1970 and the proposed regulation of pesticides used in the maintenance of rights-of-way.

Weber was generally approving of the implementation plan for air pollution prevention but pointed out the need for a greater commitment of funds and staff for enforcement.

He took issue with a number of points in the proposed pesticide regulations including the vagueness of some of the language which could lead to misinterpretations and enforcement difficulties, the lack of reference to the state's water quality regulations which control the discharge of pesticides into state waters and the waiver provision which does not stipulate conditions or provide guidelines for the Commissioner of Agriculture in granting exceptions to the regulations.

Both hearings were well attended and many comments and criticisms were offered. The Council will watch with interest to see if these hearings have an impact on the final versions of the regulations under consideration.



### IMPORTANT DATES

- January 14 & 15 The Sierra Club is sponsoring a conference on power at Johnson State College.
- 19 Vermont Forest Forum at the Bardwell Hotel in Rutland. Program at 7:15 P.M. will be a demonstration of the forest fire simulator. Dinner reservations available from Peter Hannah, UVM, Dept. of Forestry.
- 20 Public Hearing, State Board of Health on a variance on the air pollution regulations for Burlington Electric Light. 10:30 A.M. Ramada Inn.
- March 19 & 20 We're looking forward to the National Wildlife Federation's Annual Meeting.

N.B. The Senate Natural Resources Committee is meeting regularly at 8:15 A.M. during the session.

Also: Arthur Ristau is traveling all over the state with EPIC's new slide tape presentation entitled "...So Goes Vermont". If your group would like to see it, let us know as soon as possible. Call him at 229-9300 or 229-9496 (97 State St., Montpelier)

### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL - NOTICES TO BE MAILED

In an effort to spur efficiency and save money, the Council will mail 1972 membership dues renewal notices bulk rate the middle of January. These will be in window envelopes and will be clearly marked "VNRC Membership Renewal". So watch your mail and keep your checkbook handy. Better yet, tear out the form below and return it right now with your dues for the coming year. It will help save the Council money. Members not responding to renewal notices by March 1972 will be dropped from the membership roles.

Vermont Natural Resources Council  
97 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

IT'S TIME TO PAY YOUR DUES!  
IT'S TIME TO JOIN THE COUNCIL!

- [ ] Please renew my membership for 1972.  
[ ] I would like to join the Council.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

[ ] This is a new address

The following is the dues schedule:

- \$5.00 individual members
- 10.00 membership organizations
- 50.00 business organizations.

Please remember that we depend upon contributions over and above dues to support the many activities of the Council in behalf of Vermont's environment.

### A CLEAN NEW GAS

While browsing through the December issues of ENVIRONMENT we happened across an intriguing article about methane by Hinrich L. Bohn entitled "A Clean New Gas." The summary of the article serves its purpose well and is quoted in full.

"Organic wastes are potential sources of methane for fuel. Not only are these wastes a renewable energy source, their conversion into fuel reduces the problem of waste disposal. The energy contained in the carbon-hydrogen bond formed by solar energy is utilized rather than wasted. By maximizing the utility of our organic wastes, the amount to be disposed of can be minimized and the fuel produced can partially or fully offset the costs of waste disposal.

This system attempts to take into account the involvement of waste disposal in the nitrogen, phosphate, water, and carbon cycles. Food production can be increased and nitrogen and phosphate pollution can be simultaneously decreased by fertilizing soils rather than streams and lakes.

Converting our wastes into a convenient fuel provides some defense against the ominous specter of deficient energy in the future. Our solid organic wastes are a useful store of solar energy and are last year's solar energy—not that stored eons ago as coal, petroleum, and natural gas. Photosynthesis constantly builds carbon into energy-rich plant life. If this energy were channeled through man's environment, rather than dissipated, it would lessen our dependence upon irreplaceable fossil fuels, decrease the air pollution caused by the oxidation of both fossil fuels and organic wastes, and lessen the increased concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide and dust due to fossil-fuel combustion."