

VERMONT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY --- VERMONT COUNTRY ROADS, OR UNNEEDED AND COSTLY STATE HIGHWAYS?

Everyone of us knows of at least one Vermont town road in our area which, in the last few years, has been straightened, widened, and paved, its shade trees cut and its bordering stone walls bulldozed under, even though no one in town wanted the costly "improvement," and even though no one could see any traffic which required the demolition of the old road. The fault doesn't lie with our selectmen or our road commissioners who are doing the best job they can under the circumstances. The fault is an outmoded State statute which allocates an amount of State revenue to each town which must not only be used exclusively for highways, but also can only be used to "improve" roads to the specific construction standards imposed by State Highway Department. There is minimal discussion of whether or not the town needs the 24 foot wide, bulldozed, straightened high speed highway which is the State minimum. The result is only human; the selectmen see money "lost" if they don't spend it, even though what really may be needed (a wider bridge, a little work on a bad curve, or paving only the bad section of a hill road), would cost only one-tenth of the State's required "improvement." So the town accepts the State's gift, but on the State's conditions, and yet another beautiful Vermont town road, with its trees and walls and traditions, disappears forever. And to add insult to injury, the "improvement" spends Vermont taxpayers' dollars where the extravagant expenditure of public funds wasn't needed and, often, wasn't wanted.

We think, particularly now when Vermont thrift may become more of a national necessity than a Vermont tradition, that it's time to stop this waste.

What will be most effective are facts, and each of you can help:

(1) Send us photographs, before and after, of any substantial town road improvements that, in your opinion, had a deteriorating impact on the character of your town; (2) with the photographs, send a clear description of where and when the construction took place; (3) if you can -- and this is important -- see if you can find in the Town Clerk's office or District Highway office, or both, what the actual, not projected, traffic was on the road; how much the improvement cost; and if an actual safety or traffic problem existed. Also research what specific portions of the road, rather than the reconstructed stretch, could have been improved to solve the problem.

VERMONT COUNTRY ROADS (con't)

With your help, we will be able to show all Vermonters what is happening to country roads at an expense the people of the State can ill-afford. With gasoline in short supply there will be even less reason than before to continue improving country roads in Vermont.

TENTH VNRC ANNUAL MEETING

On Saturday, December first, about one hundred VNRC members gathered in Montpelier to conduct the 1973 Annual Meeting. The purpose of the yearly meeting is to give all members the opportunity to review and discuss Council policies and programs and to elect members to the Board of Directors.

Chairman Jonathan Brownell and Executive Director Seward Weber reported on the Council's activities and financial status. A "1973 Projects Report," summarizing principal activities was distributed to all attending the meeting. Project areas include: natural areas; environmental education; visual integrity; eastern wilderness; land preservation; land use planning and Act 250; highway construction and planning; population policy; air quality; conservation commissions; and the practice of environmental law in Vermont. All VNRC members will be mailed an annual report in January with membership renewal notices.

The Council has been hard pressed to raise enough funds to meet the expenses of carrying on its 1973 programs. Possible solutions were presented at the meeting, but the membership did not want the Council to curtail its present level of activity. During 1973 a Finance Committee chaired by board member Hugo Meyer was formed and has initiated new fund raising programs. This committee must find new sources of financial support immediately if the Council's activities are not to be sharply reduced.

Re-elected to the Board of Directors as members-at-large were: Judith M. Buechner, Pawlet; Deane C. Davis, Montpelier; A. John Holden, Jr., East Montpelier; and Leonard Wilson, Waitsfield. Elected to fill at-large vacancies were: Catherine Beattie, Danville and John Shuell, Peru. Elected as representatives of member organizations were: David Marvin, Johnson, of the Green Mountain Profile Committee and Bruce Nye, Monkton, of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers. Leaving the Board are Sylvia Ferry, Peg Garland and Edward Killian.

The meeting concluded with an after-luncheon speech by Martin L. Johnson, Secretary of Environmental Conservation, which will be reported upon in the January issue of the Report.

THE BOARD AND STAFF OF THE VNRC WISHES YOU A VERY
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

LOAD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The demand-oriented power system which we have today may be on its way out according to Richard deGrass, engineer and Deputy Commissioner of the Vermont Public Service Board. It won't happen tomorrow, said deGrasse, but it's coming faster than we thought. Already power companies in this country are experimenting with new systems to enable the consumer to limit his own power use and benefit from rate reductions.

In Rutland the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation has a pilot program underway where the consumer has agreed to allow the electric output in his home to be controlled by the power company in exchange for a reduced rate. The experiment, for the most part, is limited to the remote control of electric hot water heaters; however, some entire homes are operating under this system.

Although new to this country, the concept has been used in Europe and Australia with some success. Mr. deGrasse said that Switzerland has used a "ripple" system whereby individual appliances are controlled by the power company. In France, a red light system is used. When the consumer goes beyond his peak power consumption, the light goes on to warn him that he is over-extended and that his bill will be going up!

The purpose of the experiments in Rutland and other cities in America is to devise a system that will tailor the power supply to the needs of the consumer. Our present system has no relation to the consumer's lifestyle; it is designed to provide peak power whether or not the consumer needs it or wants it. In sum, it is an inefficient and expensive way to handle power.

Mr. deGrasse outlined the following steps which would lead to a load management system:

1. Experimenting with the one-way control system used in the Rutland program.
2. The designing and wiring of new homes to accommodate a sophisticated control system.
3. Computer programming by a consumer in his home on a daily basis to regulate and control his own power needs.

It is estimated that on a nationwide basis, step (1) would result in about a 5% total power saving. Step (2), however, would result in a 20% saving of power.

Currently the Vermont Public Service Board, the University of Vermont, Dartmouth College and the Central Vermont Public Service Corporation are working on a program to broaden the Rutland experiment. Application has been made to the National Science Foundation for a grant to undertake this project.

LEGISLATIVE LOG

The VER, as in the past, will publish monthly a log on legislation affecting the environment under consideration by the Vermont General Assembly.

Environmental legislation highlights of the 1973 General Assembly session included the passage of the Land Capability and Development Plan, the tax on speculative land sales, and the mandating of beverage container deposits.

Important bills still in committee include:

BILLS REMAINING IN HOUSE COMMITTEES

Natural Resources

- H-100 Designates certain areas as regulated flood hazard areas and regulates land use thereupon.
- H-156 Provides for designation and preservation of scenic roads.
- H-163 Appropriates money to UVM to study biogas or methane process of garbage disposal.
- H-275 Requires a permit for alterations to streams having a drainage area of five square miles or more.
- H-276 Changes names of Environmental Board and Dist. Commissions to Land Use Board and Dist. Land Use Commissions and clarifies definitions of development to eliminate any acreage requirements.
- H-282 Regulates development to control soil erosion.
- S-36 Permits the erection of small directional signs, for directional purposes only, at specified locations.

Appropriations

- S-99 Authorizes a plan for a comprehensive statewide system of management, storage, collection, and disposition of solid waste and would promote recycling and recovery of solid waste products.
- H-272 Would give Environmental Conservation Agency the authority to purchase undeveloped land.

Municipal Corporations

- H-281 Restricts buildings near highways and requires off-street parking in municipal planning.

Highways

- S-49 Establishes bicycle routes in the state.
- S-69 Provides for utilizing highway rights-of-way as utility corridors.

BILLS REMAINING IN SENATE COMMITTEES

Natural Resources

- S-23 Imposes litter levy on all containers and eliminates the requirement that all beverage containers be returnable.

Natural Resources (con't)

- S-28 Provides that recycling centers are in conformity with existing statutes regulating the disposal of rubbish, garbage and junked cars.
- S-98 Transfers registration and operational matters relating to snowmobiles and motorboats to Department of Fish and Game.
- S-101 Eliminates regulatory power of Commissioner of Public Safety over snowmobiles and eliminates permission requirement for private land use.
- S-102 Prohibits surface mining of copper in the state.
- H-150 Increases litter levy on beverage containers and extends date for ban on nonreturnable beverage containers (note: because this bill did not pass last session, the ban on non-returnable beverage containers went into effect in accordance with 1972 legislation).

Highways and Bridges

- S-18 Prohibits the highway board from purchasing rights-of-way for a four-lane highway on routes designated for construction of two lanes.

NEW BILLS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>
S-143	To provide that municipal zoning regulations may not distinguish between conventional homes and mobile homes.	Ogden
S-145	Provides for removal of Dept. of Fish and Game from Agency of Environmental Conservation.	Boylan
S-352	To provide for removal of vehicles from highway limits and public view, and provide that garages storing vehicles for more than 60 days abide by junkyard regulations.	Caracciola
H-355	To provide that construction and improvement of state highways be subject to Act 250 process.	McLeod
H-358	To provide that the state and its agencies may acquire land in municipalities only if municipalities approve of acquisition and land will continue to be taxed on basis of its fair market value.	Kinsey
H-363	To provide that interim zoning regulations may be effective immediately after public hearing and upon public notice.	Cleveland
H-371	Municipalities of less than 5,000 inhabitants will be exempt from requirements to provide sanitary land-fill or incineration as exclusive means of refuse disposal.	Vance
H-388	Provides for adjustment of penalties for persons not complying with provisions of Board of Health subdivision regulations.	Galli

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BOTTLE BAN

Seventy percent of Vermonters surveyed in a recent statewide poll support Vermont's Beverage Container Deposit Law or "Bottle Ban." The public opinion survey was conducted by students at Johnson State College enrolled in a course, "Major Issues in Vermont." Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed would like to see the law changed in some way -- 44% want a recycling program included; 25% want the law repealed; 24% want reusable bottles provided and 7% want to revert to the litter levy.

When asked what the objective of the bottle law is, 80% answered, "the elimination of bottles and cans as highway litter" and 20% responded, "the recovery of natural resources through recycling." 73% of the 450 people polled in all 14 counties feel the law is effective.

There was a 65% positive response to the question, "Do you believe there is an attempt by brewers to force repeal of the law by upsetting the consumers about increased costs?"

The greatest support for the law came from Washington County (90%), while in Lamoille County only 31% felt the ban was a good law.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS HIGHLIGHTS DURING NOVEMBER INCLUDED....

Woodstock - One of the pioneers of the Vermont conservation movement warned that the energy crisis here and nationwide is being used in an attempt to weaken and circumvent environmental control regulation. Richard Brett said, "The politicians haven't awakened to the fact that the public, even in times of an energy shortage, is willing to support a good human environment." Brett praised Environmental Conservation Secretary Martin L. Johnson for his efforts to maintain environmental standards despite intense pressure.

Montpelier - Vermont's Agency of Environmental Conservation has been given more than 2,000 acres of forest land through a Woodbury couple's generosity and a grant from the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. The Bureau's Land and Water Conservation Fund provided \$163,375 to pay for half the land and Hugo and Elizabeth Meyer donated the other half, which is valued at \$330,500. This gift-purchase will be under state management and care. It is comprised of 500 acres in Marshfield and 1,583 acres in Worcester.

Los Angeles - The Japanese having gobbled up huge chunks of Hawaiian real estate, are now tackling the U.S. mainland just as voraciously. Indeed, Richard C. King, executive director of the Los Angeles based Center for International Business, figures that Japanese real estate investments in the continental U.S. total about \$750 million, or some 75% of total Japanese investment here. It is evident that Japanese appetite for American real estate has just been whetted. In the past few weeks alone several substantial deals either have been closed or have reached the serious negotiation stage. Dollar devaluation and yen revaluation have made U.S. real estate dirt cheap for the Japanese. (Business Week, Nov. 10.)

PETERSON URGES ZERO POPULATION

The newly confirmed head of the federal Council on Environmental Quality said the United States should lead a worldwide drive to reach zero population growth as quickly as possible. Russell W. Peterson also urged a national effort for full employment, terming "ridiculous" the economic view that some unemployment is necessary.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

Looking for an appropriate present for a student, relative, friend or associate? Why not give him or her a membership for 1974 in the VNRC? A special student membership costs only \$5, individual member \$7.50, and a family membership \$10. All members will receive twelve issues of the Vermont Environmental Report, Vermont's only monthly environmental newsletter. Don't delay -- send your tax-deductible check to the Council today and a special letter announcing your gift will be sent to as many friends as you designate.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ENVIRONMENT

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The National Wildlife Federation has announced that applications are now being accepted for its 1974-75 program of ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION FELLOWSHIPS OF UP TO \$4,000 EACH. For application forms write: Executive Vice President, National Wildlife Federation, 1412 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Applications must be submitted before December 31, 1973.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTIONAL-PEACE CORPS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

During the past two years, since the inception of the Smithsonian Institution-Peace Corps Environmental Program, there has been a significant increase in the number of Peace Corps volunteers requested by developing countries for assignment to projects dealing with environmental problems. A large share of this increase has occurred in the fields of natural resource conservation and ecological research. Anyone interested in becoming an Environmental volunteer with the Peace Corps should contact Dr. James A. Sherburne of the Office of Ecology at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. 20560.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES OF INTEREST

LUDLOW REPORT

The effects of second home development on a Vermont community were recently assessed in a report prepared for the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning and Development Commission. Effects of Second Home Development on Ludlow, Vermont may be obtained by writing Edwin Johnson, S.W.C.R.P.&D.C., Community Center, Room 18, Springfield, Vermont 05156.

EASTERN OMNIBUS WILDERNESS BILL

The Senate Interior and Insular Affairs Committee has marked up Senate Bill 316 and will send it to the Senate Agricultural Committee, of which Senator Aiken is the ranking Republican member, for review and approval before reporting it to the full Senate. S-316 designates two Green Mountain National Forest areas for wilderness status; Bristol Cliffs, in the town of Bristol, and Lye Brook, in the towns of Manchester and Sunderland. The bill also provides for the study of areas believed to be suitable for inclusion in wilderness at a later date. Vermont conservationists have urged that the unroaded area in the Green Mountain National Forest including Wallingford Pond and Wilder and Willard Mountains in the towns of Wallingford and Mount Tabor should be designated for study. Anyone interested in either promoting or discouraging this move should write Senator Aiken at the earliest possible moment.

USFS ADDS 1 MILLION ACRES FOR WILDERNESS STUDY

The U.S. Forest Service has added 39 areas covering more than one million acres to its National Wilderness Preservation System study category, according to the Wildlife Management Institute. That brings the total national forest land now being studied for inclusion in the national wilderness system to 274 areas of more than 12 million acres.

--- The Council needs a four-drawer letter-size metal filing cabinet. If anyone has such an item in reasonably good condition and would like to donate it to the Council, we will arrange for delivery. Please call Seward Weber. ---

VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL
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