

# VERMONT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Published monthly by The Vermont Natural Resources Council, a non-profit citizens' conservation organization supported by membership dues and contributions. 26 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602 (802) 223-2328 Chairman, Jonathan Brownell, Executive Director, Seward Weber, Editor, Arthur Williams

June, 1974, Number 29

## SERIOUS EFFORT BY LAND USE COMMITTEE

Rather than adopt a State Land Use Plan this year, the 1974 Legislature created a land use study committee to review the original plan proposed by the Environmental Board and to make recommendations to next year's legislature. The membership of the committee includes State Representatives Kinsey (Craftsbury) serving as chairman, Cook (Fair Haven), Foster (Moretown) and Allard (St. Albans); State Senators Branon (Franklin-Grand Isle), Gibb (Addison), Partridge (Rutland) and Smith (Chittenden); Schuyler Jackson and Ronald Hagen of the Environmental Board; and Harry Cooley, Ferdinand Bongartz and Paul Daniels representing regional and local planning groups.

The committee is currently studying the proposed plan, and has passed its first resolution agreeing that both the State and local municipalities have a responsibility in land use planning. Contrary to newspaper accounts of the committee as an anti-plan group doomed to failure, committee member Schuyler Jackson is optimistic. "Clearly all the members of the committee are equally committed to producing a constructive and meaningful report with affirmative recommendations," he has stated. "It is gratifying to see 13 people with such a wide range of philosophical perspectives get down to the task at hand so quickly."

## HOW TO PROTECT BEAUTY?

Criteria 8 of Act 250 calls for the protection of natural beauty and aesthetics from undue adverse effects of developments. Last month the Environmental Board held its first hearing on proposed rules spelling out standards by which district environmental commissions can consider aesthetics. Many comments at the hearing presented opposition to land use regulations in general. There was also significant support for the regulations, however, including some developers and architects. Executive Director Seward Weber testified that the rules appeared to be overly subjective guidelines. "Guidelines do not have to be mandated or forced upon district commissions," he stated, "...but they should be written with a specificity that will be useful."

A second public hearing on the proposal will be held on Wednesday, June 26, 7:30 p.m. in the Pavilion Office Building auditorium.



## MOBILE HOMES IN VERMONT

A 1972 report on "Mobile Homes in Vermont," by Robert Sinclair and Terrance Fiske, of the University of Vermont, draws these conclusions: "Some town regulations governing mobile homes do not seem to be in the best long-run interest of the towns. As an example, many towns allow mobile homes if they comply with conventional housing zoning regulations and are sited on one or two acre lots. The resulting dispersal and density of housing is a luxury that Vermont may not be able to afford in the future. Siting mobile homes in parks where population density can be much higher would result in more intensive land use, greater tax revenues per acre and the possibility of a lower cost per service."

The report recommends more regulations against siting mobile homes on individually owned lots in rural areas, and suggests that towns should zone areas for mobile home parks in order to meet the housing requirements for those families who want and need this type of housing and at the same time preserve the beauty of the Vermont landscape and minimize the cost of providing services.

At the time of the study, mobile home sales were booming; mobile homes were 81 percent of housing starts in 1969. However, in the last few years sales have plummeted from a high of nearly 2,000 units in 1968 to 978 last year, and a projected 300 in 1974. According to Ray Pecor, of Ray's Mobile Homes, claiming 80 percent of the Vermont market, poor sales are due to the fact that prospective buyers cannot find space in mobile home parks or meet local zoning requirements. Nearly 190 Vermont towns have some form of zoning restriction and about 30 relegate mobile homes to parks. Although other dealers in the state support Pecor's contention, mobile home sales are down in nearly every state.

Pecor claims that new mobile home parks are not being built in Vermont because stringent local stipulations make it economically unfeasible for the owner to operate. Top rent for park space is about \$60.00 a month, not enough to carry well landscaped spacious parks with recreation facilities that are found in some states.

According to Pecor, because of the lack of park space or other available sites, young and older Vermonters (median age for mobile home household head is 52) are being forced to live in the city or town tenements. Ray Pecor and others feel that the mobile home does provide necessary low cost housing for Vermonters who have no other choice. All agree that there is a built-in prejudice against mobile homes stemming from the early migrant trailer days.

Can the mobile home be made more compatible with the Vermont environment at a reasonable cost? Several experimental Parks are being built in the State—one in Warren with a design grant from the Vermont Council on the Arts. The financial outcome of such environmentally compatible parks is uncertain at this time.



### PICNIC FOR TOWN CONSERVATION GROUPS

The Vermont Association of Conservation Commissions, established last year with the assistance of the VNRC, is sponsoring a picnic on Saturday, August 3, at the new Waterbury Green, beginning at noon.

The gathering will be for people interested to learn how town conservation commissions can be established and to discuss with legislators the possibilities for state enabling legislation for such commissions.

The picnic is open to all; bring your own lunch. For further information, contact Mary Miller, Waterbury Conservation Commission Chairman, at 244-8479.

### THE VERMONT BACKROAD

Northeast Environmental Design  
Woodstock, Vermont, May, 1974

The Vermont Backroad, A Guide for the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of its Scenic Quality, was prepared by Northeast Environmental Design of Woodstock and sponsored by the Ottauquechee Regional Planning and Development Commission through funding by the Woodstock Foundation and the Eva Gebhard-Gourgaud Foundation.

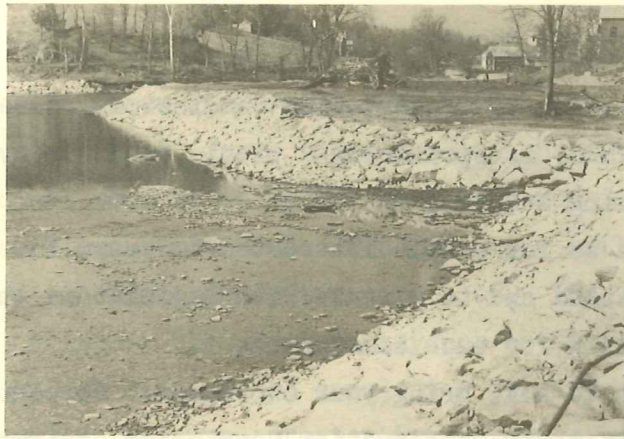
The book has been praised for its combination of practicality and concern for aesthetics and the state is considering paying for a project designed to demonstrate economical and aesthetic ways of maintaining Vermont's country roads.

The book has been written for the layman interested in the conservation of backroads and for those who may be directly involved in the road improvement work. It should be particularly useful to members of local planning commissions, town selectmen, town road commissioners and state highway engineers. Each aspect of design, construction and maintenance is thoroughly illustrated to clarify points made in the text. One is made aware of small, inexpensive but important things that can be done to enhance the scenic quality of a road such as concealing the protruding ends of culverts with stones to give them a natural look—protruding culverts abound in Vermont, or putting in timber guard rails on backroads rather than the standard metal variety.

Most important perhaps, the text points out a number of things that should not be done if the backroad is to be improved and still preserved—over-clearing of cover and trees and the destruction of stone walls are probably the most obvious.

Fortunately, Backroads has been distributed to all selectmen and town road commissioners. It is an excellent resource book on the care and preservation of rural roads and includes a guide to where technical assistance can be obtained in all aspects of road care plus an appendix listing vegetation common to roadsides in Vermont. The book is the best we have seen on the subject and is highly recommended reading for anyone concerned with the preservation of these assets.





(photo by Sewall)

#### BANK STABILIZATION ALONG THE MAD RIVER AT MORETOWN

Our May issue featured an editorial criticizing the appearance of the banks of the Mad River after stabilizing under the soil conservation program. We have received several letters defending this method of stabilization. Excerpts from a letter by Denning Miller, former Chairman of the State Water Resources Board are printed below:

#### FLOOD PROOFING VERMONT RIVERS

It is a pleasure to report that Vermont at long last has again a program to permanently flood-proof the banks of its streams. The last such occurred nearly 40 years ago during the Depression and its beneficial effects can still be observed locally along the Winooski River.

The primary current operation, although expensive, is remarkable, effective and long-lasting. It consists simply of rolling rock of sufficient size to resist the thrust of the high water over the banks which are being washed away. There are, of course, other means of stabilizing such banks, but this method is by far the most ecologically beneficial.

If rock in sufficient size and quantity is placed in this way, it provides in turn an excellent habitat for the insects, small forage fish and other aquatic life that is the base for the ecological life of the river.

It is true, of course, that freshly quarried rock may have a somewhat "naked" look, but this will disappear in a year or so, to blend naturally with the surroundings, as was the case of the blasted rock-faces along our interstate highways.

Credit for all this goes largely to the Soil Conservation Service and to our Federal Congress for making funds available on a reasonable cost-sharing basis. The public, in turn, can assist in restoring some of the scenic assets to the streams by planting fast-growing, water-loving trees, secure in the knowledge that their plantings will remain in place over the long-time future. In this instance, as in all those where we strive to work with nature, patience is not only a virtue, but a necessity, if secure, long-lasting results are to be obtained.



## RAIL SERVICE IN VERMONT UP FOR CONSIDERATION

The Interstate Commerce Commission will hold a public hearing on July 10, 11 and 12 in the American Legion Hall in White River Junction to listen to testimony regarding the impact of the Rail Reorganization Act of 1973 on transportation in Vermont. Both freight and passenger service will be under scrutiny. Individuals, corporations and associations should address themselves in particular to the "goals" as described in Section 206(a) of the Act. These include creation of a "financially self-sustaining rail service system" adequate for present and future needs, "high speed rail passenger service, promotion of competition" with other transportation services and maintenance of environmental standards.

The hearing will cover both Vermont and New Hampshire. Persons wishing to testify can avoid possible delays by making an appointment with Allan E. Kaulbach, Rail Services Planning Office, Interstate Commerce Commission, 1900 L Street, Washington, D. C. 20036 (Telephone: 202-254-3900). The hearing will be extended into the evening of July 10 and, depending on the pressure, one or both of the other evenings. For further information, contact Allan Kaulbach of the RSPO, the Vermont Association of Railroad Passengers (RFD #1, Windsor), the Vermont Natural Resources Council (223-2328), or the Vermont Public Service Board in Montpelier (828-2322).

## ENVIRONMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS

Washington—The U. S. Supreme Court rejected a proposed settlement of Vermont's three-year old suit against New York, International Paper Company, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency over pollution of Lake Champlain. The settlement was rejected because of the role projected for a special "master" to rule on future suits between the parties concerning pollution of the lake.

Montpelier—The Vermont Public Interest Research Group, Inc. (VPIRG) released information suggesting "an overwhelming liklihood" that a huge nuclear power plant will be built in the future at a site in Monroe, New Hampshire only twenty-five miles from Montpelier "as the crow (or radiation) flies."

VPIRG based its allegations on the following:

- 1) According to the President of New England Power, Russell Holden, the Monroe site is "the number one site in New Hampshire." (quote reported by Associated Press, 5/20/74).

- 2) New England Power Company has bought over 350 acres of land at the site and is now attempting to purchase the last needed parcel. So far, the company has spent over \$330,000 for the land. Extensive surveying has taken place on the site this spring.

The site in Monroe, N.H. is directly across the Connecticut River above the Comerford Dam from Barnet, Vermont, and is less than ten miles from St. Johnsbury, Vermont.



## AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS

The following publications are available from the VNRC. All are free.

Please request by title.

1. "Summary Fact Sheet: The Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 and the Vermont Water Quality Programs," prepared by the VNRC for the June 1974 Water Quality Workshop, 6 pp.
2. "A Citizen's Guide to Clean Water," U. S. EPA, June 1973, 95 pp.
3. "Municipal Conservation Commissions," by Justin Brande, June 1974, 6 pp.
4. "Revised Land Taxation—A Starting Point," by R. Gregory Belcher, 13 pp.
5. "Population Policy for Vermont," by David B. VanVleck with assistance from a VNRC study committee, October 1973, 16 pp.
6. "Protection of Natural Areas in Vermont," a report of the Vermont Cooperator (VNRC) in the New England Natural Areas Project, October 1973, 26 pp.
7. A Selection of Books Relating to the Environment. A listing of publishers or distributors of 124 environmentally related books, pamphlets and films. October 1973, 6 pp.
8. "Vermont's Land Use and Development Law," text of Act 250 and the Land Capability and Development Plan, 32 pp.
9. "Vermont's Land Use Plan and Act 250," State Planning Office, January 1974, 10 pp.
10. "Energy Conservation in the Home: It's Up to You." (Available in quantity from the Environmental Program, Bittersweet House, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, 05401).
11. "An Inquiry into Flood Plains, by Richard Brett, 10 pp.
12. "EQ—The Fifth Environmental Quality Index" (For 1974), National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D. C. (supply is limited).

## CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN WATER POLLUTION CONTROL

The recent statewide Water Quality Workshop, coordinated by the VNRC and attended by approximately 75 participants, explored the need for more effective public involvement in government decision-making.

State officials and involved citizens explained the four major state water quality programs—setting water quality standards and classifying streams, issuing permits to all dischargers into waterways, construction of local sewage treatment plants and adopting basin plans for every major river in the state. Each of these programs has specific provisions for the average citizen to participate.

Workshop participants expressed a sense of frustration with the existing public hearing process and stressed the need for public involvement early in the planning stages. The workshop identified the need for greater public education and the dissemination of summary information in non-technical language. As a result of the workshop, the VNRC and others will be considering further possibilities of organizing and assisting greater citizen participation in water pollution control.



REVISED—STATE COMPREHENSIVE  
OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

The Planning Division of the Agency of Environmental Conservation has published a rewritten and updated version of the 1968 Vermont State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Approval of the plan enables Vermont to qualify for Federal Land and Water Conservation Act funds. The plan has received high praise from the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and is considered one of the best produced thus far by any state.

Other aspects of the plan relating to environmental concerns will be published in future issues of the VER. Complete copies may be obtained by writing for SCORP 73, Planning Division, Agency of Environmental Conservation, Montpelier, Vt.  
Price: \$10.00.

The report outlines certain policy areas of special importance that are considered undetermined by the Agency of Environmental Conservation. Since policy will have to be declared in the near future in most of these areas, we have abbreviated them for your consideration:

- 1) Considering the recreational and scenic values of Lake Champlain, should any power plants be located on the lakeshore? Should industry be located there when other suitable sites are available?
- 2) The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation has proposed making the Connecticut River Valley a "New England Heritage" area. This could result in an influx of recreationists from metropolitan areas. Can the integrity of the rural environment be preserved if the proposal is effected?
- 3) Should the cost of public recreation facilities be met by fees other than user charges?
- 4) Should the state assume a greater responsibility for the provision and maintenance of hiking trails, or should it continue to be borne by private clubs. Note: State and Green Mt. Club are now working together on maintaining the Long Trail.
- 5) Who should pay for the establishment of non-motorized recreation trails if they occur on highway corridors or abandoned roads?
- 6) What should be the proper sequence for determining and meeting future skier needs through the establishment of additional ski areas or the expansion of existing one?

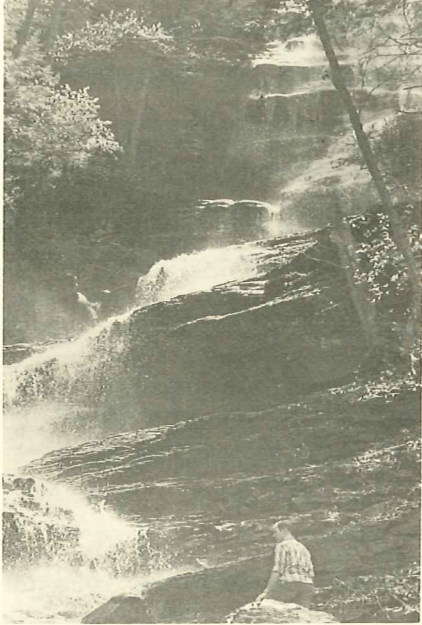
IT'S STILL RENEWAL TIME

Maybe it's Watergate or the high cost of living but VNRC membership renewals for 1974 are flowing in more slowly than at any previous time in recent memory. Usually by this time, our membership roles are at full strength but not this year. Won't you unearth the first-of-the-year renewal notice or the March reminder and send your dues and contribution in today? Your help is needed more than ever before to assist with the transportation project, the environmental issues leaflet series, the Vermont Tree Farm Program, the "Vermont Environmental Report," the up-dated membership brochure about to be printed, the Townscape project and the many other activities which keep the Council's small staff working overtime.



### LYE BROOK INCLUDED IN WILDERNESS BILL

With the passing of the Eastern Wilderness Bill by the Senate the end of May, attention is now directed towards the House which is beginning to consider the matter. Both versions of the Bill designate two areas within the Green Mountain National Forest for wilderness classification.



(Photo by Tyler Resch)

The VNRC has followed the eastern wilderness legislation closely for the last year and a half and has supported the concept of wilderness areas in the eastern two-thirds of the United States. Here in the accompanying photograph we see Congressman Mallary viewing a high cascading waterfall in one of the GMNF areas—Lye Brook. He was accompanied on a five mile hike through the area by U. S. Forest Ranger Norm Arsenault, Green Mt. National Forest Supervisor; Kent Mays and Peter Smith of Mount Holly, a member of the Board of Directors of the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

### TRANSFERABLE DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM

The VNRC-sponsored symposium on the concept of transferable development rights as it might be applied to land use planning and regulation will be held on Friday, June 21, in the Pavilion Auditorium in Montpelier, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Professor John J. Costonis, noted for the Chicago Plan employing transferable development rights, a panel of Vermont lawyers and planners will participate. There is a \$5.00 registration charge. To register, contact the VNRC.

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