

# VERMONT ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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May, 1975, Number 39

## STATE LAUNCHES DRIVE TO REMOVE BILLBOARDS

About 1300 off-premise signs and billboards will be coming down all across the state this year as part of a big push by the Vermont Highway Department.

Until recently a legal battle between the State of Vermont and the Federal Highway Administration has stalled the sign removal program. The State of Vermont has traditionally maintained that billboard advertising was a privilege and not a right. In its arguments before the Court, the state went further: it maintained that such a privilege could be terminated without compensation.

The Federal Highway Administration disagreed. Lawyers cited provisions from the Federal Highway Beautification Act of 1965. Under this act lobbyists for the billboard industry won a major concession. Even though the act called for removal of billboards, it also guaranteed compensation to billboard owners. States that refused to compensate billboard owners stood to lose 10% of their federal highway funds. In Vermont's case this was estimated at two and one-half million dollars a year.

In July, 1974, Judge Coffrin of the U. S. District Court for Vermont handed down his ruling. Vermont would have to pay the compensation.

Now the Vermont Highway Department has the sticky task of administering a statewide removal program. Not only must the department determine what signs qualify for compensation, there is also a new state law on the books. This law, the Tourist Information Services Act of 1968, prohibits off-premise advertising and substitutes in its place a network of official information centers, a series of guidebooks and a system of "Official Business Directional Signs."

Eugene Brush, Administrative Assistant for Outdoor Advertising, explained how the sign removal program will work. The first task is to establish the exact dimensions of rights-of-way on primary roads throughout the state. There are literally scores of illegal signs on these rights-of-way, and once these rights-of-way can be determined, these signs can be removed.

The next task will be the issuance of removal notices and a judgement of what billboards qualify for compensation. "There are hundreds of signs that are not compensable," remarked Brush. In order to qualify for compensation, billboards and signs must have been erected before the Tourist Information Services Act prohibited off-premise advertising. And they must have been legally maintained.

The highway department hopes that the removal program can be completed by December 31, 1975. An ambitious timetable? Yes, certainly, if you stop to consider that each of the 1300 billboards represents a possible law suit: this billboard is or is not in the right-of-way; is or is not "compensable;" is or is not worth what the department is willing to offer, minus depreciation.



Lodging



Food



Gasoline



Recreation

The Tourist Information Services Act of 1968 provided for an alternative to off-premise advertising. Part of this alternative was a uniform code of symbols that were both attractive and easy to identify. The adoption of these symbols has simplified communication and improved the visual landscape.

PARSONS AND WHITTEMORE PROPOSES 200 MILLION DOLLAR PULP MILL

Parsons and Whittemore, with corporate offices in New York City, has proposed construction of a 200 million dollar pulp mill facility somewhere along the Connecticut River, probably in the Claremont, New Hampshire area, but conceivably in Vermont. With unemployment this past March at 8.1% in New Hampshire the pulp mill proposal has attracted wide attention.

Parsons and Whittemore is an international corporation with holdings presently in Canada, Greece, Madagascar and Austria. It is privately owned and has assets estimated at more than 277 million dollars. It has constructed pulp and paper operations in 27 countries, but none as yet in the United States.

In 1968, Parsons and Whittemore proposed a pulp mill in New Mexico. There were questions of water supply and air quality standards. The Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce voted 2-1 against the proposal and the mill was never built.

In 1969, Parsons and Whittemore tried again, this time in Colorado's depressed Costilla County in the southern part of the state. The Colorado Water Pollution Control Commission raised questions about the adequacy of water supplies and the mill never got built.

These are some of the dimensions of the current proposal for the Connecticut River: a mill occupying 100,000 square feet of space on a site of 250-1000 acres; a total operation capable of handling 400,000 cords of wood per year drawn from a radius of 50 miles, capable of running 350 days a year, 24 hours a day and capable of producing 600 tons per day of bleached, air-dried pulp using the "Kraft sulfate process." Eighty per cent of this output would be exported to supply the European fine paper market. No recycled paper would be used or accepted.

These are some of the details of financing and employment provided by the company. The proposed mill at a cost of 200 million dollars would be entirely financed by the company itself. (Shares are not available

to the public.) Construction would take two years. During this period 250-1000 workers would be employed. After construction, Parsons and Whittemore would spend an estimated seven million dollars annually on the company payroll. At least 450 local jobs would be provided. An additional 500-1000 workers would find employment indirectly as a result of contracts the company would make with independent logging and trucking companies in Vermont and New Hampshire.

VNRC is closely following the Parsons and Whittemore project. The effect of such a mill on the Connecticut Valley region might be constructive: it could provide employment; it could put money into the economy; it could lead to a more active use of our woodland resources; it could encourage the preservation of forest lands. There are literally thousands of acres of forest land in Vermont and New Hampshire that could be improved through careful timber harvesting and management.

At the same time it is necessary to ask tough questions, questions concerning the social and environmental impact of this pulp mill, questions that need to be answered, that VNRC will insist are answered before a project of such magnitude can be found to be acceptable.

These are some of the leading questions:

(1) Will a pulp mill on the Connecticut River lead to a degradation of air and water quality standards? What assurances can Parsons and Whittemore make that this new pulp mill will be any less offensive than a similar plant in New Brunswick where, reportedly, the stench can be detected as far as 30 miles away? Will Parsons and Whittemore be willing to defer construction until after federal EPA guidelines for effluent from Kraft pulping mills have been promulgated this coming fall?

(2) The State of Vermont alone produces some 400 tons of paper a week suitable for recycling. Could Parsons and Whittemore redesign its plant to accommodate recycled material?

(3) The proposed pulp mill will generate a demand for 400,000 cords of wood. Careful forest management practices will, therefore, be essential. Will Parsons and Whittemore agree to include in its agreement with loggers and landowners a strict provision for enlightened forest management practices?

(4) Tax money from the pulp mill will go to one town, the town which provides the pulp mill site. This means that neighboring towns will provide essential services (roads, schools, police) without just compensation. Will Parsons and Whittemore be willing to work out a formula for more equal distribution of taxes among the several affected towns of the region?

(5) A 200 million dollar project that will use 400,000 cords of wood annually is a huge commitment of our forest resources to one specific enterprise, the need to supply an export market with high quality paper. Should the Parsons and Whittemore proposal be integrated with a more comprehensive plan for the use of timber resources that would include wood as a fuel, wood as a possible source of electric power generation, wood to supply domestic paper needs.

(6) Should we examine alternatives that may be open to us in the Connecticut Valley for developing our forest resources? Should we consider proposals for a state-run timber and pulp cooperative with profits remaining in the region; should we ask local business people to develop proposals; is it prudent to permit a remote international corporation to develop these resources to supply a foreign market?

These are searching questions, not easily answered. We shall be able to test these questions seriously whenever Parsons and Whittemore discloses its choice or choices of site. VNRC has joined the Connecticut River Watershed Council and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in asking the Northeast Regional EPA Administrator in Boston to undertake an environmental impact statement for the proposed mill. VNRC, in concert with the Forest Society and the Watershed Council will urge Dartmouth College President John

Kemeny to commit the interdisciplinary resources of the College to a study of the social and economic impacts of the Parsons and Whittemore project.

VNRC asks its members to become engaged in the study of the pulp mill proposal. Comments, suggestions and help from members are urgently solicited. (A fact sheet on the Parsons and Whittemore Pulp, developed by students from the "Environmental Studies 50" class at Dartmouth College, is available to members from VNRC.)

The Valley News of West Lebanon, New Hampshire has reprinted and is distributing a series of articles on the Parsons and Whittemore pulp mill that appeared during April. VNRC has mailed copies of this reprint to members who live in the Connecticut River Valley. We would be happy to respond to requests from other members who might wish to obtain a copy of this Valley News series.

#### VNRC PAYS ITS RESPECTS TO FRED MOLD

VNRC bids farewell to an old friend and past board member in the death of Frederick H. Mold on March 6th.

Since 1948, Fred Mold was curator of the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury. His achievement and influence in that position were enormous.

He took a musty, disregarded building on Main Street in St. Johnsbury and turned it into a museum humming with life. He took a large, valuable, but chaotic collection of stuffed animals and cultural artifacts, organized these materials and displayed them to advantage. He brought elementary students into the museum. A generation of kids had their curiosity provoked by his teaching and enthusiasm.

VNRC members will perhaps remember his part in fighting to save Victory Bog, one of the few pieces of real wilderness left in this state.

(A "Fred Mold Memorial Fund" has been established to support the work of the Fairbanks Museum. Contributions are being accepted at the Fairbanks Museum, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, 05819.)

LEGISLATIVE LOG

STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY-IMPORTANT BILLS WHICH SAW ACTION AS  
OF APRIL 30, 1975 IN THE 1975 SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Bill No.	Relating to:	Amend- ment Pro- posed	House Action	Senate Action	In Con- fer- ence Comm.	Signed by Gov.
H. 22	Merging of highway and general fund	X	rejected			
H. 89	Exempting conservation organizations from property transfer tax	X	passed	passed	X	
H. 96	Planning of bicycle routes	X	passed	passed		X
H. 127	Legislative approval of nuclear power plants	X	passed	passed		X
H. 134	Tax reductions on undeveloped land	X				
H. 139	Amendments concerning classification and aid for town roads	X	passed	passed	X	
H. 163	Scenic roads	X				
H. 184	Creating an agency of transportation	X	passed	passed		X
H. 228	Banning disposable bottles and flip- top cans	X	passed	passed		X
H. 276	Access to public records and documents	X	passed			
H. 339	Designating a state office to apply for federal funds for energy exploration		passed			
H. 356	Requiring economic impact statements for environmental laws	X				
H. 383	Land Use Plan	X				
H. 402	Requiring statewide uniform appraisals for property taxation	X	passed			
H. 407	Establishing a department of energy planning	X	passed			
S. 57	Requiring legislative approval for four- land limited access roads			passed		
S. 66	Tightening state control over stream alterations	X		passed		
S. 74	Creating a joint energy committee	X		passed		
JRH 25	Creating a water pollution study committee	X	passed			

Environmentally-significant bills which did not see action this year,  
but will remain in committee for possible action next year, are de-  
scribed in the February, March and April issues of the VER.

## HIGHLIGHTS: 1975 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Further Nuclear Plant Construction: The most significant environmental action taken by the 1975 session was enactment of H. 127, a bill that will require approval by the General Assembly for further nuclear power plant construction in Vermont.

Land Use Planning Legislation: Land use legislation failed again to emerge in this session. Three separate plans were submitted as bills. One plan was developed during the summer of 1974 by a Land Use Study Committee; a second was drafted by Henry Carse, Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee; a third and "strongest" plan was one drafted for Governor Salmon by the State Planning Office.

The fate of land use legislation can best be described as a "failure of will." There were strong sentiments on both sides. Opponents attacked the "regulatory" aspects of all three proposals. Supporters called for adoption of a land use plan that would give the state the power to act if local governments failed to work out their own plans within a specified length of time. Governor Salmon ultimately took the position that no land use plan was better to the passage of a "weak" plan this year.

Amendments to the "Bottle Bill:" House Bill 228, introduced by Rep. Samuel Lloyd, calls for amendments to Vermont's container deposit legislation. These amendments would ban disposable bottles and flip-top cans. Supporters of the "Lloyd amendments" argued that their adoption would reduce solid waste and lead to a savings of natural resources and energy. Opponents claimed that business would suffer and the sales tax revenue might decline.

The amendments ultimately passed in both houses but not before there had been a major fight in the Vermont Senate including a vote to relieve Sen. Fred Westphal's Finance Committee of the bill. In the final version, the amendments are scheduled to take effect, not in 1975, but in 1976. This was a compromise and it gives opponents another legislative session in which to rally their forces.

"Economic Impact" Statements: Critics of Act 250 and the bottle deposit law backed an anti-environmental bill (H. 356) that would have required "economic impact" statements of any proposed environmental laws or regulations. Rep. Joe Steventon led the move to "gut" this bill and send it back to committee.

State Agency of Transportation: House Bill 184 to create a State Agency of Transportation passed both houses and has been signed by Governor Salmon. The Governor attached great importance to this legislation. It will merge the highway department with authorities that regulate air, water and rail travel in Vermont.

Energy Planning Agency: Another legislative item high on the list of Governor Salmon's priorities, (H-407) a bill to establish an energy planning agency, was in the Senate Energy Committee at adjournment. It will be considered again next year.

Access to Public Documents: House Bill 276 that would ensure the public right of access to official documents passed the House but bogged down in the Senate. Opponents of this measure included the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. The League claimed it would increase the problems of administering local government.

Open Space and Property Tax Reduction: Several bills were introduced providing for the reduction of property taxes on undeveloped land. Such measures would create economic incentives for landowners to hold onto their land rather than selling it or subdividing it. These bills are still resting in committee but some form of revised land taxation is expected to be a high priority in next year's General Assembly.

## FOOD CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN POULTNEY

A consumer group with headquarters in Danby, Vermont, the Consumer Association for the Betterment of Living (CABOL), will hold its first "Consumer Forum" on June 20, 21 and 22 at Green Mt. College in Poultney, Vermont. The major focus of the conference will be the important role of food in determining the mental and physical health of children.

SUMMER -- 1975 -- ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- (1) Keewaydin Environmental Center, "U. S. Forestry Course," May 23-25. Contact: Abbott T. Fenn, 40 Cushing Street, Ashburnham, MA, 01430.
- (2) Green Mountain Audubon Nature Center, "Mini Workshops on Birds, Spring Flowers, Wild Foods, Ferns," daily May 10 - September 13. Contact: Green Mt. Audubon Nature Center, P. O. Box 68, Huntington, VT, 05462, (802) 434-3068. Fee: \$7.50.
- (3) Center for Northern Studies, "The Polar Environment," June 2-21. Contact: Peter Marchand, Center for Northern Studies, Wolcott, VT, 05680, (802) 888-4331. Fee: \$480.
- (4) Lake Dunmore School for Trip Leaders, June 14-21. Contact: Abbott T. Fenn, 40 Cushing Street, Ashburnham, MA, 01430, (617) 827-5106. Fee: \$90.
- (5) Vermont Camping Association and The Conservation Committee of the New England Camping Association, "Vermont Ecology Course for Camp Counselors," June 14-20. Contact: Mrs. Charles S. Davies, Camp Betsey Cox, Pittsford, VT, 05763, (802) 483-6623. Fee: \$85.
- (6) Appalachian Mountain Club, "Workshop on Mt. Leadership and Ecology," June 13-15, Pinkham Notch Hut to Madison Springs Hut, White Mts. to Presidential Range, New Hampshire. Contact: Nelson Obos, AMC, 5 Joy Street, Boston, MA, 02108. Fee: \$40.
- (7) Johnson State College, "Environmental Education," June 23 - July 3, (Four-credit course). Contact: Dr. Fred Stahuber, Johnson State College, Johnson, VT, 05656. Fee: Vermont residents: \$120; Out-of-state: \$180.
- (8) Lyndon State College, "Summer Program in Environmental Sciences," July 7 - August 5. Contact: Dr. Don H. Miller, Chairman, Science Department, Lyndon State College, Lyndonville, VT, 05851. Fee: Vermont residents: \$30/credit; Out-of-state: \$41/credit.
- (9) Vermont Bicycle Touring, "VBT Bike Repair Clinic," July 20-25. Contact: John S. Freidin, VBT, RD #2, Bristol, VT, 05443, (802) 388-4263. Fee: \$137.
- (10) Vermont Institute of Natural Science, "Third Annual Conference on Vermont Birds," Castleton State College, June 14-15. Contact: Vermont Institute of Natural Science, Woodstock, VT, 05091. Fee: \$25.
- (11) Castleton State College, "Traveling the Vermont Outdoors," June 16-27. Contact: Registrar, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT, 05735.
- (12) Appalachian Mt. Club, "Mountain Leadership Workshop," Presidential Range, New Hampshire, June 18-22. Contact: Nelson Obos, AMC, 5 Joy Street, Boston, MA, 02108. Fee: \$85.
- (13) University of Vermont, "Landscapes of Vermont: An Environmental Analysis," June 16-27, (for middle and secondary school teachers). Contact: Miss Noel Ring, Environmental Education Project, Geography Department, UVM, Burlington, VT, 05401.
- (14) University of Vermont, In-service Workshop, "A Field Approach to the Study of the Environment," June 23 - August 7, (Monday and Thursday at 4:00 p.m.). Contact: Sidney I. DuPont, Principal, Deerfield Valley Elem. School, Wilmington, VT, 05363, (802) 464-5177. Fee: Vermont residents: \$35/credit; Out-of-state: \$48/credit, (Three-credit course).
- (15) University of Vermont, Summer Session, College of Education and Social Services, "Science and Its Relationship to Environmental Education," June 23 - July 4, 8:00-12:30. Contact: UVM Summer Session Office, Burlington, VT, 05401. Fee: \$107.
- (16) Institute of Natural and Environmental Resources, University of New Hampshire, "The Environments of New Hampshire," June 23 - August 15. Eight-week summer program for students, teachers, etc. interested in managing environmental impact. Contact: John E. Carroll, INER, James Hall 221, UNH, Durham, NH, 03824, (603) 862-1020. Fee: New Hampshire residents: \$335; Out-of-state: \$390.

### WOODCUTTING OFF STATE LANDS BECOMES POPULAR

Benjamin Hoffman, Chief of State Land Management, says that there are over 600,000 cords of "junk wood" on 200,000 acres of state-owned land. That's a lot of wood and it has been available for \$1.00 a cord to anyone with the gumption to go in, cut it, and carry it out. As short as two years ago Hoffman says there were hardly any interested takers. "We couldn't sell permits on state land. No one was interested. We sold to about five or six people in a year."

Then came the energy crisis. A \$1.00 a cord began to look pretty good. The situation began to change. There were several thousand inquiries. In the period from November 1973 to June 1974 the Forests and Parks Department sold fuel wood permits at a \$1.00 a cord for 2100 cords of wood. In the more recent period, from June 1974 to February 1975 the state sold permits for 3912 cords of wood.

Last November, there was a subtle change in policy. Forests and Parks stopped encouraging people to go into the woods for that single cord or two. As Hoffman explained, "The first thing that went was the wood near the road." It was comparatively easy for the guy who wanted a single cord of wood to get it out and loaded into a pickup truck, or even into the trunk of his car, because it was available near the road. Now that the easy wood has been cut it's more important to go in with a crew and with the right equipment.

Last November, the Forests and Parks Department sought to establish a minimum of 25 cords for each permit. In April the price per cord rose to \$2.00. This spring the Department has relented somewhat on its 25 cord minimum. You can still go in for five cords in some places but the Department is encouraging people who agree to purchase 25 or 50 cords at a time.

Since the Forests and Parks Department has a limited staff of people to supervise the cutting of wood on state lands it is encouraging the work of community action agencies throughout the state. Several of these agencies have become involved in organizing teams to cut firewood and in assuring firewood supplies to low-income families or disabled individuals.

This would seem a logical approach to getting junk wood out of the forests because you really need at least three or four people cutting, bucking, toting, hauling and stacking, and you need the right equipment; the saws, a tractor, a four-wheel drive vehicle, or even a team of horses in more difficult terrain.

### LATE NOTE ON PARSONS & WHITTEMORE PROPOSAL

On May 27 at 7:30 p.m. at the Claremont, New Hampshire Senior High School a group of Dartmouth students and faculty will present the results of a study of the social, economic and environmental impact of the mill on several locations in the Upper Connecticut River Valley.

### VNRC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Enclosed are my dues of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for 1975  
VNRC membership. ( ) New ( ) Renewal

Student	5.00	Non-profit Org.	15.00
Individual	7.50	Associate	25.00
Family	10.00	Business	50.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Please accept my additional contribution  
of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for VNRC projects.

The following persons would be interested in learning of the Council's activities. (Please print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

You may use my name: ( ) Yes ( ) No

## GREEN MOUNTAIN POWER IS TESTING NEW RATE DESIGNS

The Green Mountain Power Corporation (GMP) has launched a \$275,000, federally-supported project to test experimental rate designs. One hundred twenty customer-volunteers are assisting the Burlington-based electric company in the first phase of the project.

In "Phase One" these volunteers will be "guinea pigs" for six different experimental rate designs. GMP wants to find out what incentives work in reducing consumer demand for power.

Dr. William Beardsley is administering the rate design project for GMP. He explained that only two of the six experimental designs are currently being tested with meter readings to be taken starting May 1. These two designs are referred to in power company language as the "Off-Peak rate Rate" design and the "Interruptable Rate" design.

Volunteers who are testing the "Off-Peak Rate" design will be billed according to two different rates. One rate will apply to the electricity they use during heavy or peak periods; another rate will apply to the electricity they consume during light or off-peak periods. GMP has installed a two-dial watt-hour meter in the homes of volunteers. This enables them to monitor their use of electricity in both categories.

Volunteers who are testing the "Interruptable Rate" design agree to have electric

service to certain appliances suspended or interrupted at heavy or peak periods. Hot water heaters can be temporarily shut off without impairing their effectiveness. Customers who agree to this kind of interruption of service may eventually qualify for lower rates.

"Phase Two" of the rate design project will begin this fall. It will include more volunteers, not just single homes, but small communities, like housing developments.

Beardsley was optimistic about some of the newer equipment that will be introduced this summer. One innovation will involve the substitution of hot water storage units for conventional hot water heating systems.

Another innovation is the "Ripple System" that has been employed effectively in Switzerland. Use of the "Ripple System" permits electric companies to temporarily suspend electric power to certain heavy appliances simply by throwing a signal from a central control point. Such a system would give remote control to electric companies; it would also give them enormous flexibility in making day-by-day and hour-by-hour adjustments in response to prevailing conditions of supply and to consumer demand for power.

Beardsley answered the question of why energy conservation methods have not been previously introduced by saying: "Our rates have been cheap enough in the past. They just simply didn't justify the cost of the equipment until now."

**VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL  
26 STATE STREET  
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