

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, Nathaniel Frothingham

September, 1975, Number 43

VNRC WILL OPPOSE PARSONS AND WHITTEMORE.... UNLESS

The Vermont Natural Resources Council will oppose construction of a \$200 million pulp mill on the Connecticut River if the Parsons and Whittemore (P&W) Company fails to meet exacting pollution control standards.

At its quarterly meeting August 26, the VNRC Board of Directors adopted a resolution calling on P&W to employ the "best available technology" in controlling pollution at the proposed plant. (A similar resolution has been adopted recently by the Conservation Society of Southern Vermont.) The VNRC Board of Directors stated that it would not be satisfied if the mill merely complies with current state and federal standards for air and water pollution. These standards have not kept pace with technological advances in pollution control equipment. Studies of pulp mills similar to the one P&W is proposing indicate that pollutants can be held to levels far below those currently permitted under Vermont, New Hampshire and federal law.

John McGlennon, New England's top official at the Environmental Protection Agency in Boston appears to confirm the logic of the VNRC position. In a recent statement he is quoted as saying that P&W would have to spend at least 10% of the plant's \$200 million cost on pollution control devices, and he added: "Any paper plant that has been built and is in operation in the country can be improved on. The one Parsons and Whittemore proposed should be an improvement over any of them."

In a related development, the National Wildlife Federation recently made a special conservation award to the Gulf States Paper Corporation. Gulf States operates Alabama's oldest pulp and paper mill on the Black Warrior River in Tuscaloosa. In 1965, the State of Alabama tightened up its pollution

control laws. Gulf States had to meet the new standards. It not only met these new standards; it exceeded them. Gulf States constructed a \$7.6 million three-stage treatment system that is so efficient that the plant's effluent has already exceeded goals set by the EPA to be achieved in 1983.

In announcing the conservation award to Gulf States, Walter L. Mims, President of the Wildlife Federation, made this comment: "Conservationists have criticized industry for many years for degrading our environment so it is only fair that when a company makes this kind of clean-up effort and gets these results, we should give it some recognition. We hope others will follow this example."



INVITATIONS WILL BE GOING OUT TO MEMBERS

Invitations to the Vermont Conservation Banquet on November 1st will be going out to VNRC members the last week in September. The banquet will begin at 6:00 p.m. at the Woodstock Inn with a cash bar; dinner will follow. Guest speaker at the event will be Representative Morris K. Udall (D. Arizona). Proceeds from the banquet will benefit the VNRC Educational Fund.

Vermont Conservation Banquet
Saturday, November 1, 1975; 6:00pm
Woodstock Inn, Woodstock, Vermont

THE BLACK RIVER POWER PROJECT: SPRINGFIELD
PIONEERS A CRITICAL TEST OF STATE LAW

In January, 1975, Selectmen of the Town of Springfield announced their intention of forming a municipal power company for the purpose of harnessing energy from a string of dams along the Black River.

What gives this project signal importance is that it will offer the first test of a body of law that has been on the books since 1947. These laws permit a municipality to generate, buy and sell electricity. In addition, these laws permit a municipality, such as Springfield, to purchase utility company plant and property and to condemn property in a neighboring town.

There is a lot of talk in the air about finding cheaper sources of power. People are talking about decentralization. Municipal power companies offer cheaper rates because they don't have to pay stockholders. There is activity in Swanton, Highgate, St. Albans Town and Village to consider expanding municipal power resources in northwestern Vermont. In short, many communities around the state are watching what happens in Springfield as a test of an idea that may have important repercussions.

This is the scope of the proposed project in Springfield.

It would involve the construction and rehabilitation of five existing small dams, the construction of two new small dams, the installation of a 4,000 KWH generating unit, and a major element of the project, the construction of a dam, powerhouse and reservoir at Hawks Mountain in the Town of Cavendish. Construction of the Hawks Mountain unit will require purchase of approximately 500 acres of developed and undeveloped land, relocation of residents in the affected area, and the relocation of 5.5 miles of State Highway 131 which will be covered by water from the reservoir.

The planning, financing and construction of any large-scale electric project takes a long time. The Black River Project is estimated to cost \$57,890,000. It will be financed by the sale of revenue bonds. These bonds do not pledge the credit of the

Town of Springfield. The project will involve a major environmental and social impact. There will be applications to federal and state authorities, there will be public hearings, there will be voter ratification and the inevitable litigation proceedings.

Springfield Selectmen began this lengthy process with private discussions in July, 1974. R. W. Beck and Associates was engaged to conduct an engineering study of the Black River. The Springfield plan calls for commencement of service to customers no later than January 1, 1981, six and one-half years after the project was initiated.

These are the major legal steps that must be completed before a municipality can offer service to customers.

The Town of Springfield has already taken the following steps:

(1) Springfield has filed for a "preliminary permit" with the Federal Power Commission.

The Town Manager of Springfield engaged an engineering study by R. W. Beck in July, 1974. In January, 1975 Beck recommended that the Town proceed with the Black River Project. The Town filed for preliminary permit on January 24, 1975 with the Federal Power Commission (FPC), a step that protected the Town's water rights on the Black River.

(2) Springfield voters ratified the Black River Project.

On March 4, 1975, voters in Springfield approved the Black River Project. The law requires a vote of at least 30% of the registered voters. Of this 30%, three-fifths, or 60%, must vote affirmatively.

(3) Springfield has notified Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS) of its desire to purchase plant and property within the Town.

After ratification by the voters, Springfield had 30 days in which to notify CVPS of its desire to purchase plant and property.

CVPS has replied. They have indicated no desire to sell their plant and property. A CVPS spokesman complained about the

THE BLACK RIVER POWER PROJECT (Continued)

Springfield letter of application to purchase plant and property. He said that it was "very, very broad," that it was "legally insufficient" and that the Springfield Selectmen failed to identify what exactly they wanted to take.

The spokesman further stated: "We don't want to lose part of our system. So we're availing ourselves of our legal rights. When they're taking our property, we're not willing."

The 1974 General Assembly passed H. 379. It became law without Governor Salmon's signature. H. 379 suspends the authority of the Town of Springfield to institute or continue condemnation proceedings in a neighboring town. This suspension is presently in effect, and remains in effect until March 1, 1976. In the meantime, H. 379 sets up a special legislative committee to study "inter-municipal relationships as they may be affected by the exercise of eminent domain." H. 379 was passed in response to an outcry from residents in Cavendish where the waters from the Black River Project would flood 500 acres of land.

These are the steps that remain to be taken by the Town of Springfield.

(1) If the utility, in this case CVPS, refuses to agree to the sale of its plant and property, the Town of Springfield may apply to the Public Service Board to arbitrate a price.

Since CVPS has indicated its dissatisfaction with the Springfield offer to purchase, it may be assumed that Springfield will ask the Public Service Board to rule on the question of price. The Public Service Board's ruling on price may be appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court.

(2) Springfield must obtain a formal license from the Federal Power Commission (FPC).

The Beck Report recommended that Springfield apply for a formal FPC license no later than October, 1976. Springfield needs this license before it can move ahead

on the development of the "water" part of its project. This licensing procedure requires Springfield to present an "Environmental Analysis." If the FPC asks for it, Springfield could be required to submit a draft "Environmental Impact Statement."

The licensing proceedings provide an opportunity for participation by interested public agencies and departments, including the State Water Resources Board and the Army Corps of Engineers. The Vermont State's Attorney's Office has already "entered an appearance" indicating its intention to be a party to these licensing proceedings.

(3) Springfield must apply for a "Certificate of Public Good."

Before site preparation and construction begins, Springfield must apply to the Public Service Board for a "certificate of public good." The PSB will grant a certificate of public good only after public hearings in Windsor County. These hearings provide another opportunity for state agencies and departments as well as the general public to participate.

Springfield plans to begin construction of the Black River Project in April, 1979, and to complete construction by December, 1980. Springfield plans to inaugurate service to its customers no later than January 1, 1981.

CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR VNRC BOARD NOMINATIONS

Jonathan Brownell has asked the Council's membership for nominations to fill seven vacancies on the Board of Directors. These vacancies will be voted on at the annual meeting in December. Brownell has taken the unusual step of deputizing the Executive Committee of the Board to serve as the Nominating Committee for 1975. Brownell wants the Executive Committee to make a thorough review of the nominating process. He wants candidates for the Board to understand the role they will be asked to play. Board members are responsible for interpreting the Council's programs to prospective members, for guiding the work of the Council and for deciding the Council's position on environmental issues.

TASK FORCE ON "WOOD AS A SOURCE OF ENERGY"
ISSUES REPORT

A report by the "Governor's Task Force on Wood as a Source of Energy" has stirred new interest across the state in the management of Vermont's timberlands and the possibilities of using wood as a source of energy.

The 59-page report, presented to Governor Salmon on August 14 by Task Force Chairman Sam Lloyd of Weston, concludes that the development of a large-scale wood industry could provide up to 25% of Vermont's power and home-heating fuel requirements by 1985. The report further finds that if proper tree-harvesting practices are employed the use of wood as an energy source could have a beneficial impact on the quality of Vermont's woodlands.

The new optimism about Vermont's forest resources rests to a large extent on the emergence of a new wood procurement technology known as "whole-tree harvesting." This new technology employs huge cutters, forwarders and chipping machines that can clearcut, stripcut or selectively cut large areas of forest in a short time.

The chipping machine is the key element of this new enterprise. This is how the report describes it. "Operated by one man, and costing from \$60,000 to \$100,000, the chipper is capable of converting a full-size tree with branches, bark, leaves and all into chips in approximately 30 seconds or less. Development of these devices has achieved highly significant gains in cost reduction and productivity. Material handling costs are reduced up to 50 percent, and the ability to utilize low-grade whole trees has resulted in gains from 50 percent to 100 percent in wood fiber yields."

This new technology is far more efficient than older harvesting methods, a crew of workers with chain saws and skidders. In recent experiments conducted by the Department of Forests and Parks, three men were able to harvest 90 cords of wood per day using this new equipment. Now it will be possible for small working crews using this machinery to go into the forests of this state and begin clearing out some of the 1.9 million cords of junk wood that is accumulating annually.

"Speed" and "efficiency" are the advantages of whole-tree harvesting. Forests and Parks officials have considered the negative features of this new procurement technology. They believe on balance that it is a harvesting system that can be safely managed. Other observers are not so sure. They are aware of possible abuses, and the abuse of whole-tree harvesting could lead to over-cutting, cutting in fragile areas, sedimentation and possible nutrient depletion of forest soils.

The Governor's Task Force found that Vermont has an ample supply of wood to make up a significant part of the state's energy needs. A U. S. Forest Service inventory completed in 1973 indicates that more than 4.4 million acres of land in Vermont are in commercial forest. This represents more than 75% of the total land area of the state.

The problem is not quantity but quality. It is widely acknowledged that Vermont's forests have declined in quality in recent years. The Task Force report minces no words on this subject: "The forests of Vermont are poorly stocked with quality trees. There are excessive amounts of trees that are poorly formed, rotten or of an undesirable species." In truth, a forest is much like a garden. If the deformed, diseased, or otherwise undesirable trees are not weeded out, the best trees cannot grow.

In Vermont the simple fact is this: woodlot owners have failed to manage their forests properly. Over 90 percent of Vermont's forest lands are in private hands. There are at least 70,000 small owners of timberland in Vermont and 30,000 of these manage between two and ten acres each. Some of these owners have second homes in the state; others are land speculators. Many out-of-state land owners have not been willing to make the personal and financial effort to invest in sound timber management programs.

Another explanation for the deterioration of Vermont's timber resource is the problem of taxation, the high cost of forest land, and the difficulty of making responsible timber management a paying proposition.

The existence of a market for timber, even for junk wood, and the emergence of a

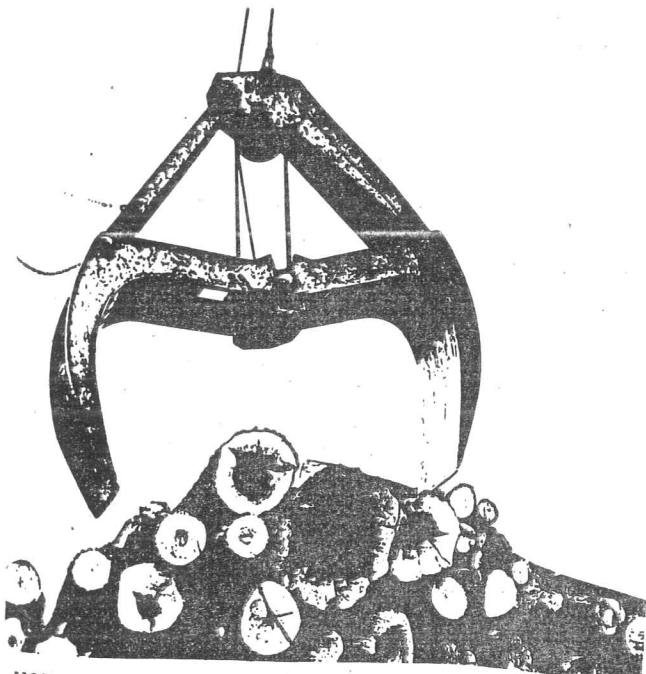
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TASK FORCE ON WOOD (Continued)

new harvesting technology may well provide an incentive for better management. This was part of the thinking of the Governor's Task Force. But the market and the new technology were not seen to be enough. More was needed. The Task Force was clear on this point. "It must be recognized," wrote the Wood Procurement Subcommittee, "that the above objectives cannot be achieved without property tax reform which will sustain forest resource management as an economically viable enterprise."



NOTES

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has been active in studying forest management problems and in encouraging the intelligent use of this resource.

VNRC summer intern, Richard Cowart, has written a comprehensive report entitled, Vermont's Forest Resources: Current Conditions, Trends and Policy Recommendations. Cowart's report will be the subject of an article in the October VER.

VNRC has collaborated with the Vermont Department of Forests and Parks and the Vermont State Forestry Planning Committee in publishing Forest Management Guides, a

handbook on sound timberland use. Copies of this booklet are available from the Council.

Information about tree farming can be obtained from VNRC or by contacting the County Forester in your area.

VNRC members who would like a copy of the report of the "Governor's Task Force on Wood as a Source of Energy" may write to the following address: Forestry Division, Department of Forests and Parks, State Office Building, Montpelier, Vermont, 05602.

"VERMONT ENERGY RESOURCES" SPONSORS PROFESSIONAL ENERGY SEMINAR

"Vermont Energy Resources" of Waitsfield is sponsoring a two-day regional professional energy seminar at the Sugarbush Inn in Warren on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 23 and 24. The purpose of the energy seminar is to address the needs of professional people in architecture, engineering, building, banking and real estate for "priority energy information."

State and federal officials and energy experts will discuss such topics as these at the two-day conference: energy costs; state and federal energy policies; alternative sources of energy; new energy hardware; energy conservation; and the impact of energy shortages on the revitalization of downtown urban areas.

Those wishing to register in advance for the energy seminar should write to Vermont Energy Resources, Box 1, Fiddler's Green, Waitsfield, Vt., 05673. They should include the following information: (1) name; (2) address; (3) company; (4) title; and (5) telephone. A \$75.00 fee will be charged for the "First Registrant" and a \$50.00 fee will be charged for "Each Additional Registrant." Registrations must be accompanied by a check, made payable to "Vermont Energy Resources." Those who desire hotel space at the Sugarbush Inn should indicate the following: whether they want single (\$40.00) or double (\$35.00 per person) occupancy; the number of persons in their party; their arriving date and time, together with their date of departure.

LUNG ASSOCIATION DIRECTOR ASSESSES VPIRG
REPORT ON AIR POLLUTION

The Executive Director of the Vermont Lung Association, Hu Slack, has studied the Vermont Public Interest Research Group's (VPIRG) report on the State's Air Pollution Section, UP IN SMOKE: THE MYTH OF CLEAN AIR IN VERMONT, and has found it wanting in important respects.

Early in August VPIRG published the 22-page study of the Environmental Conservation Agency's Air Pollution Section. After an extensive investigation VPIRG concluded that the Air Pollution Section was "paralyzed by lack of staff, lack of money, lack of morale, and lack of leadership." The report went on to say that the "air quality monitoring program is in a shambles" and that "the enforcement program has been neither aggressive nor effective in tackling big industrial polluters."

Hu Slack is careful in his response to the VPIRG air pollution study. Slack feels that VPIRG has performed a valuable public service in drawing public attention to air pollution problems. He remembers when public interest in air pollution was aroused, back in 1971, when you could get a big crowd out to a hearing. Now he says, wistfully, "In 1971 air pollution was an important issue; now it's energy."

If Slack has a quarrel with the VPIRG study it is not with the timeliness of the report, but with its credibility. He feels that the VPIRG piece fails to describe the complexity of the air pollution situation and fails to acknowledge the solid gains that have been achieved since 1971.

Slack is particularly sensitive to VPIRG's attack on the Air Pollution Section and its implied criticism of the State's Air Pollution Chief, Richard Valentinetti. "Richard Valentinetti is one talented, capable individual." (Slack says this with conviction.) Slack sees the job of Air Pollution Chief as an immensely complicated assignment. Slack feels that the VPIRG report simply fails to encompass the difficulties under which Valentinetti is working.

Valentinetti has to try to keep and open line of communication between two basically

irreconcilable groups, the militant environmentalist whose interest is primarily aesthetic and the violator of air pollution standards who must be brought around to compliance. It's a difficult job and it isn't as if Valentinetti was operating on his own. There are limiting factors. Not only must he supervise a pollution abatement program, he must also navigate a skillful course between the Agency of Environmental Conservation, the Air Variance Board, the State Health Board, the Attorney General's Office and the Vermont General Assembly. (What Slack might have added is that Valentinetti has his hands full. He is also in charge of the State's Solid Waste Program. See July, 1975 VER.)

Slack has other problems with the VPIRG study. He notes that the report spends a lot of time decrying the number of violations that have occurred in federal and state standards. Slack points out that the VPIRG report wouldn't have been possible before 1971 because there was no air pollution program, there were no standards, there was no monitoring. The fact that the program, the standards and the monitoring exist today is an achievement in itself that ought not to be discounted. As for the debate regarding the meaning of the state standards, while Slack would like to see the tougher Vermont standards kept, he acknowledges that these are what he calls "ideal" standards.

Slack finds certain items in the VPIRG study that reveal a basic misunderstanding of the air monitoring effort. Page 12 of the VPIRG study says: "... in the fall of 1974, three new sites were established in cooperation with Norwich University and Lyndon State College. Two of the sites are in small towns and one is atop a mountain--once again not the spots where the worst pollution levels can be expected." Slack makes two points about this particular comment. He explains the need for monitoring devices in remote locations to establish baseline data. How else can you determine the extent of naturally-occurring, background pollution? And Slack commends the siting of monitoring stations in cooperation with two Vermont colleges as an intelligent use of volunteer help in a program that is strapped for funds.

VPIRG AIR POLLUTION STUDY (Continued)

The VPIRG report suggests that air pollution is an acute problem in Rutland. In answer to a question of what the Vermont Lung Association was doing in Rutland, Slack replied, "You've got to have the data to work on." Slack indicated that the VPIRG report had drawn attention to the critical problem in Rutland. "We're getting tooled up to get going down there," Slack reported. "We have put (the Lung Association's) Air Pollution Committee into action."

Toward the close of the interview Slack discussed an alarming statistic, the fact that in the most recent data available Vermont has been rated between first and third nationally in death rates due to respiratory disease. The VPIRG report stated that Rutland ranked 24th out of more than 3,500 counties in the United States in a twenty-year study of cancer mortality among white males.

Slack finds these statistics distressing but he is unwilling to jump to conclusions. "It is quite difficult to identify the specific cause of a specific disease." "Why should Vermont be first or third in the nation in death rates due to respiratory disease? It doesn't make sense," says Slack. "It's a figure we've been struggling with." Slack mentions the possible explanations: it could be air pollution; it could be occupational hazards; it could be smoking; it could be viral causes. "I cannot honestly say that cancer mortality in Rutland is directly related to air pollution. The cause and effect has not been established."

The respiratory death rate in Vermont is disturbing. The Lung Association is not sitting on the problem. The Association has worked with the Medical Center Hospital of Vermont, the UVM Medical College, and the State Health Department to secure a five-year, \$5 million grant to establish a Vermont Lung Center, a research and demonstration project, financed by the National Heart and Lung Institute. The Lung Center will try to find out why there are so many deaths attributable to respiratory disease

in Vermont. Meanwhile, the Lung Association will keep plugging away at the public, with education, screening, preventative health programs in schools and industry and breathing workshops.

Clean Air.

CITIZENS' HISTORIC PRESERVATION COUNCIL FORMED IN VERMONT

In August, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) established a "Vermont State Council." The new Council consists of qualified men and women throughout the state who are prepared to assist communities, local groups and individuals who are seeking to preserve threatened historic areas and buildings.

The SPNEA is the principal non-official organization for historic preservation in New England and has a regional office in Boston, headed by Mr. William Hart, telephone (617) 227-8054.

(VNRC members who may wish to seek the advice and help of Council members in Vermont may get in touch with the following persons: (1) Professor Glenn M. Anders, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt., 05753, tel.: 388-2762; (2) Mrs. Tordis I. Isselhardt, McCullough Mansion Assn., Box 95, N. Bennington, Vt., 05257, tel.: 442-2747; or (3) Mr. Chester Liebs, History Department, UVM, Burlington, Vt., 05401, tel.: 656-3180.)

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: _____

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

VNRC RESPONDS TO SALMON ADMINISTRATION
ENERGY POLICY

At its August 26th meeting, the VNRC Board of Directors approved a five-page statement that was drafted as the Council's formal response to the Vermont Energy Policy, a policy that was released by the Salmon administration on April 28, 1975. (See June VER.)

The VNRC statement stresses the need for immediate action in creating a Vermont-oriented energy program. The Council acknowledges the importance of federal action. At the same time it feels there are ways the state can act on its own to form a bold response to the energy crisis. The Council notes that Vermont is in a precarious position with its severe climate and its traditional dependence on increasingly-expensive imported petroleum. The VNRC paper sees the present moment as an opportunity to move in the direction of energy independence and self-sufficiency. In using renewable energy resources, such as wood, the state would be acting on the recommendations of the recently released report on the Task Force on Wood as a Source of Energy; we would be improving timber stand quality; and we would be reversing the flow of Vermont dollars that are currently going out-of-state to purchase scarce fossil fuels.

VNRC also proposes an aggressive program to develop and encourage alternative sources of energy. The state can do this in two

ways. It can offer low-cost loans and property tax exemptions to individuals who install alternative systems. It can make a determined effort to attract new industries into the state, industries that are based on the manufacture and sale of wood stoves, wind power and solar heating equipment. The VNRC position paper praises the Salmon administration's cautious attitude toward further nuclear power plant construction, but takes issue with the notion that coal is not a viable alternative.

A major portion of the VNRC response is devoted to the subject of energy conservation. These are some of the Council's specific proposals: (1) use of the gasoline tax to finance energy conservation programs and to support the development of alternative sources of energy; (2) a state-supervised program to improve insulation in existing buildings and a revision of insulation construction codes for new buildings; (3) continued enforcement of lowered speeds on the state's highways; (4) the development of mass transit alternatives where possible, including car pooling and urban bicycle lanes and routes; (5) a sliding registration tax based on the gasoline efficiency of motor vehicles; (6) a reform of the electrical rate structure to favor the off-peak use of electricity; and (7) the use of energy criteria in transportation, land-use and water quality control planning and decision-making.

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