

# Vermont Environmental Report

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE VERMONT NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL, A NON-PROFIT CITIZENS' CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION, SUPPORTED BY MEMBERSHIP DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS. VNRC, 26 STATE STREET, MONTPELIER, VERMONT, 05602. (802) 223-2328. CHAIRMAN: DAVID R. MARVIN; EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: SEWARD WEBER; EDITOR: NAT FROTHINGHAM.

## Sewage Treatment

### Relief in Sight for the Unsewered Town

As the September VER goes to press, a Conference Committee of the U.S. House and Senate is considering changes in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972. These changes could have decided impacts on Vermont's own water pollution control programs.

Earlier this year the House and Senate passed two very different bills to amend the 1972 law. Now a Conference Committee is seeking to reconcile the differences before Congress adjourns this fall.

In several respects, the Senate version is more far-reaching than the House bill. It contains key provisions that would affect the construction grants program for sewage treatment plants.

Michele Frome, Director of VNRC's "Workbook on Sewage Treatment Alternatives" project, has been following the progress of the Congressional deliberations. She strongly supports two provisions in the Senate bill. One, an amendment introduced by Sen. Robert Stafford (R-Vt.), would set aside 5% to 10% of the construction grants funds in rural states for use only for "alternative or unconventional systems" in communities of 2,500 people or less. Another provision would make private sewage systems serving individual households eligible for federal funding as long as it is a municipality that applies for the funds and develops a plan to insure proper operation and maintenance of these individual systems.

Frome is enthusiastic about these new proposals. "If passed," she says, "these provisions could really make a difference in some Vermont towns. The logic is this: that

towns might be more willing to consider alternative systems and more able to pay for them if the same kind of financial assistance that is now available to construct conventional treatment plants can be extended to include other choices.

"But changes won't happen overnight," Frome warns. Even if the Senate amendments are passed the money won't be available right away. The federal Environmental Protection Agency will have to prepare regulations spelling out what the phrase "alternative systems" means, who is eligible, and what kind of operation and maintenance plans will be required.

The new provisions could make a difference for small communities such as Barton, Vermont. A sewage treatment plant proposed for Barton would have cost \$2.8 million. The Town's share of this cost was to be \$450,000. Barton is an unusual town. Citizens voted to reject the federal money. The Town of Barton chose instead to tell the 40 or so polluting householders to install their own individual septic systems. At a rough estimate of \$1,000 each, these 40 septic systems will cost a total of \$40,000. Under the current law, Barton will receive no State or federal funds for this work. If the Senate amendments are adopted, however, it could change the whole picture for Barton and a lot of other communities in the same situation.

Reginald "Tex" LaRosa, Chief of Environmental Engineering at the Agency of Environmental Conservation in Montpelier, thinks that Vermont will see "the largest use of these new funds in unsewered parts of towns that already have conventional treatment plants." (Our italics.)



## Relief...

Why?

LaRosa explains. In unsewered towns, the responsibility for adequate sewage treatment lies entirely with individual homeowners. The pivotal question is this, "Will the towns accept the legal responsibility for individual systems which traditionally has been left to private homeowners?" LaRosa feels that towns are reluctant to take on any new legal responsibilities for pollution abatement.

Towns that already have sewage treatment plants are in a different class. They have already acknowledged the

existence of a water quality problem. They have adopted ordinances. They have worked through the federal and state paperwork. Applying for federal funds to finance alternative systems for individual houses will pose less of a problem for such towns. But will the unsewered towns take on new legal obligations and make the effort to apply for federal funds?

Frome, LaRosa and others are awaiting action from Congress and the EPA to see if new avenues for sewage treatment will be opened up for rural communities.

## Fight over Iron Bridge Resolved

An increasingly bitter contest in Woodstock over the fate of the historic Elm Street Bridge appears to have been resolved by a compromise that has been struck between contending parties in the dispute.

The Elm Street Bridge, an iron structure that spans the Ottauquechee River on Route 12 at the north end of Woodstock Village, was built in 1870. It is a narrow bridge, with an 18-foot wide roadway, two sidewalks four feet wide each, for a total width of 26 feet. It is supported by a "Parker-Patent" modified bowstring truss, and is a key feature of the Woodstock Historic District. (See May, 1976 VER)

At issue in the dispute is whether the iron bridge would be torn down and replaced, preserved intact, or modified to meet demands for two-lane truck and automobile access into the center of Woodstock Village.

Parties in the dispute included citizens representing the Woodstock Historical Society, Town Selectmen, State Highway officials, representatives of the Federal Highway Administration and members of the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The apparent compromise came at an all-day meeting with all parties to the dispute in attendance on Thursday, August 11, in Woodstock.

To illustrate the divisions that have been dividing the Woodstock community over the future of the Bridge, here are the extreme positions on either side.

The Federal Highway Administration had originally wanted a modern concrete span with a 40-foot wide roadway over the Ottauquechee River. On their side, the preservationists

began by calling for repair of the Elm Street Bridge. They wanted the 18-foot roadway maintained intact, and they wanted to keep the bridge to the same overall width of 26 feet.

As time wore on, positions moderated. The Federal Highway Administration agreed to build a bridge with a 30-foot wide roadway, and argued long and hard for this final, fall-back position. Citizens fighting to save the bridge took their case as far as the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

The compromise that was worked out on August 11th calls for a roadway of 24 feet in width, with two sidewalks each four feet wide, for an overall bridge width of 32 feet. To realize this increased width, the supporting stone abutments will have to be rebuilt. The bridge will also be realigned, and the south end of the bridge will be lowered.

To the casual observer, these details may seem insignificant. To the preservationist, they are crucial. Preservationists have argued that the narrow iron bridge served as a brake to high-speed traffic entering Woodstock from the north and announced the sudden transition to a settled, village community. Widening the bridge, flattening out the dip in the road at the south end of the bridge as it enters the Village, all these changes, they felt, would favor increased speed and mobility and would alter the sensitive relationship between the bridge and the Village beyond it.

A part of the compromise of August 11th is a commitment to use the historic bow string trusses as part of the reconstructed bridge. But the widened bridge will be supported by steel girders and the trusses will become ornamental, no longer load bearing, structural members.



## Iron Bridge ...

Richard Carbin, Executive Director of the Ottauquechee Regional Planning and Development Commission, says that the Commission is supporting the 24-foot roadway compromise.

In looking back over the dispute, Carbin had these observations. "We need to make the case for historic preservation

with a greater sensitivity to people on the practical level. The fight over Elm Street Bridge was seen as a special interest effort on the part of preservationists. There does not seem to be a general understanding of the positive economic impact for Woodstock in preserving the historic fabric of the town."

# Robert Klein is Leaving Us

After more than two years of piloting Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Natural Areas Project, Robert Klein is winding down his work with the Vermont Natural Resources Council.

Klein has been recruited for a new assignment in Maine as consultant to The Nature Conservancy in association with the Maine State Planning Office. Beginning October 1st and going on for six months, Klein will be providing advice to the "Maine Critical Areas Program" on protection techniques for Maine's registered critical areas. In Maine, a natural area is called a "critical area." Despite these new obligations, Klein plans to return to VNRC on an occasional basis to continue the work he has set in motion over the past two years.

In the rough draft of his Final Report, Klein itemizes the achievements of the Natural Areas Project over the past 12 months in Phase 3.

One of his chief aims in this period was to prepare educational materials to expand public awareness of natural areas and the need to protect them.

Klein has produced several materials since August, 1976. One of these is the 25-minute slide-tape entitled **Natural Areas - Saving a Precious Resource**. Klein has shown this slide-tape to almost 50 groups and to a Vermont ETV audience since its release in January, 1977.

A second major item is the 25-page booklet that Klein prepared in collaboration with VNRC Staff Attorney, Darby Bradley. This booklet, entitled, **Charitable Gifts of Land: Their Tax Implications**, explains tax incentives and encourages landowners to consider contributions of private land to public or quasi-public landholding agencies.

Klein's most formidable challenge over the past 12 months has been the painstaking effort to protect at least some of the 64 prime natural areas that he identified in Phase 2 of the Natural Areas Project. Of this effort, Klein says, "It requires a tremendous amount of patience and a spirit of guarded optimism."

At this writing, Klein is unable to announce the formal acquisition or protection of a single natural area. But this fact hardly does justice to his sustained efforts, or to the situation. Negotiations are continuing with half a dozen landowners. In the case of a few other sites, the formal announcement of land acquisition or protection only awaits the necessary final signatures.

Klein is candid about the difficulties of negotiating for the purchase or protection of natural areas. Sometimes it is black and white: a given landowner is cooperative, or recalcitrant. Sometimes the discovery that an individual parcel of land contains a natural area results in the escalation of the price far beyond what any agency, public or private, can afford. But often the situation is more subtle, as Klein explains in his Final Report.

To many people, land is a very personal thing. It is integrated into their household economies, their farm work, their investment plans, their family histories, their hopes for their children, their recreation, and their view of themselves.

Another side of Klein's work was his lobbying effort for the passage of H.8, the Fragile Areas Register Bill, during the 1977 Session of the General Assembly. H.8 passed the House, was approved by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and will be considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee when the 1978 Session convenes in January.

One example of the tempo of Klein's life as he shifts to Maine is that over the next six weeks he will show his Vermont natural areas slide-tape two times in Pennsylvania and once in Washington, D.C. He is departing for Maine, but his engagement with VNRC continues.

**MOVING:** Please give VNRC a helping hand. Here's how. Send us your change of address notice as soon as you can, and an old VER label.



# Big Crowd at 1977 Meeting

An overflow crowd of more than 170 people turned out for the September 10th VNRC Annual Meeting at the new Ski Touring Center of the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe.

The morning program of field trips to Mt. Mansfield, Molly Bog and the whole-tree harvesting site in South Duxbury was well attended, as was a discussion group on planning and zoning in Stowe.

## 1. George D. Aiken

The annual meeting began after lunch when VNRC Board Chairman, David Marvin, honored former Vermont Governor and U.S. Senator, George D. Aiken. In recognition of Aiken's years of service to the cause of conservation, he was presented with a hand-carved wooden plaque, the work of Wolcott craftsman Richard T. Smyth. The plaque was engraved with a winter silhouette of a Vermont sugar maple under which is a brass plate bearing these words, "To George D. Aiken -- For his many years of work in behalf of environmental enhancement in Vermont and the nation."

## 2. James Craig

Next on the agenda were remarks by guest speaker, James Craig, Editor of *American Forests*, the monthly publication of the American Forestry Association.

Craig hit on two themes in his talk to the VNRC membership. His first theme was a call for better environmental reporting. Craig drew attention to the decline of farm population across America. Overall, Craig said, farm population has slipped to 8.8 million people. Craig told the gathering that the conservation movement was under attack for being elitist. "We are being criticized by union labor and blacks," he said. Blacks were saying, "Don't tell us to put insulation in our houses when you are going to the seashore in the summer." Rather than ignoring city people and minorities, Craig insisted on the need for working with them. "They are not aware of the depth of the problems of resource management," Craig said. Here, he felt, the press had a key role to play.

Craig expressed concern that few newspapers have full time conservation reporters. "We need people," he said, "who can act as a bridge between resource managers and the pub-

lic. We need to tell our story with more believability than we have before." Craig warned that there would be serious consequences if we fail to do this. We cannot protect wilderness areas unless we are intelligent in the management of all our other resources. Because if these other resources are mismanaged, we will eventually lose our wilderness areas.

Craig's second theme seemed to be directed to environmental organizations such as the VNRC. Looking at the present situation, he said, "We have people fighting each other that ought to be together." Craig reported that the Forest Service has 1000 environmental law suits pending against them. What was needed was the search for areas of agreement - getting timber companies, conservationists, minority groups together. There was no glory in it, said Craig, but it was indispensable in arriving at good solutions.

## 3. Carl Reidel

Outgoing VNRC Vice-Chairman, Carl Reidel, who is on leave from UVM for two years as a Visiting Professor at the Yale School of Forestry in New Haven, Connecticut, followed James Craig.

Reidel spoke briefly but vigorously. Reidel said that the past five years in Vermont had been characterized by a gradual retreat from the environmental gains of the early 1970's. Reidel said the problem was timid leadership. "There has been a lot of moaning about Pyramid Mall," said Reidel. "But Pyramid Mall has come because we have invited it, because we failed to follow through on Act 250, and to do the job with land use planning and regional planning."

Reidel challenged the Council and the Council's membership to "get on with the job again." "Tell Gov. Snelling and the Legislature that they have not done the job." He continued, "This State's future is linked to the land." At the same time, Reidel deplored the budget cutting that has practically crippled the Agency of Environmental Conservation. The pressures from the south are building, he warned. "If you do not believe me," said Reidel with a knowing laugh, "come down with me to Connecticut and I will show you what it is going to be like in Vermont in five or ten years."



## 4. VNRC Dues

In the business portion of the annual meeting, the VNRC membership, on a voice vote, approved an adjustment of membership dues that had been recommended by the VNRC Board of Directors.

The following dues adjustments will take place effective January, 1978. Individual dues will increase from \$10.00 to \$12.50. Family dues will increase from \$12.50 to \$15.00. Non-profit organization dues will increase from \$15.00 to \$20.00. Business dues will increase from \$50.00 to \$75.00. Two other categories have been revised. Patron dues have been reduced from \$500 to \$200, and the category of "Benefactor" has been eliminated entirely.

## 5. Elections

Elected to the board of directors for three-year terms as members at-large were the following: Edward W. Cronin, Jr.

of Lyndon Center; Patricia Highberg of Woodstock; A. John Holden, Jr. of East Montpelier; Mark B. Lapping of Hyde Park; and Peter B. Smith of Belmont. Elected to the board of directors as representatives of member organizations were: E. Chandlee Archer of Williston, representing the Lake Champlain Committee, and Francis Whitcomb of South Albany, representing the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association.

## 6. Other Business

Under the heading of "other business," VNRC member Justin Brande offered a resolution that called upon the VNRC Board to concern itself with water quality planning and implementation projects in Vermont. Brande discussed his concerns of the continuing drainage of wetland areas and the continued channelization of Vermont's rivers and streams. After discussion, Brande's resolution was adopted.

The Annual Meeting adjourned and was followed by a showing of Robert Klein's slide-tape, *Natural Areas -- Saving a Precious Resource*.

# Land Trust Granted Tax-exempt Status

According to VNRC Staff Attorney, Darby Bradley, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has granted tax-exempt status to the newly-formed Ottauquechee Regional Land Trust. The Land Trust was organized this past spring by citizens in the Woodstock area in cooperation with the Ottauquechee Regional Planning & Development Commission. Woodstock area residents were concerned with the threat of development pressures on their region's farm and forest lands.

Tax exempt status means that contributions of land or of conservation restrictions to the Trust will be tax-deductible.

Bradley, who is providing legal assistance to the Trust, expressed satisfaction with the IRS decision. The Ottauquechee Land Trust is the first such entity formed in Vermont for the purpose of acquiring conservation restrictions or open space easements in land. What is encouraging is that the granting of tax exempt status to the Ottauquechee Trust holds promise for instituting similar activities in other parts of the State. The VNRC Environmental Law Service is already discussing with other organizations the possibility of forming a new Trust for the purpose of protecting the islands of Lake Champlain.

### UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT NATURAL AREAS

Here is a publication that will be of interest to VNRC members who may wish to visit any of the ten natural areas managed by the University of Vermont in the Burlington area.

**UVM Natural Areas**, written by Louis Borie for the UVM Environmental Program, is a catalogue of each of the ten natural areas. It includes a location map, photographs, and a botanical comment on the features of each site. **UVM Natural Areas** is available by writing the UVM Environmental Program, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05401.

### FOREST MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

The last in the fall series of Forest Management Workshops will be held in the Woodstock-Barnard area on Saturday, October 8, from 10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. This particular workshop will focus on wood energy. Forest management workshops are open to the general public and are free of charge. Each workshop is led by a trained forester. For more information and directions to the workshop site, write VNRC, 26 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602, or call 223-2328.



## Canis latrans Is Back

### COYOTES ESTABLISH VIABLE POPULATION IN VERMONT

"Twenty years ago there were probably no coyotes in the State," says Fish & Game biologist, James Stewart. They began to show up gradually, according to a Fish & Game "fact sheet" in the late 1940's. Now coyotes can be found all across the State, and there are perhaps between 1,000 and 1,500 animals.

The coyote male usually weighs from 30-40 pounds; the female averages 30 pounds. The "eastern coyote" is somewhat wolf-like in appearance and resembles his western counterpart, but is definitely heavier.

Stewart characterizes the coyote as a "smart alec." What he means by this is that the coyote is clever enough to survive in spite of humans. In California, when human settlements expanded into the coyote habitat, the coyote refused to give ground. He adapted. He got his meals from garbage cans and made his home in highway culverts. "They do not hunt like the wolf," says Stewart. And he observes with a chuckle, "They are just as cunning as they used to say Br'er Fox used to be."

Stewart does not deny that the coyote is a predator. "I am not saying that they are incapable of pulling down a weak deer. But they are more omnivorous than anything else." Just the same when people learned that a viable coyote population had established itself in Vermont, a cry went up to "Put a bounty on them!" Stewart feels that such a bounty is unnecessary. For one thing, Vermont is a "bounty-less" state; and for another, Stewart reports



that it has **not** been demonstrated that the coyote is attacking sheep and livestock.

The coyote is an unprotected animal. That means that he is "up for grabs." A coyote pelt goes for \$60 in the fur trade. Just the same, the coyote has his wits going for him, and with about three-fourths of the State now in forestland, the coyote has a lot of acreage upon which to roam.

According to the Fish & Game Department, "Coyotes were virtually unknown east of Wisconsin at the turn of the century." Over the past several years they have been extending their range eastward. New Hampshire recorded a coyote in 1944. Since then coyotes have completed the eastward expansion of their range to the Atlantic Ocean.

## Wood Energy Fair

The UVM Extension Service and the Vermont Department of Forests & Parks are sponsoring a Wood Energy Fair on Saturday and Sunday, October 8th and 9th, at the Union 32 High School in Montpelier.

The purpose of the Fair is to provide the general public with access to information on all aspects of wood as an alternative fuel supply for home heating. The organizers of the Fair have planned a series of demonstrations by foresters on wood harvesting, splitting and drying techniques. There will be manufacturers' displays of wood stoves, furnaces, splitters, chainsaws, and insulation. One of the principal concerns of the organizers is the need for safety in the use of chain saws for wood procurement, in the installation

of home stoves, and the need to burn properly seasoned wood.

The Wood Energy Fair will begin at 10:00 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m. It is open to the public free of charge. For further information call the UVM Extension Service, at 223-2389.

## SORROW

*As this issue of the VER goes to press, the Vermont Natural Resources Council was saddened to learn of the death of James MacMartin, who was a member of the VNRC Board for six years. The Vermont Environmental Report will pay tribute to Mr. MacMartin in the October issue.*



## HEARINGS - PUBLICATIONS - CONVENTIONS...

### WATER CONFERENCE SET FOR NOVEMBER 2 & 3

The State 208 Water Quality Program has announced plans for a two-day conference on the subject of "Alternatives to Sewers for Vermont Towns." The conference will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, November 2nd and 3rd, at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, Vermont. More information on this conference will be printed in the October VER.

### "HANDBOOK" WILL INTEREST VNRC MEMBERS

VNRC members who have an interest in plants, gardens and the natural environment may wish to know about the publication of a **HANDBOOK ON ENVIRONMENT AND THE HOME GARDENER** by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The 64-page Handbook contains some 34 articles on a wide range of subjects, ranging from "The Saga of the Furbish Lousewort" to a discussion of "The American Lawn and Its Alternatives." To obtain a copy, send \$1.75 to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11225.

### DICKEY-LINCOLN HEARING COMING IN NOVEMBER

The Office of the Army Corps of Engineers in Boston is making plans for a Vermont public hearing to consider the proposed Dickey-Lincoln hydroelectric project in Maine. The Corps of Engineers released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in August of this year. The public hearing on Dickey-Lincoln in Vermont will probably be held in mid-November, but the place of the meeting has yet to be chosen. More information on this public hearing will be printed in the October VER.

### SIERRA CLUB TO HOLD FIRST CONVENTION

The Vermont Council of the Sierra Club has announced plans to hold their first Vermont State Convention at the Farm and Wilderness Foundation in Plymouth, Vermont on Saturday and Sunday, October 15 and 16.

The Convention will begin with registration at 10:30 a.m. Saturday morning, October 15. The Saturday session will include workshops on forestry, environment and government, and questions of lifestyles. Saturday evening will feature a film followed by informal discussions. Sunday will be devoted to excursions in the Plymouth, Vermont area.

The Vermont Council has set a registration fee of \$1.50, and will ask for \$2.50 for overnight accommodations. Participants are requested to bring their own food and sleeping bags. For further information write: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 805, Burlington, VT, 05402.

### SENS. LEAHY & MCINTYRE CALL CONFERENCE

Two U.S. Senators, Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Thomas McIntyre of New Hampshire, are co-sponsoring an Alternative Energy Conference to be held at the Claremont Junior High School in Claremont, New Hampshire, on Saturday, October 1st, between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.

A spokesperson from Sen. Leahy's Office said that the purpose of the Conference was to help citizens answer this question, "What can we do to offset the impact of rising fuel costs?" The Conference will bring together suppliers, distributors and resource people on solar, wind and wood energy alternatives, and both Sens. McIntyre and Leahy will speak and will be on hand to answer questions.

## PASSING THE WORD:

Over the past year the VNRC has been active: A Natural Areas Project, an Environmental Law Service, a project on Wastewater Treatment Alternatives, a Report on the State's Container Deposit Law, a lobbying effort in the Legislature and the publication of a Legislative Alert. It is membership in VNRC that is the indispensable source of the Council's strength, that lies behind all these efforts. Will you help us reach one or two new persons or new families by suggesting below the names of people you think might wish to receive three complimentary copies of the VER and an invitation to join us in our work. (with thanks.)

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Please clip and mail this form to the Vermont Natural Resources Council, 26 State Street, Montpelier, Vt., 05602.





## PYRAMID MALL: AGENDA FOR HEARINGS

The VNRC Environmental Law Service is closely monitoring the hearings on the Pyramid application before the District No. 3 Environmental Commission.

Curtis W. Carter, Coordinator for the District No. 3 Commission, reports that hearings on Criteria 2 (water supply) and Criteria 3 (burden on existing supply) have already been started.

Upcoming hearings will take up the following criteria. It should be stressed that this is a tentative schedule.

**First Hearing:** Criteria 2 (water supply), 3 (burden on existing supply and 1(c) (water conservation).

**Next Hearing:** Criteria 8 (aesthetics and historic/archaeological site.)

**Next Hearing:** Criteria 9(f) (lighting).

**Next Hearing:** Criteria 9(f) (energy conservation--on-site energy use only).

**Next Hearing:** Criteria 9(b) (prime agricultural soils) and 9(c) (secondary forestry soils).

**Next Hearing:** Criteria 10 (local and regional plans).

For further information on hearing agendas and the place and time of District Environmental Commission hearings on the Pyramid application, call, VNRC, (802) 223-2328.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

Responding to a suggestion from the VNRC, the (State) Travel Information Council has agreed to include notices about Vermont's container deposit law at tourist rest stops and information kiosks that are maintained by the State of Vermont.

# VNRC

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## SEPTEMBER 1977 No. 67

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