

Vermont Environmental Report

A STORM IS BREWING:

How Much Wilderness in Vermont?

A storm is brewing on the Vermont horizon. The subject is wilderness. And the question is how much land, indeed if any further land, ought to be set aside for new wilderness areas in Vermont's federally-owned Green Mountain National Forest.

Today there are two wilderness areas in the Green Mountain National Forest. One is Lye Brook, 14,600 acres, located about four miles southeast of Manchester in Bennington County. The other is Bristol Cliffs, 3,700 acres, located about two miles south of Bristol in Addison County.

In 1977 the U.S. Forest Service began a national evaluation of all roadless and undeveloped areas in the 187-million-acre National Forest System. This evaluation is called the "Roadless Area Review and Evaluation" (RARE II) because it is the second such evaluation to be undertaken in recent years. According to the U.S. Forest Service, the purpose of this review is to determine once and for all which undeveloped forest lands should be given further wilderness consideration and which lands can be designated for multiple use.

In the initial stages of the review last year, the U.S. Forest Service identified only one area of 13,000 acres in the Green Mountain National Forest for wilderness consideration. That determination was contested sharply by wilderness proponents who were able to persuade the U.S. Forest Service to revise its initial determination to include not one, but six areas, containing 55,720 acres of land.

Now proceedings are moving toward a climactic phase. On June 15 the U.S. Forest Service published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This Impact Statement described the alternative uses of the six potential wilderness areas in Vermont and discussed uses ranging from protected wilderness all the way to expanded development.

Between now and October, the public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft Impact Statement. Particularly crucial are a series of five "open house public information meetings" that are being held throughout Vermont during June and July to test public opinion. By no later than January 1979, the U.S. Forest Service will bring together its

final recommendations for wilderness designation for consideration by the Carter Administration and the U.S. Congress.

The question of how much, if any land, should be set aside as new wilderness areas in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest is producing wide, even heated, disagreement.

On one side is an organization of snowmobilers, loggers and landowners known as the Devil's Den Committee. This group strongly opposes any further wilderness designation in the Green Mountain National Forest. On the other side is a citizens group called the Vermont Wilderness Association dedicated to the goal of preserving "some remnants of wilderness in Vermont."

One member of the Devil's Den Committee who spoke out against any further wilderness designation in Vermont was Roland Q. Seward, Sr., of East Wallingford. Seward is past Republican National Committeeman and the chief executive officer of The Seward Family Hill Country Food Products, makers of dairy foods.

Seward was adamant in his opposition to further wilderness designation both in Vermont and in the nation-at-large.

"I think we are on a collision course," said Seward about the efforts by pro-wilderness people to set aside more areas for wilderness.

"We say there is more than enough already," Seward said. Looking at the current objective of pro-wilderness people to set aside at least 55,720 acres of additional wilderness in Vermont, Seward said, "You are talking about 28 percent of the federal forest land in Vermont."

Seward objects to the prohibitions that take effect on wilderness lands: no cutting of timber, no development, no mechanized vehicles. Seward sees the pro-wilderness crowd as a small band of elitists who want their own special preserves for the rarified pleasures of backpacking, hiking and nature appreciation. He is outraged at the thought that the local Vermonter would be denied access onto these acres of federal land to gather fuelwood, or to cut timber. "To deny people the right to cut that wood, - only a hog would want to stop

that," he says vehemently.

"The worst effect of all is that it costs \$57,000 to build a house," Seward is talking about rising costs of lumber, rising costs of construction. "The more you restrict timber cutting," Seward predicts, "the higher the price is going to be."

Seward rejects the argument that thousands of people are turning to wilderness areas for recreation. "You have to talk to somebody who's out there and they will say there is nobody out there at all."

On the other side of the issue is Peter Smith, Coordinator of the Vermont Wilderness Association. Smith lives in Belmont and runs a cheese-making business.

Smith sees the RARE II process as a last and precious chance to save some remnants of Vermont's natural heritage. He measures the 55,720 acres of proposed wilderness additions against the total land area of the State of Vermont. This is just under one percent of the total land area of the state. And he points out that the land proposed for wilderness is not prime commercial timberland. He quotes figures to show that timber productivity on land proposed for wilderness designation is only 36 percent as productive as the average forestland in the rest of Vermont. And he points out that all of this land is federally-owned; no private lands will be affected.

Smith sees disturbing developments all around him. He sees ambitious plans afoot to construct wood-burning electrical power plants. He talks of expensive road-building projects on the books today for every one of the six wilderness areas that the Wilderness Association has identified for possible inclusion in a National Wilderness System.

Smith has watched cutting operations in the Green Mountain National Forest. While foresters are giving lipservice to limiting clearcuts to no more than 25 acres, this is not what Smith has observed on the ground. About three miles north of Weston he has seen as many as three clearcuts that are joined together. Technically these are separate clearcuts. But join them together and they amount to 67 acres of clear-cutting.

Peter Smith is a little impatient with those who object to prohibitions against timber cutting, or snowmachines, in wilderness areas. "My response is how greedy can you get. Almost all of the State Forest & Parks land is open to these uses. After the wilderness areas have been designated there

will be 200,000 acres of land open in the Green Mountain National Forest." Says Smith in conclusion, "We are taking out only 55,000 acres. These are the only wilderness areas that Vermont will ever have."

Smith casts his gaze backwards in time. The bobcat, otter, loon and bear. These animals were once found from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Plains. Now they are relegated to the spine of the Appalachian Mountains. Smith thinks that private land in the future in Vermont will be subject to much more intensive use. He says about proposed wilderness areas, "We are saying that in the future these areas may be the only habitat left in Vermont. We are losing 100,000 acres of land to development each year in Vermont. That's twice the amount of land than we are trying to protect," says Smith.

Wilderness areas in Vermont. Peter Smith sees the present review process as an unusual opportunity to save a few thousand acres of land in Vermont for future generations, for the protection of wildlife, for the delight of the hiker, backpacker, the crosscountry skier, the seeker of solitude, a sanctuary out of the reach of clearcutting, highway construction, off-road vehicles, and development.

Roland Q. Seward sees it quite differently. He sides with the local fellow who feels that the disenfranchisement of Vermonters has gone on long enough and far enough. One local man told Seward in a moment of anger and frustration, "I guess we are going to have to have an environmental Kent State in Vermont."

The U.S. Forest Service has scheduled four "open house public information meetings" during July for public comment and review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on proposed wilderness areas in the Green Mountain National Forest. All meetings will start at 7:00 p.m. The meetings are as follows: July 18, South Burlington, Sheraton Motor Inn, July 19, Bennington, Mt. Anthony Union High School, July 25, White River Junction, Holiday Inn, and July 26, Middlebury, Municipal Building.

VER readers who may be interested in supporting the Vermont Wilderness Association, or in being placed on the Association's mailing list, should write or call, Vermont Wilderness Association, Peter B. Smith, Coordinator, Healdville, Vermont, 05147, -- (802) 259-2322, or 259-2340.

VNRC HAILS WHITTAKER'S APPOINTMENT AS SECRETARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY

VNRC's Executive Director Seward Weber has commended the appointment of Brendan J. Whittaker to succeed Martin S. Johnson as Secretary of the Agency of Environmental Conservation.

Whittaker was appointed to the top Environmental Agency post on June 15.

In a statement released to the press, Weber said, "The VNRC feels that Whittaker has the training and professional qualifications to lead the State's continuing effort to maintain and enhance the quality of its rural environment."

Weber noted that agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation, some of Vermont's most important industries, depend upon the rural environment for their well-being.

Weber expressed the hope that the new Environmental Secretary would pay careful attention to environmental problems that will be created over the next decade as Vermont reacts to the "approaching shortage of liquid fuels."

Said Weber, "I hope that Whittaker as Environmental Secretary will pay careful attention to the environmental impacts of increased harvesting of wood." Weber added, "We would be selling Vermont short if we overcut our forests to satisfy energy needs without a serious effort to reduce energy consumption and energy waste through conservation."

Huffman Praises Land Use Tax Law

Benjamin L. Huffman, who coordinated the 1978 legislative effort for the Fair Tax & Equal Education Coalition has hailed the enactment of H.361 as "one of the more advanced land use tax assessment approaches in the country."

In most states, Huffman explains, a land use assessment program typically has three elements. There are requirements to qualify for use appraisal, there is a reduction of taxes, and there is a repayment of deferred taxes if a parcel of land goes out of active production or no longer qualifies for use assessment. Another element in most states is that use assessment continues for a term, usually for 10 years. "At the end of the term the landowner is under no compulsion to do anything," Huffman says.

In Vermont the assessment program is different in at least one important respect. "In Vermont," says Huffman, "once you're in the program, you're in." There is no 10-year term. Conceivably a parcel of land could be assessed at a use value forever.

The "Land Use Change Tax" provision of H.361 has confused many people, Huffman says. Huffman points out that the land use change tax is figured out when the land is withdrawn from productive, qualifying use. But the change tax is only paid if the land is developed. Of course, once the land has been withdrawn from land use tax appraisal it then becomes subject once again to taxation at fair market value. "The point is to penalize the transfer of property from one use to another. If you keep it in the same use you are not penalized at all," Huffman explains.

Huffman thinks one of the potentially most significant parts of the new law will be its positive impact on forest management. Because properly managed forest land will qualify for a land use tax assessment, Huffman believes

that the new law will encourage better forest management. "The value of forest land will go up," Huffman predicts.

Huffman is concerned about the need to implement H.361 in a timely manner. Already Governor Snelling has said that he will delay appointment of members to the Current Use Advisory Board until December 1978 at the earliest. The Current Use Advisory Board is responsible under H.361 for determining a range of use values for farm and forest appraisals. Huffman sees the need for local listers and landowners who want to participate in the new program to get a jump on understanding the administration of the law. The Governor in announcing a delay in appointing members to the Current Use Advisory Board may complicate this process. This, in turn, could lead to confusion. "The Board is the key group," Huffman says. "We need to have most of this stuff done by the summer of 1979. If the Governor delays appointing the Board the work load will be that much heavier."

Huffman advises interested landowners to apply to their local listers for inclusion in the new tax program no later than February, 1980. The new use values are to be recorded for the first time on grand lists beginning April, 1980.

In a letter to supporters of the Fair Tax & Equal Education Coalition, Huffman thanked those legislators who were most responsible for the passage of H.361. The Coalition, indeed the Vermont Natural Resources Council, wishes to commend the following members of the Vermont House and Senate: Rep. Harold Billings (Rutland Town), Rep. Henry Carse (Hinesburg), Rep. Norris Hoyt (Norwich), Rep. Robert Kinsey (Craftsbury), Rep. Madeleine Kunin (Burlington), Rep. Norman Wright (Westminster) and Senator Keith Wallace (Washington County).

PYRAMID...

The following are developments that occurred last month in the continuing review process of the Pyramid Company's application to build an 80-store, \$10 million shopping center on 67 acres of land in the Town of Williston.

● In a major victory for VNRC and the Lake Champlain Committee, the State Water Resources Board reversed an earlier decision of the Environmental Conservation Agency and refused to issue a stormwater discharge permit to the developer. The Board's decision was based on expert testimony produced by the two conservation groups that the parking lot run-off from the proposed mall would probably contain significant amounts of heavy metals and oxygen-demanding pollutants and that the treatment system planned by Pyramid would be inadequate. While the Pyramid Company is expected to find an "engineering solution" in the case, the Board's decision has broad implications for State policies on the issuance of stormwater pollution permits.

● Present indications are that the Environmental Agency will reaffirm its decision to deny an air pollution permit for the proposed mall. The State re-opened its review of this issue after Pyramid submitted new data on the effects of increased shopper traffic on carbon monoxide levels at the Five Corners intersection in Essex Junction. The State's position has been that with the mall, Vermont would not be able to attain the mandated air quality standards required under federal law by January 1983. Pyramid is threatening to take the air pollution issue to court.

● Finally, the decision of the District No. 4 Environmental Commission on whether Pyramid is entitled to an Act 250 permit may be near at hand. A final hearing was held on June 15, and there are indications that the Commission hoped to reach a decision by June 24. The application for a permit was filed in July 1977 and hearings have been continuing since August of last year.

RECYCLING NEWSPRINT: Waste Not, Want Not -- Why Not?

We buy it as a daily or weekly newspaper, read it once, and throw it away.

As it comes from the mill, newsprint today costs \$339.00 per ton. Its disposal may seem insignificant. But thousands of pounds of newsprint in Vermont are being carted off to landfill sites around the state and buried, instead of being recycled.

According to Andy Rouleau, Environmental Supervisor for the Vermont Division of Solid Waste, an average household of four people in Vermont generates about four pounds of newsprint each week. Using these figures, the City of Burlington generates 19.3 tons of newsprint each week. That's approximately 1,000 tons a year. If we assign an average value of \$30.00 per ton to newsprint, citizens in Burlington are throwing away \$30,000 per year.

Applying the same formula, Rutland City throws away newsprint valued at \$15,000. Springfield throws away newsprint valued at \$7,800. Barre City throws away \$7,000. And Montpelier throws away \$6,000.

Every one of these communities has costs associated with solid waste removal and disposal which includes newsprint and everything else in the solid waste stream. But the recycling of newsprint could conceivably reduce costs. On a yearly basis, Burlington spends \$70,000 on solid waste disposal; Springfield spends \$45,000, Rutland City spends \$42,900, Barre spends \$42,000. And this year Montpelier will spend about \$27,000.

Why have Vermont communities avoided the obvious--recycling newsprint?

Andy Rouleau suggests the answer is that land is still available for sanitary landfill sites. So, there is no compelling need to shift to recycling.

A sanitary landfill site is an area where refuse is dumped, compacted by heavy machinery and covered with soil. This process continues until the area is filled and a new site must be found. Cities and towns across the state are finding that the cost of land, and the costs of engineering, designing and maintaining landfill sites are constantly rising.

At the same time the price paid for old newsprint is also on the rise.

Traditionally, recycled newsprint has been used for making theater tickets, shoe boxes, low-quality tissue for stuffing ladies' handbags, and more newsprint. Now, more and more, old newsprint is being used as the raw material for cellulose-based insulation.

In the spring of 1978, the VER conducted a survey of eleven paper handlers throughout Vermont. This survey included refuse removal companies, paper companies and insulation manufacturers. From the survey results, the VER discovered that a ton of newsprint in Vermont brings an average price of \$30.00 per ton. The market for newsprint is highly volatile. Because of shifting demands it can reach a figure as high as \$85.00 per ton at peak periods.

The following are four examples of Vermont organizations which are making efforts at newsprint recycling.

□ The Bennington Redemption Center is a collection depot staffed by a dozen students from the Bennington Alternative Program, a special program for Bennington High School students. Last year, the Center turned over \$13,000 to the Bennington School Board. Two-thousand dollars of this was from recycled newsprint.

□ Cassela Refuse Removal of Rutland offers a 50-cent reduction in the collection fee for customers who separate newsprint from the rest of their garbage. Owner Douglas Cassela has three communities participating. At least 50 to 60 percent of customers in these communities are separating newsprint from their garbage.

□ The Burlington Recycling Project is a group of local residents who are interested in establishing a permanent, waste newsprint recycling program for the City of Burlington. At present, this is a pilot program that involves monthly newsprint collections covering neighborhoods in the City of Burlington.

□ The Sigma Zeta Fraternity at Lyndon State College in Lyndonville has recently set up two bins on campus for newsprint. A spokesperson from the College Admissions Office said, "The project was intended more as a conservation measure than to make money. It's been very successful so far."

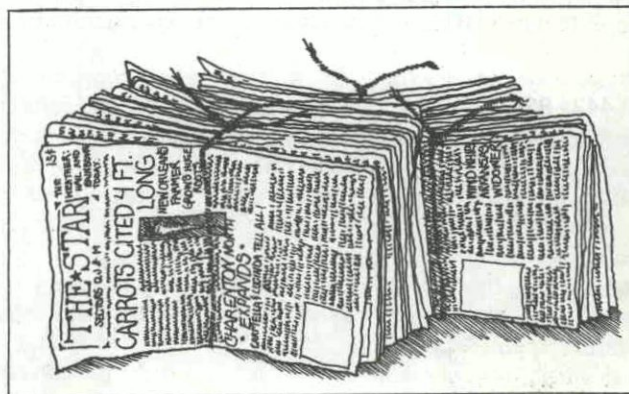


Illustration by Wendy Edelson

Why don't more Vermont communities have recycling programs? Andy Rouleau answers this question. He says, "You can't justify recycling to a community in economic terms, in

most cases." Why not? Rouleau explains it this way. "Recycling is a marginal operation. There is equipment involved. Fork lifts and balers. That's expensive machinery." Rouleau sees the primary obstacle to successful recycling as the fluctuating price of newsprint. "You can't have a long-term contract (with a buyer) without fixed prices. The markets are limited. Most paper manufacturers are out of state. In small communities you'd have to get the landfill owners or operators to get together so a trucker could pick up a half a load here and a half a load there."

Andy Rouleau agrees that people need to be informed about recycling. He has doubts about the public's enthusiasm for recycling. He will also say that recycling will increase the life of a landfill site.

About a recycling program for newsprint Rouleau says, "The key, of course, is that the recycling operation has to be run by people who understand markets and materials. It needs to be run like a business." But of all the recycling markets,

Rouleau states, "The newsprint market is simple and straightforward. Almost anyone could do it."

Nationally, over 200 cities are collecting newsprint separately for recycling. Madison, Wisconsin started newsprint recycling in 1968 and is currently making a profit of \$51.24 per ton. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in November, 1977 that an Ohio insulation manufacturer predicted the price of newsprint could reach \$125.00 per ton. According to "Chas" Miller of the Environmental Protection Agency's Office on Solid Waste, the price paid by some insulation firms on the East Coast has already reached \$80.00 per ton.

Adela Awner of the Solid Waste Project of the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, D.C. puts the newsprint recycling picture into sharp focus when she says, "Any community that can find a market and doesn't take advantage of it might as well be taking dollars and burying them."

The following is a list of businesses who buy newsprint from households, community groups, etc.

Burlington Paper Stock
11 Archibald Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
(802) 862 - 9641

Will take any amount of newsprint, some magazines acceptable.

Burlington Waste & Metal Co.
255-257 North Winooski Avenue
Burlington, Vermont 05401
(802) 862 - 5535

Will take newsprint bundled or in boxes. No magazines.

Cellulose Energy Conservators, Inc.
P.O. Box 2047
South Burlington, Vermont 05401
(802) 862 - 4311

Will take newsprint without any magazines. Must be dry. Bundled with string, or in boxes. Usually buys in tons, but will consider smaller amounts.

Benn Kraft Insulation, Inc.
316 Northside Drive
Bennington, Vermont 05201
(802) 442 - 8361
Buys in large quantities, tons only.

Cassela Refuse Removal
Post Road
Rutland, Vermont 05701
(802) 775 - 0325
Reduced rate for collection if newsprint is separated out.

Mountain Paper Products
Bellows Falls, Vermont 05101
(802) 463 - 4514
Strictly newsprint, tons only. Will take locally collected paper, weighed before delivery.

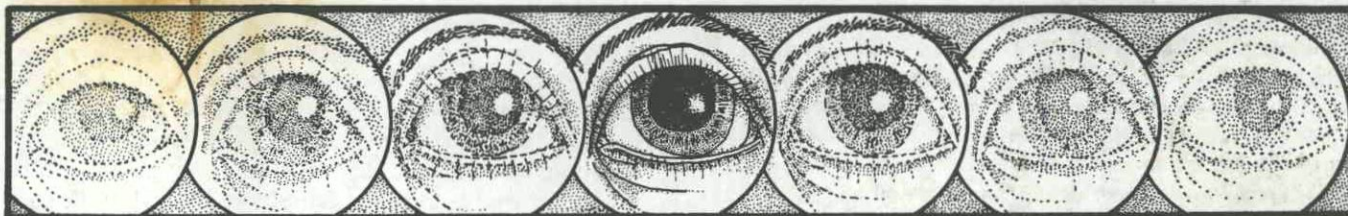
Vermont Fibers, Inc.
12 River Street
Springfield, Vermont 05156
(802) 885 - 9555

Will buy newsprint from local groups, mixed with some magazines acceptable.

Vermont Tissue Paper Corp.
Rte. 67 A
North Bennington, Vermont 05257
(802) 447 - 7558
Will buy newsprint from local groups, minimum 500 pounds. Mixed with some magazines acceptable.

The following is a list of places and contacts for newsprint recycling on a donation basis.

Barnet- Contact Local Grange.
Barre Town- Contact School Association.
Bennington- Bennington Redemption Center, 512 Main Street, Bennington.
Burlington- Contact Burlington Recycling Project, c/o Vermont Vanguard, 149 Cherry Street, Burlington.
Burlington- Contact Larry Dean, Boy Scouts.
Enosburg Falls- Contact Senior Citizens.
Hanover, N.H.- Newsprint shed, located on Rte. 120, behind municipal garage.
Hinesburg- Contact Boy Scouts.
Lebanon, N.H.- Newsprint shed located past landfill, across from Ready Mix Cement.
Lyndonville- Newsprint bins located on Lyndonville State College campus.
Norwich- Newsprint shed located at Norwich landfill.
Shaftsbury- Newsprint shed located at town landfill.
Woodstock- Newsprint shed located across from Pete's Variety store.
Woodstock- Newsprint shed located across from Pete's Variety Store.



·A PERSONAL DIMENSION·

Carl Reidel is a former Vice Chairman of the VNRC. He is director of the UVM Environmental Program, on leave at the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, until June, 1979. His wife, Jean, is a student at the Yale Divinity School.

Going away can be a way of coming home.

As a child, I remember going off to kindergarten for the first time. How good the kitchen smelled when I got home. Then going off to college and that first job away. Those memories are even sharper.

Each of those experiences has brought perceptions about places left behind, about possibilities and problems never fully understood before. I've often resolved to write a letter home and share my new perceptions, or to change things when I got back.

Now I am away from home once again. Not far away from Vermont, but far enough to discover that things look different than they did up close. And before time clouds that view, I'm writing that letter home.

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My temporary home is New Haven, Connecticut. At first, it didn't seem a lot different from Vermont. Sure, more people and cars, more hectic and congested. But a gentler climate, and with Yale University nearby, more cultural activities. Yet, Connecticut is significantly different from Vermont, now that I've seen beyond the similarities.

Something is clearly missing in Connecticut.

I expect that New Haven was once very similar to Burlington, a coastal city of pleasant homes, a college, a place with its own distinctive character. But today, the differences are dramatic.

The New Haven harbor on Long Island Sound is now totally given over to oil tanker facilities and storage tanks for dozens of oil companies. There is the huge "United Illuminating" electric power plant and a maze of small industrial plants along

the shore. Interstate highway exchanges, high-voltage power lines, and railroads separate the city and its people from the water. The once-productive fishing and oyster industries are gone, perhaps forever. The New Haven harbor, and others like it along the coast, are hopelessly polluted with industrial waste, PCB's, and sediments too toxic to disturb.

Only a few decades back, oyster fishing was a major industry and the coast was popular for boating and summer recreation. Clockmaking and light industry was in scale with the community and the harbor was a thriving port for diversified shipping.

It's different now, and I can't help but wonder if it's a glimpse of what Burlington harbor and Lake Champlain may become.

Like the harbor, New Haven itself is also a study of "progress."

New Haven was once known as the nation's model for urban planning, an example for other small cities. In the 1960's a massive urban renewal project replaced a decaying center city with a modern enclosed mall, a Macy's Department Store, and a new hotel.

But the dream was incomplete. Because of short-sighted planning, the problems of unemployment, poverty, and inadequate transportation, only shifted into outlying neighborhoods. Low-income housing that had been lost to urban renewal was not replaced. Suburban sprawl and uncontrolled shopping center development in nearby towns robbed New Haven of its tax base and sapped the business potential of the center city. Neighborhood cohesion eroded as the quality of schools declined and as street crime spread. No one speaks of the model city anymore.

Perhaps I'm over-reacting. New Haven has many fine qualities. It's not so much what's wrong, as what's missing, and what could have been. Looking at New Haven, I can't help but wonder if Burlington is failing to make the same tough decisions about the future, that could have made a difference here.

Connecticut is not just New Haven. As I drive north from

New Haven's city center, up Whitney Avenue, through Hamden (New Haven's "South Burlington") it doesn't look much like Vermont. Or does it? The historic town centers of Whitneyville just north of New Haven, then Spring Glen and Centerville, are still there, with their steeped churches and village greens, but they are linked together in an endless chain of commercial sprawl and lost in surrounding housing tracts. Even Cheshire, 15 miles north of New Haven, reflects the pressures of the surrounding urban centers, New Haven of course, and Waterbury to the west, and Hartford to the north.

All of these villages north of New Haven have had their vitality sapped by the massive shopping centers built along Dixwell Avenue just west of Hamden's Centerville village--a sprawling, gray expanse of parking lots, impossible traffic congestion, and second-rate stores. Bargains galore! But at what cost to the quality of life. Life is linked to the automobile for commuting, for shopping, and recreation. And those without cars? The young, the old, and the poor are isolated in decaying center cities and drab suburban tract developments. Yet, unaccountably, highway construction continues. Perhaps it's because there's no longer an alternative.

This story is repeated in town after town along Interstate 95 from New London all the way east along the coast to New York City, and around Hartford and Waterbury to the north and northwest. It's the same beyond Connecticut, along Interstate 91 from Springfield to Northampton in Massachusetts. It's beginning in Vermont as well.

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Vermonters often say, "It can't happen here. We won't tolerate such massive change."

But I don't think Vermonters understand that it didn't happen overnight here in Connecticut. It happened slowly, almost imperceptibly. Rising property taxes and land speculation forced the gradual subdivision of farm and forest land. Minor zoning variances led to creeping strip development. Subtle changes in air and water quality went almost unnoticed as exceptions to standards were justified to "improve the tax base." Short-sighted politicians gradually crippled resource management agencies to run for re-election on "my surplus," failing to understand the need to invest in the future.

No, the decline of much of urban and rural Connecticut did not happen overnight, nor was it planned by "black hat" developers from New Jersey. There were no big mistakes, no conscious plots by outsiders. It happened because people didn't realize the true cost of "progress," and because politicians couldn't see beyond November.

Vermont is not all that different. Sure, we've come quite a way in a few years. Act 250, the property tax reforms in the 1978 General Assembly, the "Bottle Bill," and other innovative public policies have made a difference. But it's not enough. Connecticut has similar laws. Even a bottle deposit law was passed here this year. Vermont has tackled some of the obvious problems, but not those important, more subtle problems, that will eventually make the real difference.

These realities in Vermont are inescapable. Our pastoral landscapes conceal growing poverty and unemployment as Vermonters are driven from the land. Our cities and towns

are losing their distinctive character because we have yielded to careless highway construction while neglecting local planning. We continue to court outside industry and developers but we are failing to husband the natural resources that could be the basis of a sound economy. Our tax systems are outdated and our schools and colleges reflect it. We are nibbling our land to death with creeping sprawl, unnecessary shopping centers, and the sheer neglect of our farms and forests. We are squandering our future as surely as Connecticut, gradually and inexorably.

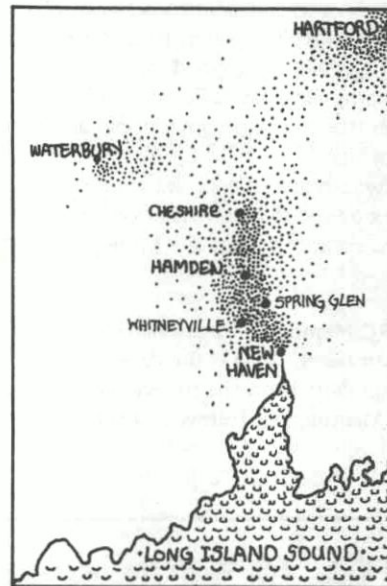


Illustration by Wendy Edelson

I want Vermonters to do better, to ask the tough questions, and to resist those "insignificant little changes" excused in the name of progress. I want Vermonters to demand the best from their leaders by insisting that legislative initiatives and executive decisions are in the interest of the entire community, not just a few special interests. To do that, Vermonters must learn all they can about new legislative proposals, about the people and processes that drive state and local government. That means time and personal involvement.

I want Vermonters to work with groups like VNRC, to attend and participate in meetings of planning boards, selectmen, and school boards. Turning up at the March Town Meeting once a year is not enough. Nor is it enough to resist a new development after a developer has been "invited" to town through inadequate planning. Simply voting in local and state elections is not enough either. We must encourage good people to run for public office and help them do it by working with political organizations, and be willing to run ourselves. I want more Vermonters to get personally involved in shaping their own future. If we care about the future of Vermont, we must either make it happen or relinquish our claim on that future.

It's easy to preach from afar. When I return to Vermont I will try to practice what I preach. Easy? Hell, no! But I've seen the alternative here in Connecticut, and I don't like it much.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN ISLANDS TRUST LAUNCHED

The Lake Champlain Islands Trust has just been notified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that it meets all of the requirements of a tax-exempt organization and is entitled to 501(c)(3) status.

The Trust was started as a special project of the Green Mountain Audubon Society, the Lake Champlain Committee, and the VNRC, to focus public attention on the importance of the Champlain Islands as a valuable scenic, wildlife and recreational resource. The Trust hopes to protect the islands through acquisition and conservation restrictions. The granting of a favorable tax status means that contributions of islands or restrictions will be tax-deductible.

The Lake Champlain Islands Trust is presently seeking to raise \$15,000 to launch the organizational and educational aspects of the project.

Any person who would like to learn more about the Trust, or to make a tax-deductible contribution to help this effort, is encouraged to contact one of the three sponsoring organizations.

Attention VNRC Members: Please mark your calendars for Saturday, September 9. This is the date for the 1978 VNRC Annual Meeting. Details on the program of events, the time and site of the Meeting will follow in a subsequent VER.

THE WOODSTOVE ANNUAL AVAILABLE

The Vermont Natural Resources Council is offering **The Woodstove Annual** to VNRC members at a discount.

The Woodstove Annual is published by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests and is a "safety and conservation manual for those who heat their homes with wood." It runs to 180 pages in length. It is written by professional foresters, educators, chainsaw manufacturers, chimney pipe makers, and the National Fire Protection Association.

A quick perusal of the "Table of Contents" reveals the practical nature of this book. There are chapters on supplying home fuelwood, fuelwood and the law, cutting cordwood, seasoning fuelwood, safety in the woods and using chainsaws successfully. The last section of **The Woodstove Annual** contains a directory of state forest agencies and an illustrated description of some fifty representative wood stoves.

The Woodstove Annual is available to VNRC members at a cost of \$2.50 postpaid and to non-members at a cost of \$2.95 postpaid.

For further information about **The Woodstove Annual** call Seward Weber at VNRC. To order single copies of **The Woodstove Annual** write VNRC, 26 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont, 05602.

VNRC

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