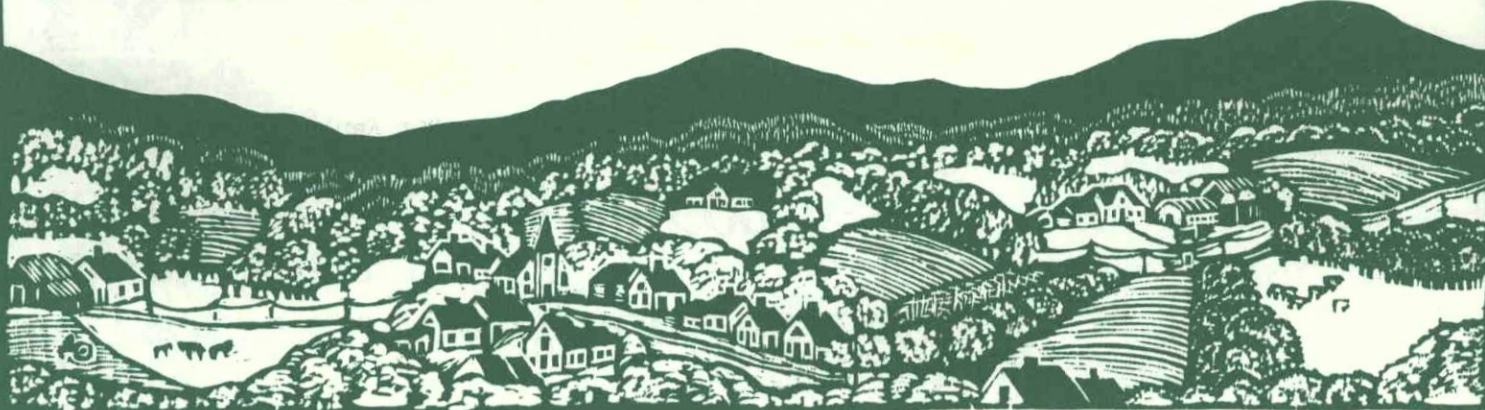


VNRC Bulletin



VERMONT WILDERNESS: TIME TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

The stage has been set and the curtain is about to go up on the third and perhaps final act of the Vermont wilderness saga. Observers on all sides of this issue hope that what happens in the next few months will resolve the status of 65,000 acres of the Green Mountain National Forest first proposed for wilderness designation six years ago. In 1975, Congress created two Vermont wilderness areas -- "Lye Brook" and "Bristol Cliffs" - totaling 17,000 acres. In 1977, four other areas in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest - "Skylight," "Big Branch," "Lye Brook Addition" and "Yaw Pond Brook" -- were part of the second Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II), but only two were recommended for "further planning" by the U.S. Forest Service. Subsequent negotiations between friends and foes of wilderness broke down, and the campaign to "Keep One Per Cent Wild" coasted to a halt.

This March, Vermont Senators Stafford and Leahy and Representative Jeffords co-sponsored a bill designating 65,000 acres of additional wilderness. But Vermont's Congressional delegation made it clear that the fate of this bill will depend on public opinion in Vermont.

The first of two public hearings on the wilderness proposal is scheduled for Tuesday May 31st, at the Dana Auditorium on the campus of Middlebury College. The hearing will begin at 3:00 p.m., and will continue until all who wish to speak have had the opportunity to do so. All three members of Vermont's Congressional delegation will be there. If you have strong feelings about this bill or advice to offer on the forestry, wildlife habitat, scientific research, or recreational implications of designating additional wilderness in Vermont, it's very important that you attend this hearing and make plans to testify by calling any one of the delegation's offices

Senator Patrick Leahy (toll free)	1-800-642-3193
Senator Robert Stafford (call collect)	951-6707
Representative James Jeffords (toll free)	1-800-835-5500

The Vermont staffs will pass your name along to Washington and notify you of an approximate time to testify. If you are unable to testify, but have an opinion about additional wilderness designation in Vermont, please call or write members of the delegation and make your views known.

- OVER FOR VNRC'S POSITION -

~~The Vermont Natural Resources Council supports the Congressional delegation's~~
bill to designate 65,000 acres of the Green Mountain National Forest as "wilderness".
The Council believes that wilderness designation for the areas known as Big Branch,
Breadloaf, Woodford, and Lye Brook Addition is in the best interests of the people
of Vermont for the following reasons:

- o Vermont has one of the smallest percentages of publicly owned land in the country. Congressional wilderness designation is the only way Vermonters can assure a small reserve of wild lands for future generations.
- o Wild lands give us a glimpse of our early mountain landscape. They also can provide invaluable base-line data for the study of critical plant and animal species and environmental threats such as acid rain.
- o Public lands in Vermont are under consideration for sale, for oil and gas exploration, and as possible sites for a nuclear waste dump. Congressional wilderness designation would disqualify these particularly important wild areas from those uses.
- o Wilderness designation should not adversely affect Vermont's timber production. Most of the lands under consideration are at high elevations and have a variety of limitations for logging and management. Their present and potential contribution to Vermont's annual timber harvest is extremely small. Eliminating these marginal lands from management and shifting scarce forest management resources to more productive lands elsewhere may well increase overall timber production in Vermont.
- o Wildlife protection and management, watershed protection and a wide variety of recreational activities would benefit from wilderness designation. Many important trout streams, rivers and aquifer recharge areas have their origins in these vital watershed areas.
- o Vermont is well-known for its environmental commitment and its unspoiled natural beauty. Setting aside this one per cent of Vermont's land area is a statement in the best tradition of the Green Mountain State -- a statement to our residents, friends and future generations that at least a small part of our special State will remain untrammelled and unspoiled.
- o Wilderness designation would not increase federal jurisdiction and control. The proposed areas are already government-owned and would continue to be administered by the U.S. Forest Service.
- o Wilderness designation would not affect in-lieu-of-tax-payments to towns. The Forest Management Act of 1976 set federal in-lieu payments on the basis of National Forest acreage, not as a percentage of revenue from timber sales and other receipts.
- o The Council is aware that there may well be differences of opinion over the exact location of boundaries and the need to relocate some existing snowmobile trails. But it would be tragic to sacrifice this last chance to preserve a remnant of our Wilderness heritage because of these differences. We will work to ensure that the needs of all outdoor users are considered and accommodated, and we urge all dedicated conservationists to write their Congressmen on behalf of reserving these few isolated tracts of primitive land for our children.

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