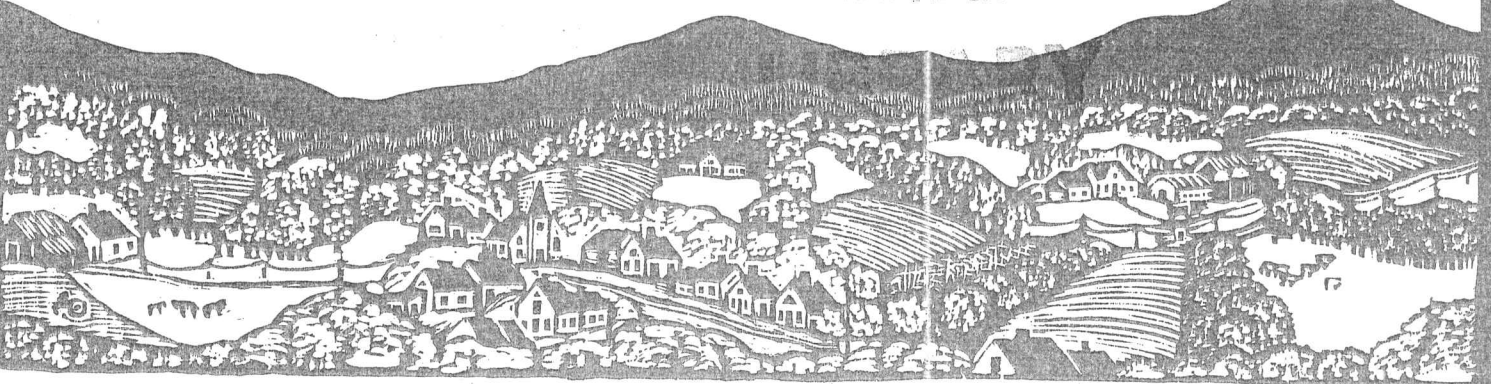


APR 15 1986



1986/2

APRIL 8, 1986

*** LEGISLATURE IN THE HOMESTRETCH -- ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS POISED FOR PASSAGE ***

Rumblings over adjournment have sounded in the State House halls, and legislators and lobbyists are scrambling to move their respective agendas forward before the final gavel falls. Several natural resource bills stand ready for passage: from such fundamental issues as clean water and public health, to new programs for wildlife management and solid waste problems, to more detailed changes in tax policy and concerns for growth management. VNRC has been busy advocating choices that will improve the environment that we share and will pass on to our children. The fate of each of the bills listed below will be determined over the next two weeks--a call or letter from you to your senators and representatives is especially helpful and important at this time!

VNRC priorities before the closing of the 52nd Biennium:

* S.42 - WATER QUALITY: A controversial and highly publicized push to pass a House Natural Resources Committee-sponsored bill addressing water quality ended in defeat on the House floor. Subsequently, the Senate Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Senator Arthur Gibb has completed work on S.42 which, unlike the House bill, has VNRC's full support. S.42 accomplishes several basic goals that VNRC has requested of water quality legislation, namely: protection for sensitive streams--especially at high elevations; a public process for making decisions as to when water quality can be compromised; a permit program for keeping track of new large discharges to Vermont waters; and a strong enforcement section that requires immediate clean-up for pollution violations and does not exempt existing problems. This bill will face the full Senate soon and, if passed, will require expeditious review by the House. VNRC strongly supports S.42.

* H.295 and S.80 - GROWTH MANAGEMENT: This issue was given a recent boost when the House bill H.295, sponsored by Representative Stephen Reynes, passed the House convincingly by a margin of 111-30. The bill, which would give Act 250 Commissions the mandate to evaluate "cumulative impacts" from development and enlist the use of "capacity studies" for rapidly growing areas, now goes on to the Senate. S.80, sponsored by Senators Gibb and Carter, would rejuvenate local and regional planning functions by providing money for local capital budgeting efforts and conservation programs, as well as requiring that large-scale development be measured against a regional plan. VNRC hopes that H.295 will be taken up along with S.80 to form a package that addresses Vermont's need to take stock of its resources and plan accordingly for future development pressures. VNRC supports H.295 and S.80.

* S.95 - WETLANDS PROTECTION: As originally drafted, S.95 did not receive the Council's support but has since been reworked to include suggestions from environmental, governmental and agricultural interests. Rather than create a new section of law, S.95 plugs into existing protection mechanisms available under Act 250 and local and regional planning powers. The bill also requires the state Water Resources Board to develop rules that describe significant wetlands, and allows the Board to nominate such wetlands for protection. S.95 passed the Senate and is currently under consideration by the House Natural Resources Committee. VNRC supports S.95.

* H.313 and H.751 - SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: Passage of these two bills would effectively put Vermont on track to deal with our impending "solid waste crisis." (See VER, Winter 1986.) H.313 encourages municipalities to consider recycling and source separation, to reduce municipal needs for landfilling and incineration. H.751 would reconstitute solid waste management planning at the state level by exploring markets for recyclables, initiating a certification program for waste incinerators, and requiring environmental review under Act 250 for new incineration plants. VNRC supports H.313 and H.751.

* H.453 - CONTAMINATED SOILS: With passage last year of legislation to inventory and replace leaking underground storage tanks, it is anticipated that tank replacements will uncover soils saturated by oil and gas. These soils are technically hazardous wastes and need to be disposed of in a safe manner. H.453 would require the Dept. of Solid Waste to develop a plan by 1987 for disposal of contaminated soils at a facility designed by the state. VNRC supports H.453.

* H.459 - SEPTAGE AND SLUDGE: Vermont is also experiencing a loss in facilities (either farms or treatment plants) that will accept septage and sludge for disposal. H.459 requires the Dept. of Solid Waste to plan and implement a program for the handling of septage and sludge that considers its value for fertilizer, the need for regional storage, licensing for septage and sludge haulers, and pilot programs to determine safe disposal practices. VNRC supports H.459.

* S.288 - USE VALUE APPRAISAL FOR FARMLAND: This bill creates a new definition of farmland within the existing "Current Use Taxation" program in order to provide full-time farmers with use value taxation without the lien and penalty provisions of the C.U. program. This bill does not, however, affect other forestry and agricultural lands in the Current Use Program. VNRC supports S.288.

* H.310 - FERTILIZER & FEED: Would enact registration and labeling procedures for fertilizers and feeds used in the state, and would impose penalties for mislabeling or short-weighting by manufacturers. VNRC supports H.310.

WILDLIFE BILLS - The 1986 legislative session has seen a rash of bills concerning Vermont wildlife which have often provoked long and heated debate on the floor of the House and Senate. Most of the talk has centered on new programs that would, for the first time, allow limited hunting of moose (H.89), a new program to control coyotes (S.262), and the introduction of a statewide turkey season (H. 494). VNRC is opposed to each of these measures. The Council, on the other hand supports the following wildlife-related legislation:

* H.91 - Known as the "non-game checkoff," this bill would provide funds through voluntary contribution on the state tax return to support management and habitat improvement for many of Vermont's non-hunted wildlife species.

* H.55 - Updates Vermont's endangered species law to include new listings. Also removes an enforcement loophole that makes the state ineligible for federal funds.

* H.710 - Establishes a waterfowl stamp program (similar to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife "duck stamp" program) for protection of habitat for migratory waterfowl.

* H.90 - Establishes a muzzleloader season for deer which would, like Vermont's archery season, provide additional opportunities for dedicated sportspeople.

As you know, the contents of bills can change, sometimes even daily. Please call VNRC at 223-2328 for current status on any of the bills listed above.

"Concert for Earth Day." Jim Scott, a musician with the Paul Winter Consort, and Martha Sandefer will be featured. Friday, April 18, 8 pm Montpelier City Hall.

Hand Across the Border Symposium: Public Awareness of Acid Precipitation Problems; presented by UVM and AAUW. April 14, 11 am to 10 pm UVM's Carpenter Hall. Space may still be available; \$15/person (banquet additional).

Collection of paper recyclables and household hazardous wastes at Riverside Junior High School, May 17, 9 am to 3 pm. Sponsored by Ascutney Mt. Audubon & NH/VT Solid Waste District. Call 885-3267 for details.

Vermont Natural Resources Council
7 Main Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Montpelier, Vt.
Permit No. 285



April 8, 1986
1986/2

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
BAILEY LIBRARY
SERIALS DEPT
BURLINGTON VT
05405

Bulletin