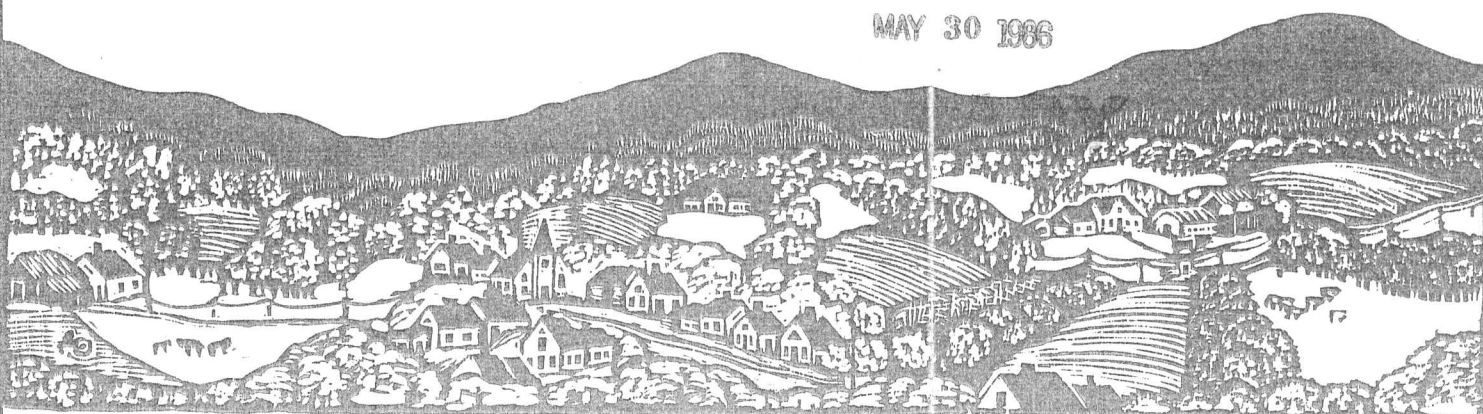


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May 23, 1986

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## 58th BIENNIUM HAILED AN ENVIRONMENTAL TRIUMPH

Vermont can truly be said to have regained a leadership role among conservation-minded states as a two-year record of environmental success was capped at the close of the 58th Biennium in early May. Some twenty bills were passed ranging from toxics cleanup, to water quality, wildlife protection, and solid waste management. Of the eleven bills that were actively followed and supported by VNRC during the 1986 session, ten survived to be signed by Governor Kunin!

"Thanks to the work of the VNRC membership, many hard working legislators, and the cooperation displayed among Vermont conservation, agricultural and hunting-fishing organizations, Vermont is back in the vanguard in its commitment to a clean environment," said VNRC Executive Director Monty Fischer.

One disappointment for environmentalists came in the final hours of the session, however, with the loss of H.295-- "the cumulative impacts" bill, which was released from Committee during the last week of the session to spark a heated, last minute tug-of-war between the House and Senate leadership. Although the full Senate never debated the bill on its merits--having lost that chance on two roll calls to suspend the rules--the bill also never achieved the strength preferred by VNRC. The growth management issue will continue to be a priority of the Council over the summer, and VNRC will work for legislative action in 1987.

A special word of thanks goes to the following members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee: Senators Arthur Gibb, Harvey Carter, George Little, Scudder Parker and Doug Racine. House members who contributed heavily include Representatives Stephen Reynes, Shirlee Arnold, Harry Pickering, Alice Bassett, Alice Emmons, Lixi Fortna, Mark MacDonald, Curt McCormack, Tim Burke, Don Hooper and Henry Carse. The staffs of the Departments of Water Resources, Solid Waste, and Fish & Wildlife and Health also worked hard in support of several bills.



## 1986 ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION PASSED

- H.55 - Endangered Species: Removes loopholes in the enforcement provisions and updates Vermont's endangered species list to comply with federal law.
- H.91 - Non-Game Checkoff: Establishes a box on the state tax return form allowing for voluntary contributions to a fund for non-hunted wildlife management.
- H.313 - Flow Control for Recyclables: Ensures that waste haulers and recycling operations have access to recyclable materials during trash collection.
- H.453 - Contaminated Soils: Requires a plan be developed and implemented for the safe disposal of oil and gas-soaked soils.
- H.459 - Septage & Sludge: Requires a plan be developed for the disposal of septage and sludge with consideration of regional facilities and reuse for fertilizer.
- H.462 - Asbestos Removal: Creates a state program for the removal of asbestos from public facilities.
- H.710 - Waterfowl Stamp: Requires that waterfowl hunters obtain a stamp, the proceeds of which will go to the improvement of migratory waterfowl habitat.

- H.750 - Radioactive Waste: Establishes and funds an advisory commission to coordinate disposal of Vermont's low-level radioactive waste.
- H.751 - Statewide Solid Waste Plan: Resurrects the state solid waste management plan to emphasize reduction, reuse and recycling as solid waste disposal alternatives and requires Act 250 review for new wood and trash incineration plants.
- S.42 - Water Quality: Amends Vermont's Water Pollution Control Act to require permits from indirect discharges, expand pollution enforcement capabilities, and provide protection to high elevation streams.
- S.69 - Historic Districts: Creates enabling legislation for towns to protect scenic and historic areas and allow the use of transferable development rights.
- S.95 - Wetlands: Provides protection by the identification and designation of "significant" wetlands and by the addition of criteria in Act 250 and the local planning laws.
- S.263 - Irradiated Foods: Requires the labeling of all irradiated foods sold in Vermont. Irradiation is a food preservation technique with questionable health effects.

Several resolutions were also passed dealing with such subjects as household hazardous wastes, disposal of low-level radioactive waste and solid waste.

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#### CURRENT USE CURTAILED?

Besides the battles waged over water quality and growth management, one of the more troublesome issues to gain the Council's attention were the myriad tax reform proposals offered during the course of the session, many of which spelled doom in one form or another for the Current Use Taxation program. The effort to gut Current Use was spawned primarily by members of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee and made more confusing by several legislators' efforts to create a separate category within the program for farmers who earn at least 50% of their income from farming.

VNRC, the Vermont Farm Bureau, and the Current Use Tax Coalition worked jointly to form a proposal that would have allowed straight use-value appraisal for full-time farmers without damaging or jeopardizing the C.U. program for other existing categories of forest and agricultural lands. The proposal became the basis for one aspect of the Senate-backed property tax relief bill. Yet the political windstorm surrounding tax reform later derailed the Senate plan, largely through an attempt by Way & Means Chair Rep. Tom Candon to split the program into two separately funded programs. The eventual settlement fortunately left Current Use intact and fully funded at \$4.2 million, but with the addition of a new category of landowners under the heading of "farmer".

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#### UPCOMING ACTIVITIES OF VNRC:

- o Monitoring an appeal by developers over a Stratton-area Act 250 decision to protect a critical deer yard habitat.
- o Intervening in a suit filed against the State of Vermont by Killington Ltd. that challenges a request by the District Environmental Commission to supply growth capacity data on new development applications.
- o Follow-up action on the new Pesticide Policy recently offered by the Kunin administration.
- o Regulatory watchdogging of several rulemaking processes for implementation of recently enacted environmental legislation, particularly regarding ground and surface waters.
- o Helping plan for upcoming New England environmental educators conference.

Call VNRC for copies of any of the bills above or for more information on the Council's activities at 223-2328. Look for a new VER coming soon!

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