

VNRC BULLETIN

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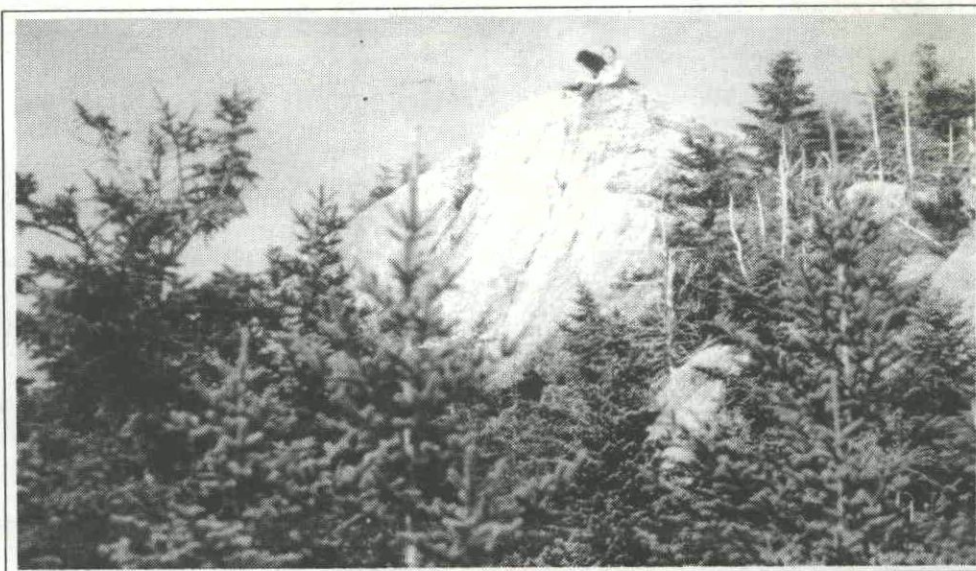
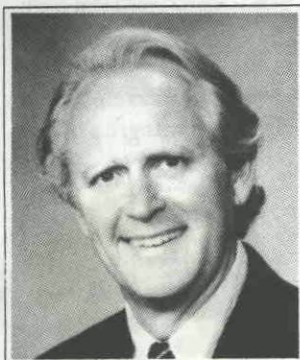
HOLMES LEADS SO. VERMONT OFFICE

VNRC's three-year-old Southern Vermont office in Manchester has tackled many issues of statewide importance, offering guidance, research, support and leadership in protecting Vermont's natural resources in the region.

This fall, VNRC welcomes Stephen Holmes as new Southern Vermont Program Director. Holmes replaces Marcy Mahr, who moved on to pursue graduate studies.

The former Vermont Commissioner of Housing and Community Affairs (1988-91), Holmes also served as head of the

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WORCESTER RANGE: THE FOREST AND THE PEOPLE

Central Vermont landowners, forest users, loggers and local officials have been getting involved this summer and fall in VNRC's Worcester Range project.

At meetings in Stowe, Worcester, Middlesex and Waterbury, residents offered thoughtful input toward the project's final goal: a balanced plan of action that recognizes the 3,000-foot peaks of the Worcester Range both as

an outstanding natural resource, and as the foundation of the region's important forest industry.

Located just a few miles from the state capital, the range is fertile ground for forestry, wildlife, hiking, and wilderness views. But with ownership split among hundreds of landowners, uncoordinated development could threaten the natural resource base.

At the meetings, VNRC's Jim Shallow has heard a

wide range of views on conservation and land use goals and how to achieve them.

"We've heard general agreement that VNRC is on the right track," says Shallow, "with our effort to find common ground among the wide spectrum of users and landowners."

VNRC is completing an economic assessment of the area's forest economy and potential; results will be released later this fall. •

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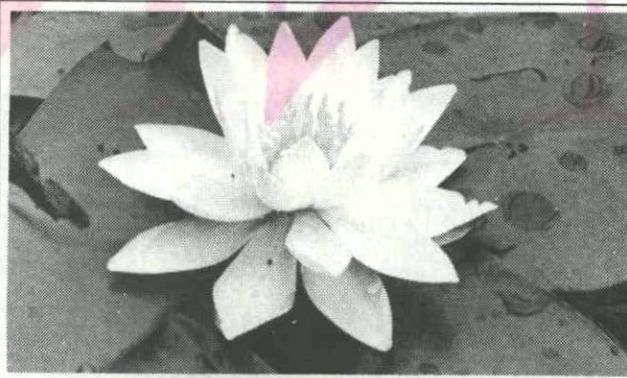
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The Vermont Natural Resources Council is a non-profit environmental organization founded in 1963 to promote the wise use of Vermont's natural resources.

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VNRC membership includes a subscription to the VNRC Bulletin and the Vermont Environmental Report magazine. For an individual membership, send \$25.00 to the address above.



BETTER RULES FOR WETLANDS

The Vermont Water Resources Board is considering changes in its eighteen-month-old wetlands rules, now that the state has some experience with how they work — or don't work.

More protection is needed for Class I and II wetlands, the two highest levels, says VNRC legal consultant Chris Kilian. VNRC is also seeking clarification in the process by

which wetlands are categorized.

This fall will be a critical stage in the review, according to Kilian. "It's an extremely important issue because wetlands are under great pressure from developers," says Kilian, adding that the Bush administration's efforts to weaken federal wetlands protection make strong state rules even more important. •

FOREST LEGACY FUNDS AWAITED

Inspired by the Northern Forests Lands Study, the federal Forest Legacy program would provide money to purchase conservation easements on forest land in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire and New York.

VNRC's Andrea Colnes, who serves on the state Legacy Committee, notes that ten potential pilot sites in Vermont sites have

been identified. At this writing, the Senate has authorized \$6 million for FY 1992. Although below the targeted amount, the funding makes the critical step of establishing a working forest lands protection program. Vermont Sen. Patrick Leahy has been the leader in securing funds. A conference committee will make a final funding recommendation this fall. •

NO CONDOS FOR BEARS

Following its victory in the Tamarack development case, VNRC is now working to protect the critical bear habitat that was at the center of debate.

When the proposed 180-unit resort in southern Vermont was denied an Act 250 permit this spring, the permit denial clearly backed the protection of key bear travel corridors that would have been disrupted by the resort. However, the 1,492-acre parcel remains a potential development target.

VNRC is now working with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Forest Service on a coordinated plan to acquire the critical bear travel corridors and feeding areas.

Diane Newton, VNRC Southern Vermont Research and Administration Coordinator, notes that the towns of Jamaica and Stratton both favor some development. VNRC, in cooperation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, is now working with the developers and towns to insure that any development which occurs will not affect the integrity of the bear habitat. •

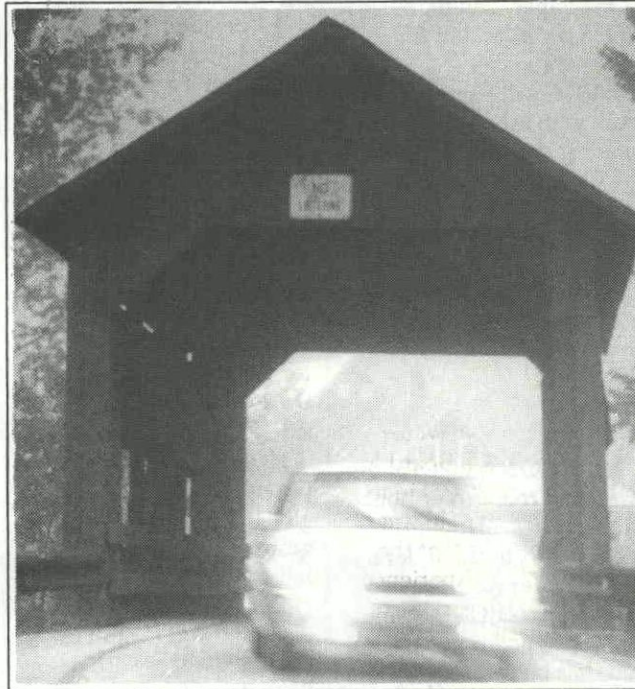


TRANSPORTATION: THE LONG ROAD AHEAD

Due out this fall, the Vermont Agency of Transportation's draft Policy Plan is intended to guide Vermont's long-term transportation decision-making and investment. Governor Howard Dean has been a long-time supporter of alternative transportation, and conservationists are hopeful that he will have a positive impact on the plan.

VNRC Land Use Director Peg Elmer notes, "Public input on the draft will be the most important force shaping Vermont's transportation future." Public hearings are scheduled through November. Contact Lloyd Robinson at the Agency of Transportation (828-2657) for details.

Elmer has also been working with a national coalition for a federal bill with incentives for conservation and alternative transportation. The impetus is re-authorization of the 30-year-old federal Transportation Act. A bill



backed by VNRC won Senate approval; efforts now center in the House.

Meanwhile, VNRC continues its opposition to the \$2.1-million Bolton I-89 interchange proposal, questioning its need and the lack of analysis of its impact

in spurring unplanned development.

"The legislative mood of fiscal conservatism will severely hamper the project's funding chances," notes Elmer. "Public pressure at this time could put the last nail in the coffin." •

SATELLITE MAPS UNVEILED

At a conference in East Burke this September, VNRC presented draft satellite imagery-based maps which will identify changes in Vermont's northern forests over the past 20 years. They will also depict the cover type and offer a rough age classification of the resource.

"Community involvement is key to planning for the future of our northern forests," says VNRC's Andrea Colnes. "The maps will help Vermonters make sound decisions on forest resources and the timber economy." Conferees included conservation, recreation, forestry and timber representatives from throughout the region. •

WINHALL RIVER PROTECTION

The Friends of the Winhall River and VNRC got mixed results from the Vermont Water Resources Board on a petition to have eleven miles of the river reclassified. The Board upgraded the upper eight miles to "A," but left the lower three miles classified "B."

Debate now moves to the Act 250 permit process. VNRC is preparing its case. Hearings are expected to begin as early as this fall. •

NEW COUNCIL ON NORTHERN FOREST LANDS

The governors of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York this summer appointed the Northern Forest Lands Council.

"VNRC is glad to support the formation of the Council, and its far-sighted

objectives," says VNRC Policy Director Andrea Colnes. The Council's purpose is to develop strategies to conserve the economic, environmental and societal values of the regions northern forest lands. It is a non-regulatory body

with no authority to purchase or regulate land.

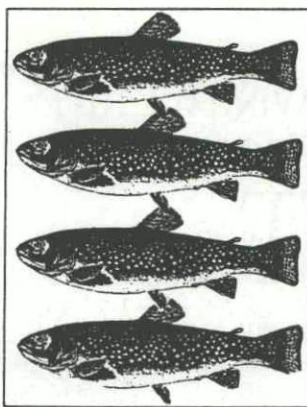
Vermont members are Conrad Moytko (Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation), Brendan Whittaker (conservationist), and Peter B. Meyer (forest industry). •

COBB BROOK UPGRADED

The Vermont Water Resources Board voted in August to upgrade the classification of Cobb Brook, putting a successful end to a two-year effort by VNRC, the towns of Windham and Jamaica, and the Friends of Cobb Brook to protect the pristine, six-mile stream.

Cobb Brook originates in the town of Windham and flows southerly through Hamilton Falls into the West River in the town of Jamaica.

Through organizing, research and testimony, VNRC was instrumental in the reclassification. With the boost from Class B to Class A, the scenic stream



now has Vermont's highest level of protection.

Surrounding landowners' development plans are still unclear. Diane Newton, who headed VNRC's petition effort from the southern Vermont office, says, "There is still uncertainty

over the long-range plans of Magic Mountain Ski Area, as well as of International Paper Company, which owns land in the upper watershed."

VNRC will continue to work with area residents to monitor development in the Cobb Brook area. ●

CLEANING UP THE ACT

VNRC has taken a lead role in Vermont this year in seeking improvements in the federal Clean Water Act. Steve Crowley, VNRC's wetlands and water policy consultant, has been meeting with the Vermont congressional delegation, putting special emphasis on opposing any weakening of federal wetlands protection.

The Act is up for reauthorization, opening the door for weaknesses to be addressed. With a coalition of Vermont environmental groups, VNRC is working to tighten loopholes on treatment and discharge of toxics, and improve pollution prevention.

The battle against gutting wetlands protection is being fought on several fronts. Besides opposing federal bills that would ease wetlands restrictions for developers, VNRC is also fighting a rewrite of the federal wetlands manual that would severely cut wetland areas. ●

AGRICULTURE, THE SWISS WAY

Vermont and New Hampshire land use professionals joined dairy farmers and vegetable growers this summer in taking a lesson from our farming friends overseas. VNRC Communication Director Susan Clark, along with representatives from twenty organizations and farms, travelled the Alps for ten days as part of the Swiss/New England Hillside Farming Exchange.

Hosted by the Swiss Group for Mountain Regions, a powerful advocacy group, the group toured hillside and high alpine regions. Meetings and field work allowed for the exchange of ideas with many Swiss farmers, foresters, business people, researchers and planners.

"What struck our group the most was the society-wide support of hillside farming," notes Clark. "From the cheesemaker to

the tourist resort owner, the Swiss vocally support the need for farmers to make a living in the hills. And so far, the Swiss citizen has shown that he is willing to put his money where his mouth is."

Switzerland has instituted a system of subsidies that allows farmers to make a living, in the long-time Swiss tradition, high on their alpine slopes. Farmers have strong, constitutionally guaranteed representation in the Swiss government.

Exchange participants are now discussing plans for bringing insights gained from the Swiss trip to bear fruit in Vermont.

Vermonters interested in meeting Swiss farmers and foresters will get a chance on October 5 - 15, when the Swiss group will visit Vermont. For information on events, contact Susan Clark at VNRC. ●

RIGHT-OF-WAY QUESTIONS

Many private lake-side camps in Groton State Forest have no deeded right-of-way, an obstacle to their sale and loan value. Landowners want the situation fixed, but the decision could have statewide implications.

"The state has hundreds of landlocked parcels," says

VNRC's Jim Shallow, who serves on a legislative committee addressing the problem. "If the state is going to grant a right-of way on public land, we want to make sure that there is a clear public benefit." The panel is drafting recommendations to give the legislature by the year's end. ●



COMMENT

NEW BULLETIN: GOOD NEWS

Welcome to the new VNRC *Bulletin*! Members are used to getting the latest conservation news from us through the *Vermont Environmental Report* magazine, and in the past, a one-page *Bulletin* has served to update members between magazines, especially during the legislative session.

But with VNRC's programs increasing by leaps and bounds in recent years, we have been hard-pressed to fit all we're doing into the one-page format. Enter the new look — one we hope will provide you with the up-to-date information you need to stay active in protecting Vermont's natural resources. Please let us know what you think!

Of course, members will continue to receive the *Vermont Environmental Report*. Keep an eye out for the winter issue, which will cover growth issues.

Publications are the backbone of VNRC's education work, but by no means do we stop here. Environmental education in Vermont is more active than ever, and VNRC plays a central role. Members interested in these programs are encouraged to call Susan Clark at VNRC to get involved. ●

NORTHERN FORESTS PROTECTION PROJECT UPDATE

This summer VNRC began holding "living room workshops" as part of its ambitious Northern Forest Protection Project. The small, informal gatherings in communities throughout northern Vermont towns are an effort to get an informed dialogue going about northern forest issues and the goals of VNRC's project.

The project, concerning two million acres of forest land in northern Vermont, has three major goals: to protect important environmental resources; maintain a sustainable forest products industry in the region; and to enhance the area's economy and communities. According to VNRC Policy Director Andrea Colnes, "When people learn about

the real stresses facing Vermont's northern forest and the local and regional timber industry, the need for creative solutions is better understood." She notes, "Strong forces for change are at work, and residents realize that development pressures and the troubled timber economy can affect both our environment and way of life." ●

WOOD TO ENERGY

Initial testing has begun on technology for a power plant that would use clean-burning wood gasification to generate electricity. VNRC's Andrea Colnes, who serves on a

committee evaluating the proposal, notes that VNRC is monitoring the technology "with an eye both to its positive use of a local renewable resource, and its potential negative environ-

mental impacts on air and forests." Both the Bennington and Burlington areas are interested in providing locations for the 18-20 megawatt plant, which would be a world first. ●

VNRC STAFF INVITED TO NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Executive Director Ned Farquhar represented VNRC at the National Growth Management Leadership Project in Oregon this summer. The meeting was a chance to share ideas on growth issues with representatives from sixteen states. Oregon's "urban growth boundaries" offers incentives to center growth in targeted areas while protecting farmland and forests. The model may be useful in this year's legislative discussion of a Vermont "growth centers" bill, Farquhar notes.

Farquhar was also the keynote speaker before the

Virginia Legislature's Growth Commission.

Policy Director Andrea Colnes was invited to Washington in July to participate in a week-long conference by the National Wildlife Federation. With sessions on the Endangered Species Act, ancient forests protection, and how to ensure that the U.S. Forest Service doesn't abandon multi-use management priorities, the conference focused on issues currently before Congress — many of which could have considerable impact in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest.

Resource Conservation Director Jim Shallow went to New Mexico in June for a two-day invitational conference exploring logging methods that can preserve both jobs and the forest resource. According to Shallow, innovative ideas were described that may be useful in Vermont. For example, participants discussed marketing wood that has been cut in environmentally sound fashion — "sort of wood with a green label," says Shallow. "The label could someday mean extra value for made-in-Vermont — or cut-in-Vermont — forest products," he says. ●

ACHIEVEMENT HONORED, PLANS CHARTED

A lot of people see VNRC as an environmental 'rescue squad,' rushing to save natural resources," says VNRC Executive Director Ned Farquhar. But VNRC has another role: looking beyond the day-to-day crises to see what problems may lie in the years ahead — and how to address them.

This year, VNRC board and staff have been developing a strategy for the future. An important component has been coordinating with other environmental groups. The year-long process of focus sessions, staff workshops, and meetings with members has resulted in a draft outline. It will be reviewed and fleshed out this fall and then presented to the VNRC board for adoption in January.

The most recent discussion of the plan with members occurred at a workshop at the September VNRC Annual Meeting.

In addition to looking forward at the meeting, VNRC took time to look back and honor outstanding environmental accomplishments. Long-time VNRC friends **Kit and Tom Foster** of Bennington were honored for their years of community leadership in environmental protection. Forester **James Wilkinson** was lauded for his tireless efforts in forest policy and practice. ●



Above: VNRC Executive Director Ned Farquhar and Board Chair Sarah Muyskens share a laugh with Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy and keynote speaker Senator Gaylord Nelson at VNRC's September Annual Meeting. VNRC honored Leahy with its 1991 Conservation Award.

CALENDAR

October 16

The Forestry Communications Council, in conjunction with the UVM Extension Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Vermont Department of Water Resources, presents **Logging In and Around Vermont Wetlands: A Workshop for Loggers and Foresters**. VNRC's Jim Shallow will be speaking on the Vermont wetland rules. For more information, call UVM Aiken Center at (802) 656-3258.

October 18

Amy Jestes, Agricultural Land Use Planner with the Vermont Department of Agriculture, will be leading a workshop on **Agriculture and Planning** at Woodbury College in Montpelier from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The workshop will review the economic and political forces affecting agriculture in Vermont, and techniques and strategies for identifying, evaluating, and protecting important agricultural land. Contact Woodbury College at 1-800-639-6039 or (802) 229-0516.

October 21, 24, 28 and November 4

Come join Steve Holmes, the new Director of VNRC's Southern Vermont Office, and VNRC Execu-

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tive Director Ned Farquhar, at a **VNRC Community Meeting**. Have some cider and a donut, and bring your questions on VNRC's programs and issues. All meetings run from 7:00-8:30 p.m. October 21, Fox Room, Rutland Free Library; October 24, First Vermont Bank Room, Bennington Free Library; October 28, Southern Vermont Office; November 4, Meeting Room, Brattleboro Brooks Memorial Library. Call VNRC for more information at (802)362-3113 or 223-2328.

November 7 and 19

VNRC presents **Protecting Vermont's Northern Forests — Looking for a**

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Vermont Solution, a panel discussion on economic and environmental issues. The discussion will be held twice: at the Woodstock Inn in Woodstock on November 7 and in Burlington on November 19. Both panels run from 7:00-9:00 p.m. Call Jim Shallow at VNRC for more information, (802) 223-2328.

December 13

Woodbury College is offering a workshop on **Tax Policy and Land Use Planning**. Deb Brighton will lead an exploration of how tax policy affects land use planning. Participants will also learn the structure of the property tax, tax reform proposals, and how to calculate the property tax "consequences" of project-

ed developments. 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Contact Woodbury College for information at 1-800-639-6039 or (802) 229-0516.

January 25

Come to a half-day workshop on hot environmental issues affecting Vermont. At VNRC's **Citizen Lobbying Day**, workshop leaders will inform you about about key environmental bills and how you can affect their outcome. Call Andrea Colnes at VNRC for more information, (802) 223-2328. This event is free and open to the public.

January 28 and February 3

Join VNRC's Peg Elmer and Andrea Colnes for **Energy Efficient Transportation: A Vision for Vermont in the Year 2010**. Panel members will include Karle Snyder, Federal Highway Administration; Scudder Parker, Department of Public Service; Betsy Rosenbluth, City of Burlington; and Rebecca Day, Brattleboro Board of Selectmen. January 28, Deja Vu Cafe, Burlington; and February 3, Putney Inn, Putney, Vermont. Both events run from 7:30-9:00 p.m. Desserts and beverages will be served. For more information, call Peg Elmer at VNRC (802) 223-2328.

VNRC NOTES



Above: Monty Fischer of the National Wildlife Federation holds members spellbound with tales of Champ and Lake Champlain on a field trip at the VNRC Annual Meeting.

DANCING AND SINGING FOR VNRC

VNRC members and friends had special reason to celebrate the environment this summer, as several groups donated their talents to benefit VNRC's natural resource protection work. Putney

area residents turned out in large numbers to enjoy "Offerings for Mother," a series of dance performances celebrating our connection to the Earth. And in Montpelier, a crowd enjoyed a concert

by Matrix, a women's Balkan singing group, and the Wilder Singers, a Vermont environmental folk group.

VNRC offers heartfelt thanks to these artists for their spirited contribution to conservation. ●

HOLMES

Continued from page 1

Windham Regional Planning Commission and the Upper Valley/Lake Sunapee Council.

"The critical mass of population and transportation corridors, and the relative proximity to the Northeast's largest metropolitan areas, make Southern Vermont the front line of development pressures," says Holmes. He foresees the major issues to include rivers and wetlands protection, wildlife habitat, and Act 250 interventions in development projects.

"VNRC's Southern Vermont office is very important for supporting local people in their efforts," says Executive Director Ned Farquhar, "and Steve's skills and interests are ideal for the job." ●

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VNRC
BULLETIN

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