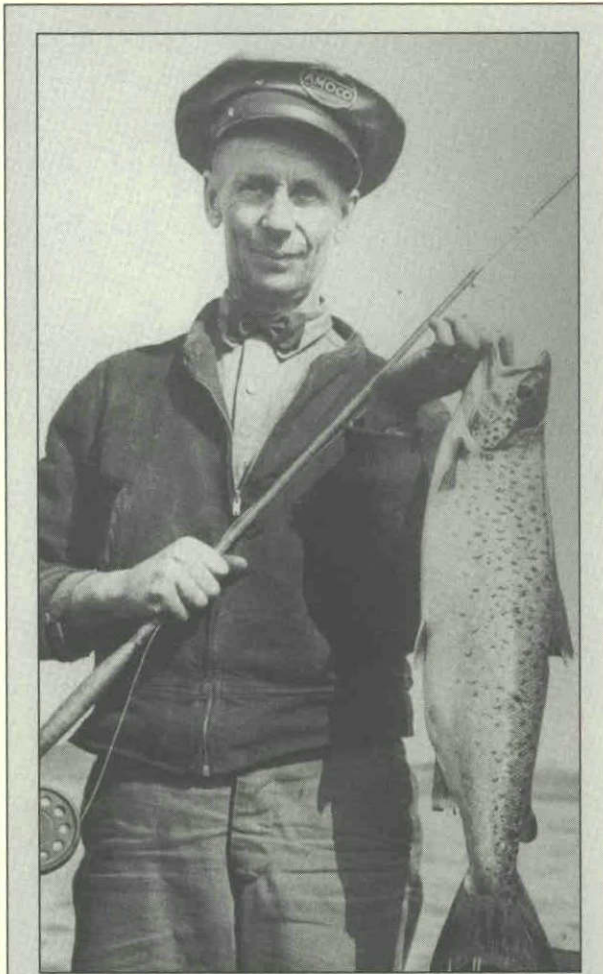


# River Action

Summer/Fall 1995

Published  
by the  
Vermont  
Natural  
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Council  
and  
River Watch  
Network



**Back when the Clyde was prime for salmon,** *this gent caught a beauty — and someday soon the big fish could be on their way back. "People once traveled from all over New England to fish the river's fabled fall and spring runs," writes Kevin Coffey in the article "Reclaiming the Clyde" on page 4. Thanks largely to efforts by the Northeast Kingdom Chapter of Trout Unlimited, federal and state regulators have called for the permanent removal of the dam that ended the once-legendary run. This issue carries articles on the efforts by volunteer groups to monitor, advocate for, and improve the Clyde and 12 other Vermont rivers.*

## INTRODUCTION: SPEAKING FOR THE STREAMS

**T**his is the first issue of *River Action*, a new newsletter that reports on the efforts all over Vermont by citizen groups working to protect rivers and streams. This newsletter has been put together as a step in forming the Vermont River Action Network (VRAN), a statewide effort being organized by the Vermont Natural Resources Council and the River Watch Network.

As this issue shows, volunteer river-protection groups in Vermont are diverse, but they share a common concern. Growing pressures to tap into our natural resources have made it more vital than ever for citizens and communities throughout Vermont to support the protection and restoration of Vermont's waters.

### WHAT IS THE RIVER ACTION NETWORK?

The Vermont River Action Network is a joint initiative of VNRC and River Watch, set up to develop lines of communication among groups and individuals interested in river quality. The Network is being funded by a generous grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust and the Ward M. and Marian C. Canaday Educational and Charitable Trust.

Rivers all over the state are threatened by sewage discharges, industrial wastes, damaging land-use practices, urban and agricultural runoff, hydroelectric projects, water

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withdrawal and general neglect. The Vermont River Action Network has been formed to help involve community members, students, and others in the protection, enhancement, and preservation of Vermont rivers and watersheds.

By connecting Vermont's river-protection efforts to one another, the network will both foster protection and serve as an educational tool, giving groups that are just starting up the opportunity to learn from seasoned organizations.

While an impressive array of groups have contributed to this newsletter, the list of contributors by no means represents the only groups working to improve and protect Vermont's rivers. A statewide VRAN conference in Montpelier on October 27 will bring together all interested river groups in Vermont to further enhance direct contact and communication across the network.

## THE ROLES OF RIVER WATCH NETWORK AND VNRC

River Watch Network is a Montpelier-based, nationally focused river monitoring and protection organization that brings together citizens — including conservationists, business owners, farmers, anglers, town officials, and others — who have diverse interests in their local rivers. River Watch Network helps them organize, raise funds, and carry out scientifically credible water-quality monitoring. As citizens begin to learn about the sources of problems in their river, River Watch helps them connect with agencies and individuals that can help them carry out improvement and protection projects.

VRAN faces policy challenges as well, and the Vermont Natural Resources Council is committed to providing comprehensive strategies for specific watershed protection and for effective

statewide policy. VNRC will help groups use the information they collect to improve water quality. VNRC is committed to aiding every group's efforts by offering its familiarity with Vermont's laws and regulations for river protection.

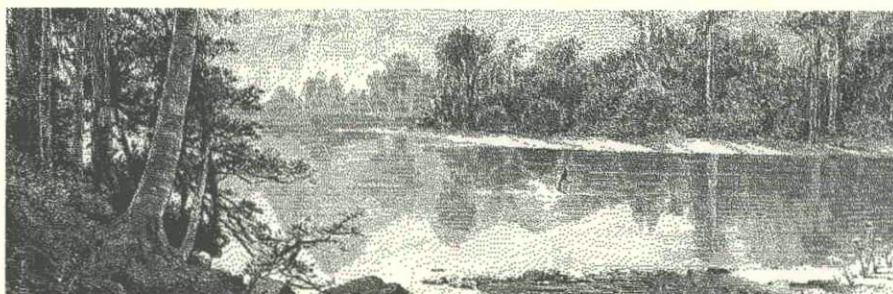
## GAINING WIDESPREAD INVOLVEMENT

The Vermont River Action Network aims to encourage grass-roots efforts, not only within communities but also among towns and planning regions through which the same rivers flow. VRAN invites

any group that seeks to protect or restore water quality to become part of the Vermont River Action Network.

Most of the articles in *River Action* have been written by volunteers who are members or officers of the group being profiled. In those cases, we have credited the authors. Other articles were prepared by VNRC and River Watch, with help from members of the citizen groups.

*For more information about the Vermont River Action Network, please call Christopher Kilian at VNRC, (802) 223-2328, or Steve Dickens at River Watch Network, (802) 223-3840.*



# WILL CONGRESS GUT THE CLEAN WATER ACT?

## *A Bid to Do That Brings a Call for Citizen Action*

Since its passage in 1972, the federal Water Pollution Control Act, known today as the Clean Water Act, has been the foundation for effective protection of Vermont's water quality. By creating regulatory standards for water quality protection, fostering watershed planning, and protecting high-quality waters, the CWA has greatly improved the health of Vermont's water resources.

The Act regulates point-source discharges of pollution from industry and municipalities, along with runoff from agricultural activities and development. It also regulates the draining and filling of wetlands, which recharge ground water, provide wildlife habitat, and filter pollutants.

Still, water pollution continues to take a toll in Vermont. The state's wetlands have already been reduced by 35 percent. And the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has emphasized that polluted runoff and alteration of stream flow continue to adversely impact thousands of miles of

*The bill passed by the House of Representatives would effectively eliminate the current protective standards.*

Vermont's rivers.

Reauthorization of the Clean Water Act is currently pending in Congress — but the bill passed by the House of Representatives would effectively eliminate the current protective standards, and would severely limit the CWA's effectiveness. The Senate will be considering CWA proposals before the end of this year.

If the CWA is weakened, Vermont's water resources would be placed at much greater risk. However, concerned citizens are not without leverage. In this state, the Vermont Natural Resources Council is coordinating the fight to strengthen the CWA. Organizations in the Vermont River Action Network that are interested in mobilizing to oppose the proposed CWA changes, and to seek changes that would strengthen the act, should stay in contact with VNRC.

*To find out more about how to get involved, contact Chris Kilian at VNRC, 223-2328.*

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