

# Bulletin

## 1996 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Published by the Vermont Natural Resources Council

The 1996 legislative session offers renewed opportunities for Vermonters who care about their environment—and that should surely include our elected representatives in the House and Senate. Advocates for conservation and environmental responsibility have well-known foes, particularly in Washington, D.C., who were not sleeping during Vermont's political "off season." With the Legislature back in session, we can focus our intellects and energies on positive steps Vermonters can take to protect their natural resources and the opportunities those resources provide us.

Particularly, the Legislature must use the 1996 session to affirm the close relationship between successful environmental protection and a sustaining, and sustainable, economy. VNRC's Legislative Platform puts forth positions and proposals in several areas where attention to conservation will enhance that relationship: Forestry practices that discourage waste and contamination, and enhance the economic and recreational value of forest lands; targeted economic development that makes the best use of both settled and unsettled lands; property tax reform supportive of Current Use, which relieves the formidable economic pressures on natural lands and resources; fees for water use to aid a vibrant and diverse recreation industry.

The strident opponents of conservation are discovering that they have galvanized an electorate that distrusts their motivations. Seventy percent of respondents to an ABC/*The Washington Post* poll last summer said the federal government had not gone far enough to protect the environment. Vermont's public servants must not make the same mistakes as their Washington, D.C., counterparts.

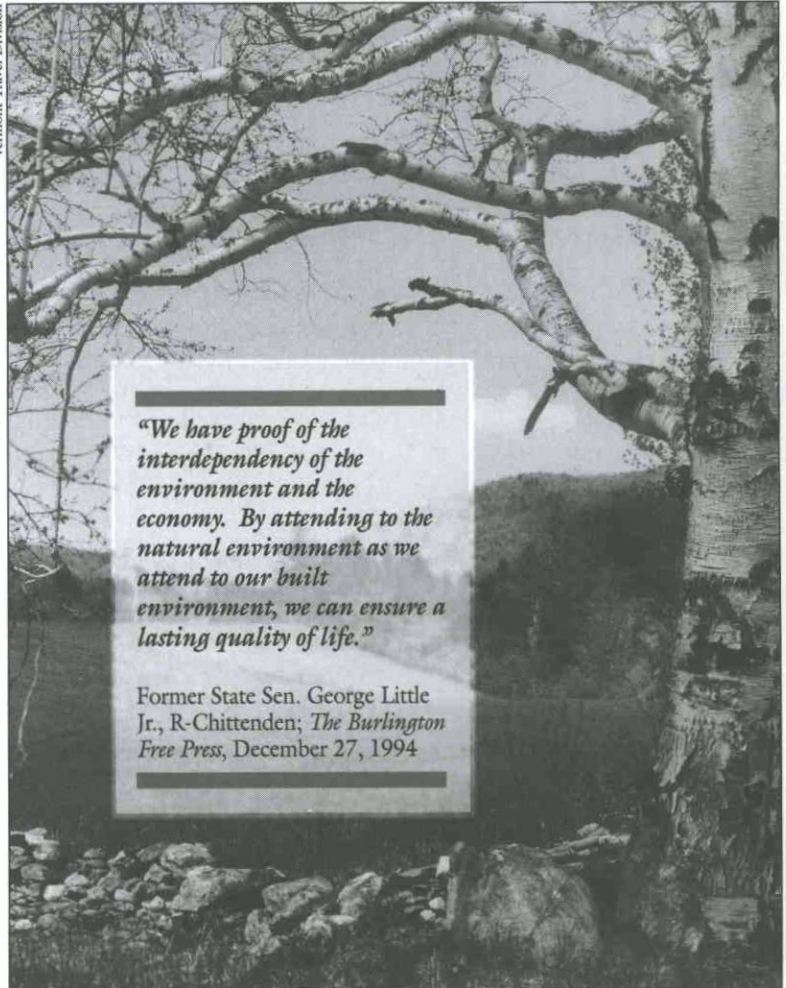
Do Vermonters—eyeing clean, verdant hillsides, drinking water purified with their tax dollars by municipal facilities, or breathing air freed of the taint from tailpipes or smokestacks—feel they are *too* protected by their government? Apparently not. Instead, Vermonters recognize that a fouled and abused environment is the label of economic and social disarray. It is clear which course Vermont lawmakers must pursue.

### FOREST RESOURCES

Last year the Legislature passed a law addressing the increasing liquidation and fragmentation of Vermont's forests. The law attempts to discourage timber liquidation by extending Vermont's land gains tax to cover profits made on timber harvests. Vermont's Forest Resources Advisory Council (FRAC) was also reactivated and

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Vermont Travel Division



*"We have proof of the interdependency of the environment and the economy. By attending to the natural environment as we attend to our built environment, we can ensure a lasting quality of life."*

Former State Sen. George Little Jr., R-Chittenden; *The Burlington Free Press*, December 27, 1994