

# Bulletin

## HISTORIC DAM REMOVAL FREES LEGENDARY WATERS

*VNRC Continues to Push for Restoration*

Published  
by the  
Vermont  
Natural  
Resources  
Council,  
Inc.

When the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) recommended removal of the Newport No. 11 dam in June, much cheering ensued among advocates for the Clyde River. This marked the first time the agency said a dam should be taken down to restore a river.

Several years of tireless efforts and hard-nosed negotiating paid off when Citizens Utilities began removing the dam in mid-August. Total removal will be completed by October 1, 1996, to reduce threats to spawning salmon.

But destruction of the dam after years of battling with Citizens Utilities, although a significant victory, is only

an important first step in the effort to restore the ecological integrity of the Clyde River. The Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), Trout Unlimited, and other citizen and government groups know it will take more than just the settling of dirt and dust from the detonations to nurse the river back to its historically healthy self.

"Removal of the dam doesn't mean much if the other parts of the ecological equation aren't in place," cautioned Chris Kilian, VNRC's Water Program Director and Staff Attorney, who has been engaged in the fight to restore the lower reaches

of the river for more than four years.

"The Clyde without the dam is great, but now we need to concentrate on the things that create a living, functioning river," Kilian added.

In fact, the obvious advance achieved with the removal of the dam is of little ecological consequence if important factors such as management of reservoir levels to protect wetlands and maintenance of appropriate flows that provide for fish passage and habitat protection are not achieved. These will be important issues in next

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*Dynamite blasts through a section of the Newport No. 11 on the Clyde River, marking the first time in our nation's history that a dam is removed for environmental reasons.*



Sandy Macy



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The Vermont Natural Resources Council, Inc., is a nonprofit environmental organization founded in 1963 to protect Vermont's natural resources and environment for present and future generations through research, education, and advocacy.

VNRC is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

VNRC membership includes a subscription to the *Bulletin* (published three times a year) and the *Vermont Environmental Report* magazine (published twice annually). For an individual membership, send \$35.00 to VNRC.

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## CLYDE RIVER

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year's discussions with Citizens Utilities, as the utility seeks a water quality certification from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

Citizens Utilities claims to have an interest in restoring public confidence in their daily operations in Vermont. VNRC will adopt a wait-and-see attitude, however, because with the Utility's track record, actions will speak louder than words.

"We are going to keep the pressure on," said Kilian.



VNRC's Steve Holmes (left) surveys the Clyde River dam shortly after the first blast.

Sandy Macy

## COLD BROOK RECLASSIFIED

The Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) worked with activists in the Wilmington/Dover area in southern Vermont to successfully petition the Vermont Water Resources Board to reclassify a portion of Cold Brook (in the Town of Dover) from Class B to Class A water late in August. Because Cold Brook originates between the Mount Snow and Haystack Mountain ski areas, Mount Snow Limited opposed the reclassification and asked the Board to dismiss the petition.

The Board's decision to grant the petition is a strong recognition of the high quality and ecological significance of Cold Brook, a headwater stream that plays a critical role in maintaining and improving the integrity of waters downstream.

Streams like Cold Brook are highly susceptible to degradation resulting from human activity. As such, they merit a higher standard of regulatory protection. With the reclassification of Cold Brook to Class A, any future

development proposals that might potentially affect the stream will have to meet the highest standards of stream protection.

## CURRENT USE SHIFTS TO LOCALITIES

*VNRC Commissions  
White Paper to Clarify*

The legislature shifted financial responsibility for the Current Use Program over to towns with the 1996 appropriations bill. Besides reinstating a penalty for withdrawal from the program, the bill created a "hold harmless" fund of \$4.7 million to reimburse those towns with property tax shifts greater than 1.8 cents. These changes were attempts to continue discouraging the development of working farm and forest land while dealing with the history of state underfunding for the program.

In the weeks following the session, however, confusion reigned and widespread uncertainty about program changes caused divisiveness in

many towns. Because the legislative action came so late, many towns had to recalculate their grand list and tax rate.

"Some people believe it was unfair to ask towns to pay for a program with statewide benefits," explains Jim Shallow, Forest and Outreach Programs Director. Consequently, four towns—Barnard, Bridgewater, Reading, and Halifax—voted



## DREAM STREAM

An Opening Reception at  
the Stephen Huneck  
Gallery  
To Benefit VNRC  
Saturday, October 5th,  
3:00 til 7:00 pm

The Huneck Gallery will  
donate 20% of all sales on  
October 5th to VNRC.

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