

Bulletin

VNRC HONORS ITS 35TH YEAR

*Vermont's
Environmental
Guardian Since 1963*



The first year in Vermont state history when humans outnumbered cows was 1963, according to a chronology prepared by the Vermont Historical Society.

Perhaps then, it should come as no surprise that 1963 was also the year that gave birth to the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC).

During the coming year, we will be celebrating our 35 grand—and sometimes tough and gritty—years of protecting Vermont's environment. We hope you will join us in appreciating the many accomplishments of our organization: Many important environmental protections in Vermont have come from the devoted work of VNRC members, volunteers, activists, and staff.

Let's celebrate together!

SKI AREA SPRAWL

When to Say "No!"

By the turn of the millennium (if not already) Vermont will be one of the most desirable places to visit in our nation. Many millions of visitors will come to Vermont to enjoy its natural and cultural bounty.

But Elizabeth Courtney, VNRC's Executive Director, cautions, "With the advent of renewed mountain resort growth comes the concern: When is too much of a good thing no longer a good thing?"

As a region, Vermont is accessible,

beautiful, rich in natural and cultural heritage, available to visitors from all over the world as a recreational and spiritual resource.

Likewise, many of this nation's most cherished places are dramatically degraded from over use, poor planning and ill-guided land use policy. In some instances, the resource may have been protected, but the surrounding areas have been so carelessly developed that the experience of getting there significantly detracts from the experience of being there.

Is Vermont potentially vulnerable to the same issues plaguing many of our nationally recognized treasures?

For the past ten years, VNRC has been involved with state and Killington officials in the negotiations that led to the complex package of land swaps and ski area expansion plans. Even though VNRC has been supportive overall of the land swap, VNRC has always been very up front about two major areas of concern: Any agreement has to have adequate water quality protections as well as careful attention to future growth plans at the Killington base area. Killington has responded to VNRC's concern over the water quality issue in the Ottauquechee River by investing in access to the Alpine Pipeline. Killington is to be commended for this effort.

Because VNRC wanted to reserve the right to express

concerns about these issues as the process unfolds, we chose not to endorse the land swap package back in 1996. Though VNRC endorsed the concept, we want to remain in a position where we could continue to watchdog Killington's future growth plans on behalf of Vermont's environment.

Many Vermonters are probably unaware that Killington's plan authorizes the ski resort to construct a chair lift, known as Lift #4, and associated ski trails in a very steep, pristine watershed area between the two ski mountains.

It is also not widely known that Lift #4 is *not* a necessary component of the interconnect between the two ski areas and is unrelated to the land swap, which gives state owned lands to Killington in exchange for the Parker's Gore bear habitat. This lift is a development that anticipates significant new growth at Killington.

"Although we have consistently endorsed the land swap, recognizing the environmental benefit of preserving this prime bear habitat and the economic benefit of allowing Killington and Pico to interconnect, we question the wisdom of allowing Killington to build Lift #4," Courtney remarked. "We remain deeply concerned that the proposed Lift #4 can only damage what is a unique and pristine high-elevation watershed potentially leading to excessive growth in the region."