

# Bulletin & Legislative Platform

Published  
by the  
Vermont  
Natural  
Resources  
Council,  
Inc.

## THIS YEAR'S TOP ISSUES AT A GLANCE:

### ACT 250

- Strengthen Act 250 in several areas such as: granting Supreme Court appeal rights to all parties in Act 250 proceedings; enabling review of cumulative impacts and requiring master plans for large-scale, multi-year, phased development projects like ski area expansion; and making it possible for Act 250 projects to be denied if they do not conform to traffic criterion 5. Reject attempts to weaken citizen participation.

### CITIZEN ENFORCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

- Vermont should follow the lead of many states and the federal government and allow citizens to take polluters to court to enforce the laws that we already have on the books.

### SPRAWL / GROWTH CENTERS / PROTECTING OPEN SPACE

- To counter sprawl, enable the creation of growth centers in which development is encouraged and supported and state funding for infrastructure is targeted. At the same time, implement measures to permanently protect open land and to discourage state infrastructure investment outside growth centers.
- Restore full funding for Municipal and Regional Planning Fund and Housing and Conservation Trust Fund.
- Insure that on-site sewage disposal policy and any use of alternative

sewage treatment technologies consider land use impacts. Close the ten-acre loophole in state subdivision regulations.

### TAX SHIFTING

- Consider the concept of land value taxation that would enable cities and towns to increase taxes on land values in their downtown centers while decreasing taxes on downtown building values if they choose.
- Consider increasing the land gains tax for land most threatened by sprawl development.
- Appoint a study committee to investigate revenue-neutral tax shifting options to benefit the environment and the economy.

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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 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.

The *Bulletin* is printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink. However, please recycle this issue by sharing it with your family and friends!

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## WATER RESOURCES

- Support stormwater legislation that addresses urban runoff.
- Require unlicensed hydroelectric power facilities to comply with the Vermont Water Quality Standards.

## ACID DEPOSITION OF MERCURY AND ACID RAIN

- Resolve to support appropriate actions on a regional scale to reduce airborne mercury and acid rain pollution.

## FORESTS

- Stand firm on the "heavy cutting" law passed in 1997.

## ENERGY

- In any legislation on electric utility industry restructuring, it is important to maintain the benefits of the current regulated system, such as environmental protection, demand side management, development of renewable energy resources, consumer protection, and low-income assistance.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Target increased funding for public transportation and maintaining what we have rather than on new highway projects like the Circ Highway.

## FUNDING FOR AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Insure that there is sufficient funding for ANR to carry out its statutory responsibilities.

## VNRC's TOP PRIORITIES

### ACT 250

For 30 years Act 250 has helped Vermonters protect their environment. Its economic effects have also been positive, improving the quality of major developments and producing generally secure financial investments.

Vermont's economic performance has been one of New England's strongest.

Nevertheless, Act 250 should be strengthened in several areas. Citizens who may be affected by decisions of the Vermont Environmental Board currently have no way to appeal to

court the way other parties such as the applicant, town, state, and regional planning commission do. Citizens should be granted the same **rights of appeal** as other parties: to the Vermont Supreme Court.

Legislators should be wary of attempts to weaken citizen

