

Bulletin

VNRC's CANDIDATES FORUM PUTS ENVIRONMENT IN SPOTLIGHT

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The evening of September 21, 2000 marked another hugely successful event to go down in the VNRC history books. VNRC hosted Vermont's first "Gubernatorial Candidates Forum on the Environment," to a standing room only crowd, and judging from the extremely positive response that VNRC has received, the forum successfully achieved the goal of reaching out to a broad spectrum of citizens. An array of pressing environmental issues were covered, and many Vermonters said they left the forum with a clearer understanding of the candidates' viewpoints.

The three participating candidates, Democrat Governor Howard Dean, Republican Ruth Dwyer, and Progressive Anthony Pollina, debated before an audience of 450 people at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier. VNRC was fortunate to have John King, President of Vermont Public Television, moderate, and was pleased to have Vermont Public Radio broadcast the debate live.

Both VNRC staff and the audience posed questions. Issues ranged from the reduction of funding allocated to the state Agency of Natural Resources to the removal of the Peterson Dam on the Lamoille

River. The debate, which lasted for 2 hours, was instrumental in helping to clarify the candidates' viewpoints and demonstrating where they would focus their energies and priorities if elected.

Don Hooper, Regional Organizer for the National Wildlife Federation, said, "The room was full. The audience civil. The questions excellent. The candidates fluent. With your help, they differentiated themselves eloquently. I was impressed that I came away with a much better understanding of the options, and who's selling what to whom. Thanks for helping us cut through the murk."

All of the candidates agreed that the protection of Vermont's environment is a top priority for them. In November, it will be up to citizens to decide who will best represent them at the State House for the next two years. **The most important step every Vermonter can take is to vote!** Please help us spread the word.

If you would like information about receiving audio or video coverage of the debate, please contact Jimmy Fordham at the VNRC office.



Moderator John King with the three gubernatorial candidates: Progressive Anthony Pollina, Democratic Governor Howard Dean, and Republican Ruth Dwyer.



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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.

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EXCERPTS FROM THE SEPTEMBER 21, 2000 FORUM

The following is an excerpt from the Gubernatorial Forum. Look for more information concerning dam removal and energy issues in the upcoming winter 2001 issue of the Vermont Environmental Report.

History: Across the country, major efforts to remove ecologically destructive hydroelectric facilities have proven feasible and beneficial to the natural resources and the public. One such effort is underway in Vermont. The CVPS Peterson Dam on the Lamoille River, built in 1948, has never been certified as complying with Vermont's Water Quality Standards. The Lamoille River is owned by the people of Vermont. As part of the relicensing, the State of Vermont must determine, for the first time in the project's fifty-year history, whether the project complies with Vermont's Water Quality Standards. Recent studies have concluded that the existence and operation of the Peterson dam has destroyed a once-legendary

and diverse fishery that includes the endangered lake sturgeon. Other studies indicated that the 5 megawatts of power generated by the Peterson Dam could be replaced with more environmentally benign and economically efficient energy sources.

Question: *Vermont Natural Resources Council asks you: Given these opportunities: river restoration, increased reliability, and economic benefit, as Governor, how would you support removal of the Peterson Dam on this outstanding public resource — the Lamoille River?*

Ruth Dwyer: I support hydroelectric dams in general because it is clean power but this particular dam apparently is in a very bad

location. It has been granted a waiver for the last 13 years from its federal license that it was supposed to have gotten at that time. The reason it gets the waiver is because the Governor and the ANR [Agency of Natural Resources] are willing to grant that. They have not enforced, in fact, what they've found to be water quality problems at the source. My approach would be to fish or cut bait. They either need to grant the license or take out the dam. You've got two choices and the ANR needs to make the determination as to which rules we're playing by. Right now, I'm having a hard time determining which rules we're playing by on the stand because the waivers have been granted for so many years without a deci-



Elizabeth Courtney, VNRC Executive Director, joins standing-room-only crowd to listen to candidates' responses.