

# Bulletin

## VNRC's CANDIDATES FORUM PUTS ENVIRONMENT IN SPOTLIGHT

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

## 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-



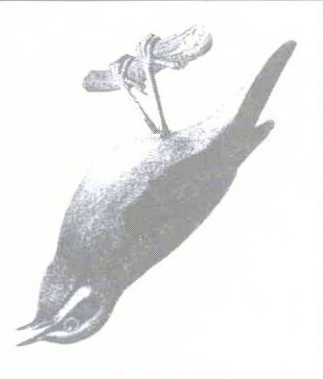
*Elizabeth Courtney, VNRC Executive Director, joins standing-room-only crowd to listen to candidates' responses.*



sion being made and those decisions currently are made at the state level. The decision's been made but there's a problem but the action hasn't been taken that solves that problem and we need to make sure that the agency can't grant 13 year waivers and has to play by the rules.

**Anthony Pollina:** Taking down the Peterson Dam is probably the single most important thing that we can do in the state of Vermont—the single most effective thing we can do in the state of Vermont—to restore fish habitat in Lake Champlain as well as in the lower Lamoille River. Bottom line, that river is ours, bottom line, that Lake is ours, bottom line, we're letting the utility kill it and they've essentially killed what is the most important fish spawning area in the state of Vermont. I would start as I've already said by saying the dam should come down. Private money, some public money—you develop an effort to take the dam down, you replace that power with another source of renewable energy. I'm not against hydropower, I'm against the Peterson Dam. I think you go to the table with that in mind and then you see what other people bring on the table. It's a sign of a weak energy policy. It's a sign of a policy that does not really take into consideration the value long term of renewable energy sources in the state of Vermont. I would begin by saying the dam should come down, and then I would sit down with CVPS and see where they want to go.

**Howard Dean:** Well, I'm the only person up here who's even gotten a dam out and that was the Clyde River dam. I made a phone call at 7 o'clock in the morning to the EPA on a Saturday morning because bulldozers were in the river illegally putting the dam back together and got an immediate cease and desist order. So, I think I know something about taking out dams and one of the things I know is that you ought to know what you're talking about and know what the science is before you do it. Here's the problems with the Peterson Dam. It probably does impair water quality and that's going to be the subject of discussions. It certainly impairs the fishery. Its replacemnts would cost the point 6 cents a kilowatt hour electrical rates to go up for everybody and the replacement power, if it's not renewable, will generate enormous amounts of [oxides of nitrogen] and hydrocarbons and NOx other substances into the air. We have to figure out how to balance that before we just decide we're gonna just take out the dam. It's not o.k. to fix the water pollution problems to make the air pollution worse and



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Please remember to  
get out and vote on  
November 7th!

those things we're going to deal with over the summer and I think probably by the fall. Hopefully if this collaborative we put together with the VNRC and other environmental groups and the power company works, we'll get that done.

**Ruth Dwyer:** I agree with the Governor—you do need to balance economics and the environment—but in this particular case it seems this dam is in a particularly bad location and that's why there has been a waiver for 13 years—because nobody seems to want to deal with that situation. The sportsmen have indicated that they're very concerned about the fishing and that particular dam is at the very end of the river where the Lake comes in. So the Lake flows backwards at some times into the river rather than the river flowing into

the Lake as it should. That seems to be the big water quality issue that's not being addressed at this point.

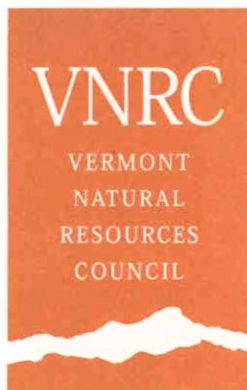
**Anthony Pollina:** Removing the dam would generate more money in fishing revenues and tourist revenues than it would be to have the dam continue to be there. The collaborative has already fallen apart once—I wish them luck doing it a second time. The fact is that if you have some vision and you think about efficiency as a way to deal with energy problems as well, you'll be able to take that dam down without any major impact on the energy grid or on those local communities. It's a question of looking ahead and deciding whether public resources are going to be used for the public or whether they're going to be controlled by the utilities.

**Howard Dean:** I'm actually glad that Anthony mentioned the efficiency issue. I'm the only Governor in the country who is allowed to be put together and encourage the energy efficiency utility so we actually use that as a power source in Vermont, and I'm proud to be the Governor in the first state that has one of those. Thank you.

**CONSERVATION SUMMIT  
SET FOR DECEMBER 12, 2000**

The Vermont Natural Resources Council will host this year's Conservation Summit on December 12 in Montpelier. Representatives from over twenty Vermont conservation organizations will meet with newly elected state lawmakers to outline legislative priorities for the 2001 session. Look for the results of the summit in the January Bulletin.





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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR DECEMBER 8TH TAX CONFERENCE

Some problems are defying the traditional regulatory cure. We have learned after more than three decades that regulation is not the only solution for cleaning up our environment. Our fish still contain mercury that threatens unborn children, sprawl continues to gobble up the countryside, and more cars on the road are causing congestion and dirtier air.



It's time to look seriously at other ways to solve these pressing problems. Why not complement regulation by harnessing taxes and other market-based incentives that allow businesses and communities to find the best solutions for problems facing the environment and the economy?

Join a group of distinguished experts from across the country and Vermont to help design strategies to implement environmentally friendly tax reforms for Vermont.

This conference is your chance to learn and to share your thoughts about specific proposals the Vermont Fair Tax Coalition is developing. It's your chance to hear key Vermonters debate what's possible in 2001 and beyond.

### HELP SHAPE LEGISLATION!

*Come join in this important event!*  
at

**Chase Community Center**  
Vermont Law School  
South Royalton, Vermont

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