

Bulletin & Legislative Platform

Published
by the
Vermont
Natural
Resources
Council,
Inc.

THIS YEAR'S TOP ISSUES AT A GLANCE:

VNRC is working on a host of environmental issues in the 2001 Legislative Session, ranging from increasing state funding and technical assistance to farmers to strengthening and improving Act 250. With over 50 new legislators in the House and Senate, VNRC has found ample opportunities to work with old and new friends who are concerned about the environment.

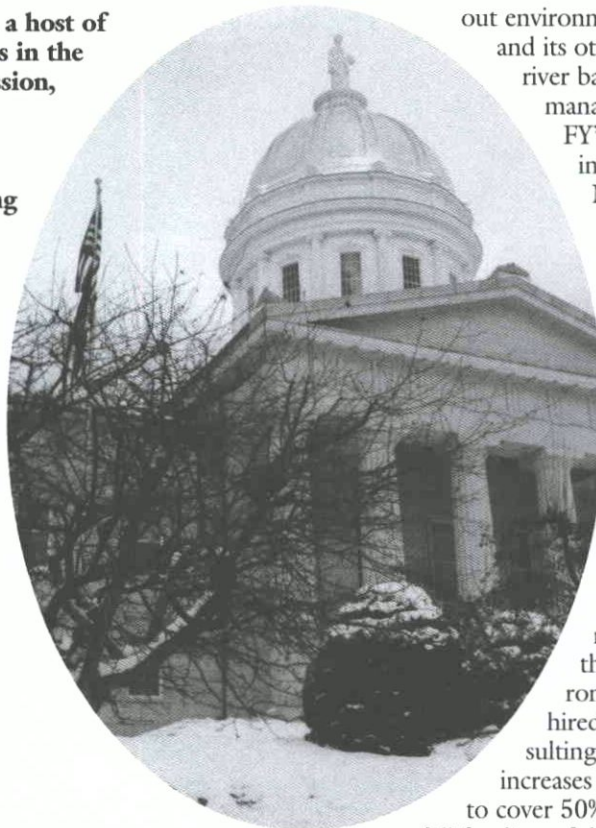
VNRC is present at the State House to represent the opinions of our 5000+ members. If you have questions or comments about our legislative initiatives, please let us know.

INVESTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Over the past five years the Agency of Natural Resources' (ANR) budget has bottomed out at just over 1% of the General Fund compared to an average of around 2% during the 1980s and early 1990s. The amount of state general funds invested in environmental protection has dropped from \$35 per year/per Vermonter in 1993 to \$15.50 per year in 1998, and staffing has been reduced by almost 40 people.

The following investments will go a long way toward improving Vermont's environmental quality and protecting its natural resources:

- Adequate funding for the Agency of Natural Resources, so it can effectively and efficiently carry

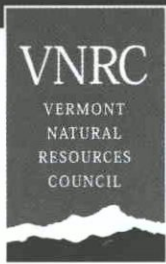


out environmental permitting enforcement and its other responsibilities, including river basin planning and stormwater management. Governor Dean's FY'02 Budget makes a significant investment in the Agency of Natural Resources. The Governor's budget should act as the "floor" or absolute minimum investment of our tax dollars for environmental protection.

- Revise ANR permit fees to incorporate more of the total societal costs of the regulated activity so polluters pay more of the costs. Currently, ANR charges approximately 30% of permitting costs to the permittee. This means taxpayers cover 70% of the costs required to permit environmental impacts. The State hired an independent economic consulting firm which suggested fee increases which would require permittee's to cover 50% of the costs. VNRC supports full funding of the ANR's Permit Fund Proposed Fee Structure revenue adjustments.

- The administration has proposed a one-time appropriation in the amount of \$500,000 to establish a "Land and Water Stewardship Trust Fund." The fund will reportedly support maintenance of our chronically underfunded State Park system, support state lands management planning, and support ecological and natural community inventories.
- The Fee Bill (above) proposes to carry over excess receipts from the Environmental Permit Fund into the

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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* and the *Vermont Environmental Report* (both published bi-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!

VNRC'S WELCOME LETTER TO THE 2001 LEGISLATURE...

January 16, 2001

Dear Legislator,

Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) would like to welcome you to the 2001 legislative session. As guardians of Vermont's environment since 1963, VNRC is our oldest statewide not-for-profit environmental organization. VNRC has over 5,000 members across the State who care very much about the natural resources and vital communities of the Green Mountain State.

Our focus is not only on supporting efforts for clean water, clean air, sustainable agriculture and forests, and healthy communities, but also on protecting the integrity of Vermont's existing environmental laws. A few of our priorities include:

- Supporting increased funding and technical assistance to help farmers clean up sources of agricultural runoff;
- Supporting increased levels of funding for the Agency of Natural Resources, especially stormwater management programs, watershed planning, state lands management, and environmental enforcement;
- Improving the Act 250 process to better address environmental concerns, guarantee the rights of all Vermonters, assist small business in an expeditious permitting process, and ensure healthy, active citizen participation, the foundation upon which the law was built.

Aside from working on our own legislative priorities, the staff at VNRC is committed to providing information and input on issues that may be important to you. Our in-house team of experts is well-versed on a host of issues. Please feel free to contact me or the following staff for specific needs:

- Pat Berry: general information
- Job Heintz: forestry, energy, lands management
- Steve Holmes: land use, sustainable communities
- Kim Kendall: staff scientist
- Kelly Lowry: water quality

We look forward to working with you this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Courtney
Executive Director



Back row, from left: Pat Berry, Steve Holmes, Elizabeth Courtney. Front row, from left: Job Heintz, Kim Kendall, Kelly Lowry