

Bulletin & Legislative Platform

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THIS YEAR'S TOP ISSUES

VERMONT'S NEW ECONOMY

As 2003 gets under way, rapid economic changes are sweeping across the global landscape, leaving a wake of economic, environmental, and social disruption. Vermont has not been left unscathed. The anxiety perpetuated by unexpected changes demand a new vision for a more resilient Vermont economy, complete with a road map to get us there. At issue is not whether Vermonters will engage to help catalyze our economy. The question is: what direction will we take to get there? The Vermont Natural Resources Council believes that the paradigm for any economic strategies must recognize the inseparability of our economy from our environment.

To know where we are going though, we have to know where we have been. For years, Vermont has been growing a robust economy derived from the quality of our natural resources. Working farmland and forests have long been a staple of Vermont's unique landscape and economy. And recreation based activity by itself brings millions of dollars into the state. However, the growth potential for our tourism and resource-based

economic engines mandate that we improve the quality of environment, rather than compromise it.

We can and should do more to encourage investment in homegrown markets and Vermont's natural capital. In the year 2000, the Vermont Job Gap Study showed that Vermont depends on imports more than seven times as much as the U.S. as a whole does. Vermont annually exports billions of dollars that could, and should, stay within our borders and add value to our economy. This problem drains our ability to use capital to support local economic activity and actually shrinks our economy.

Strategies for a robust, sustainable economy that moves Vermont towards greater economic independence rely, in large part, on a healthy environment.

Vermont should better capitalize on the quality of our natural resources, not just for a booming tourist economy, but also to provide us with energy, housing, and food. Wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal resources can provide us with clean, renewable sources of energy.

Vermont's abundant forests can provide us with sustainably harvested, high value wood for building and remodeling. Vermont's fertile farmland can provide us with

