

# Bulletin & Legislative Update

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### VNRC WORKS WITH LEGISLATURE TO TACKLE BIG ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA

When looking back over the last decade or so, it is arguable that Vermont has been resting on its laurels and compromising its reputation as a leader on environmental issues. Often it seems as though we've been sliding backwards just as much as we've moved forward. In the last couple of years, however—and during this legislative session in particular—Vermont's Democratically controlled General Assembly has reasserted itself as a leader on the conservation and environmental front.

Perhaps as notable as the issues themselves are the leaders who have begun to emerge. Individual Democrats, Republicans, and Progressive alike have stepped out in front to lead the way on key issues. Representatives Steve Adams (R- Hartland) and Joseph Krawczyk (R-Bennington) came forward to honor the legacy of past Vermont Republicans who advocate for strong conservation values.

Representative Krawczyk, along with Representative Jim Masland (D-Thetford), guided the groundbreaking Growth Center bill through the House. Representative Steve Adams, as chair of the Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources Committee, and his co-chair Representative David Deen (D-Westminster) have provided leadership on a number of bills including the Groundwater bill and







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the Basin Planning bill.

Respective chairs of the Natural Resources and Energy Committees, Senator Ginny Lyons (D-Chittenden) and Representative Robert Dostis (D-Waterbury) have ushered a number of environmental bills through each chamber including those related to renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and energy efficiency. The list goes on...

And representatives David Zuckerman (P-Burlington) and Dexter Randall (P-Troy) have provided important voices on sustainable agriculture and water quality issues.

The point is this: VNRC's efforts to make environmental issues non-partisan is gaining ground. With the help of legislators from across the political spectrum, VNRC chalked up one of the most successful legislative sessions in recent memory. Central to VNRC's success is our unique full-time presence, our diverse expertise, our strong grassroots base, and notably, our collaborative approach.

Upon passage of the groundwater protection bill, a representative of the groundwater industry said on a Vermont Public Radio story, "I give a lot of credit to VNRC and others for talking about this and trying to get what they wanted from the bill but recognizing other concerns."

## COMMUNITY IMPACT STUDY BILL

VNRC was close to ensuring passage of a bill designed to protect communities from the impacts of large-scale retail development. The bill, S.

175, would have required the developer of a proposed commercial project over 75,000 square feet in size to provide the funding for a community fiscal and economic impact study. The funding would be made available to the host community to pay for the study by a consultant of their choice.

The bill passed the Senate by a 20-5 vote. However, time ran out on this year's legislative session as the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee was reviewing the proposal. There was strong interest in this concept, and VNRC is hopeful that the bill will be passed next session. VNRC appreciates the work of Senator Vince Illuzzi, (R-Essex/Orleans) Chair of the Senate Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs Committee who was a tireless champion of this crucial community development tool.

## BASIN PLANNING AND WATER QUALITY

The House Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources Committee worked diligently with VNRC and others on a water quality and watershed planning bill that passed the House, but the clock ran out on the session before the Senate had time to consider it. Nevertheless, VNRC may build on this year's efforts during the next session.

The House-passed bill would have authorized the Vermont Water Resources Panel to protect waters of the state by clarifying the water classification process and requiring the creation of new

rules to protect the highest quality waters in Vermont. Both tools were designed for use in the Basin Planning process, a requirement of the Clean Water Act that is designed to manage and protect each of Vermont's 17 watersheds.

The Basin Planning process continues across the state, and VNRC encourages Vermonters to get involved in their local watershed protection efforts. The Vermont Water Resources Panel has yet to act on guidelines for classifying waters in the Basin Planning process. VNRC will continue to follow this process closely and advocate for classifications that protect Vermont's high quality waters.

## ENERGY

Both House and Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Energy picked up where they left off last year by tackling a host of energy related issues. In fact, the House committee began planning their efforts last fall and, under the leadership of Chairman Robert Dostis (D-Waterbury), the committee spent the majority of their time working on the following bills—all of which successfully passed this year:

Appliance Efficiency Standards, H.253- One critical piece of last year's omnibus energy bill that was left behind would have required more stringent efficiency standards for certain appliances, including furnaces, lamps, transformers and power supplies. Presented as a stand-alone bill this year, and designed to decrease energy consumption in Vermont, the Legislature delivered on its promise to pass the appliance efficiency