

# Bulletin & Legislative Update

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*Photo taken December 17, 2006, Calais, Vermont.*

Jake Brown

## Confronting Climate Change

Since 1963, VNRC has worked hard to conserve and enhance the natural resources of this rocky and wooded wedge of territory we call Vermont. Now, 45 years later, humankind and the environment that sustains it face an unprecedented challenge: climate change. As we wrestle with the effects of a warming world, which is virtually undisputed at this time to be human-caused, we at VNRC stand ready with all hands on deck to help solve this monumental challenge.

We are marrying our roots in conservation with new, locally-based and innovative solutions to tackle climate change. Conservation is at the very heart of the battle to combat global warming and ensure that Vermont's traditions like sugaring, skiing, sliding, and snowmobiling do not become extinct. As always, we will also

work alongside leaders this legislative session to help create and advance far-reaching policy changes that will help meet the needs that conservation alone cannot.

With climate change already outlined as high priority by leadership in the House and Senate, this legislative session offers tremendous opportunity to come together in partnership to chart a new course for Vermont. Lawmakers, everyday Vermonters, interest groups, and Governor Jim Douglas can and must take bold and concrete action.

In this issue of the *Bulletin & Legislative Update* we outline our legislative strategy to meet, head on, this threat to our planet and to Vermont. To see VNRC's plan, turn to the section inside titled "VNRC's Climate Change Initiatives" on page 4.



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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, collaboration, and advocacy.

VNRC is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

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## Groundwater

Drinking water is, of course, vital to life. And until recently it has been taken for granted that Vermont has enough clean and pure drinking water. But it's becoming clear that our groundwater could be imperiled by increasing withdrawals. VNRC will push during this legislative session to get the state to map groundwater and require reporting of existing groundwater withdrawals. Currently, the state doesn't require reporting of large

withdrawals of groundwater and has not mapped its groundwater resources as all other New England states have done.

Last session, at the urging of VNRC, the Legislature created a committee to study the groundwater issue. The committee appears to be close to agreeing that Vermont needs to map its groundwater resources as soon as possible and take other steps to learn more about this valuable resource. As this session kicks into gear, VNRC will be lobbying lawmakers to require the state to take

the next necessary steps: to set a schedule and provide funding for mapping and require reporting of existing groundwater withdrawals.

The groundwater committee is required to issue a final report with recommendations on creating a comprehensive groundwater protection program in Vermont, and suggesting whether or not the state should declare groundwater to be a public resource held in the public trust. A preliminary report of the Committee's work can be found on VNRC's website [www.vnrc.org](http://www.vnrc.org).



A. Blake Gardner