

VERMONT

Environmental Report

Published by the Vermont Natural Resources Council
FALL 1994

THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM





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The Vermont Natural Resources Council is a nonprofit environmental organization founded in 1963 to promote the wise use of Vermont's natural resources. VNRC does research, legislative lobbying, advocacy, and educational work on issues including land use, forestry, agriculture, water, energy, wastes, and growth management.

VNRC is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.

Published by the Vermont Natural Resources Council

Fall 1994

THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM

ON THE COVER: Big fish from the days when the Clyde ran free, hikers on Mt. Pisgah in Westmore, sign marking the Revolutionary War-era Bayley Hazen Road, and log trucks. Large photo courtesy Northeast Kingdom Trout Unlimited. Inset photos by Allen Gilbert.

The Northeast Kingdom (Reconsidered)

A View From Up Yonder

The "appellation" is well-known, but how about the land, the animals, the towns, the people of the Northeast Kingdom? Long-time Brunswick resident and VNRC staffer Brendan Whittaker offers a tour.

The Clyde

A River of the Kingdom

How can a river make front page news? Easy — just take out a dam. That's what the Clyde did this spring as debate swirled over whether a private utility should take out a hydroelectric dam built south of Newport in the 1950s. The life the Clyde gives the Kingdom says a lot about nature's place in northern New England.

The Northern Forest

Protecting It is a Matter of Biological Integrity

The Northern Forest Lands Council issued its final recommendations this fall on protecting northern New England's vast stretches of woodland. What do all the reports really mean? Why are our forests, and proper management of forests, so important?

The Inside Word

Point of view by Executive Director Jane Difley

Vermont Perspective

Updates on current Vermont environmental issues

VNRC Recommends

Two books — on religion and the environment, and the Northern Forest — that you might want to read.

VNRC News And Notes

Welcomes, best wishes, thank yous, annual meeting awards, and computer equipment for sale

Letters

What's on our readers' minds

THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM

Vital Natural and Human Resources

Jane Difley, Executive Director

The Northeast Kingdom seems to be where the character of Vermont is defined and distilled. This *VER* explores "the Kingdom" — its forests, rivers, people, places, and history — and the conservation challenges of preserving and restoring the Kingdom's natural resources for the future.

The Kingdom has been under scrutiny for the last four years as part of the Northern Forest Lands Study. In September the Northern Forest Lands

Council released its final report, making recommendations for protecting the 26 million acres that stretch from New York's Tug Hill, across New Hampshire and Vermont, through Maine. The 37 recommendations

address a wide array of issues including estate taxes, biodiversity, sustainable forestry, public education, water quality, community development, recreation, and land conservation. The report, *Finding Common Ground: Conserving the Northern Forest*, is the result of years of research and deliberation involving hundreds of people.

The report focuses much-needed attention on the natural resources of the area; it also addresses the needs of people and communities in the Northern Forest and their traditional relationships with the land. The Council's holistic approach acknowledges that forests, people, water quality, and local economies are intertwined; changes in one affect the entire system. Encouraging this broad thinking is a major accomplishment of the Council.

The Council's approach also recognizes that the importance of the Northern Forest extends beyond the boundaries of the study, and even beyond the four states. The resources of the Northern Forest are of national importance, and for that reason federal funding has been available for the Council, its staff, and the research they commissioned. Federal support remains vital, but its continuation remains in doubt.

With the Northern Forest Lands Council "sunsetting," it's up to the states and conservationists from across the region to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and that the cooperative work done over the last four years bears fruit. VNRC will continue its efforts to involve citizens from the Kingdom in determining the future of this incredible and vital area.

Rivers are another crucial resource of the Kingdom, and the restoration of the Kingdom's Clyde River and its once-famous salmon run is within grasp. The breach of Newport Dam Number 11 was dramatic punctuation to a grassroots effort by fishermen and other local activists to have the dam removed as part of the hydroelectric relicensing process of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). It required the tenacious efforts of citizens who live near the Clyde, who know the river and who understand the historic relationship between people and the river, to insist that removal be considered. VNRC continues to provide legal and technical expertise to these activists.

The Northeast Kingdom is perhaps a state of mind as much as it is a geographic location, and citizens there not only care about the landscape but are willing to fight for its protection and restoration. The character of these people may be what determines the future character of the landscape that has shaped their lives.

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INSPIRED, INSPIRING

I would like to thank VNRC on behalf of the State Council of Trout Unlimited for the work your resident legal counsel and water resources coordinator, Chris Kilian, has been doing on the Clyde River and around the state. He is an inspired and inspiring force. His dedication, enthusiasm, and legal expertise with the environmental laws of the state and country are protecting the rivers of Vermont. Plus this helped bolster the morale of the membership and leaders of the Northeast Kingdom Chapter of Trout Unlimited when it looked like FERC and Citizens' Utilities were going to roll over local, state, and federal desires for this river.

I promise that the NEK Chapter, the State Council, and National TU will be at the table beside VNRC in the appeal of the Clyde River 401 certification in the next few months. Together we have a very strong moral and legal position to help the Clyde and the Northeast Kingdom reclaim their status as a world-class fishery and recreational destination.

Best wishes and thanks.

Gary Doyle
Chairman, Vermont State
Council of Trout Unlimited

WAL-MART: NOT A MATCH

While visiting a friend in Burlington this summer, I heard of Wal-Mart trying to gain entry into the area. While employment is always a compelling argument to allow any business to take roots, Wal-Mart's presence would be counter-productive over the course of the years.

When I visit Vermont, or any New England state, I do not come to shop at Wal-Mart. I base my trip on scenic areas untarnished by asphalt parking lots, gaudy signs, and tacky shopping carts finding their way far from the store. In fact, I go out of my way to avoid those areas which have these very stores.

While I am just one voice, I have heard from people as far as Wyoming who come to view the mountains, fall foliage, and villages. Not one person has ever said to me that they love to go to Vermont to shop at the big discount stores.

Once Wal-Mart is in an area, smaller stores (the very ones which draw tourists) will gradually go out of business.

In short, allowing Wal-Mart to build is allowing one discount chain to cut off the flow to your biggest industry — tourism.

Ruth Nellis
Victor, N.Y.

ANNUAL MEETING HUZZAH

As a former long-time member of the VNRC Board, it gave me great satisfaction to spend the day as I did at the Annual Meeting Sept. 10. It's obvious the Council is developing along very promising lines.

I particularly admired Mr. Parenteau's presentation. It focused on The Big Issue in a very effective way. I hope that copies of it can be made widely available.

John Holden
Shelburne

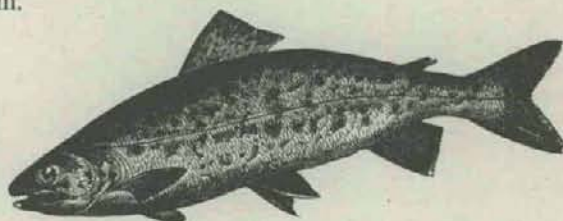
Editor's note: Pat Parenteau spoke on the topic, "It's the Environment and the Economy, Stupid!" A report of the Annual Meeting appears in this VER. Parenteau is preparing a summary of his remarks.

IT WAS A GREAT TRIP!

Thanks to VNRC staff for meeting with the participants of our Central and Eastern European fellowship program.

The case study portion of the program is consistently a highlight for the Fellows — and this year was no exception. The information that you shared on the Northern Forest Lands Council was a substantive piece of the overall picture regarding resource and development issues in the Northeast Kingdom.

Robin Webster
Atlantic Center for
the Environment



AWARD APPRECIATED

Thank-you so much for the award you gave me at your Annual Meeting. It's a real honor to receive such recognition from your organization.

With this letter I will fade from VNRC involvement until the time I can become an active member once again. Thank-you for everything you have done for me.

Marcy Harding
Jonesville

Editor's note: Ms. Harding received VNRC's Award for Outstanding Service and Dedication.

FERC REVIEWS

Deerfield, Passumpsic, and Lamoille Subjects of Dam Relicensings

While the dramatic developments on the Clyde River have dominated public discussion about restoration of rivers impacted by hydro-power dams, those issues are no less significant elsewhere in Vermont. From the Passumpsic River near St. Johnsbury to the western reaches of the Lamoille, and all the way down to the Deerfield River at Vermont's southern end — about as far as you can get from the Clyde and still be in Vermont — VNRC has been neck-deep in the effort to have state and federal agencies mitigate the negative environmental impacts of hydro projects.

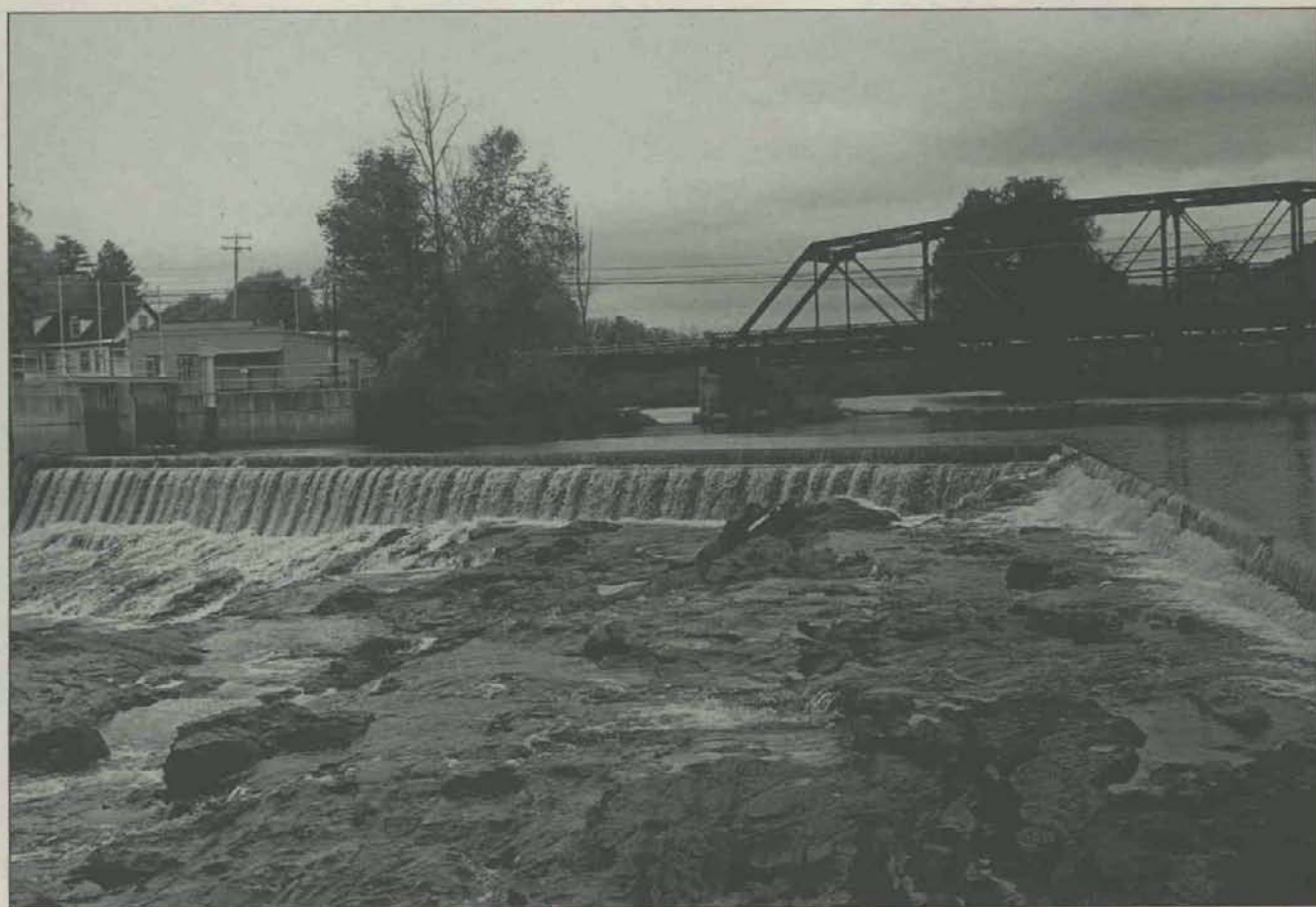
The Deerfield River gets its start in Windham County and knicks the eastern edge of Bennington County as it flows southward into Massachusetts. The river has been altered by construction of several large impoundments early in this century: the 1,163-acre Somerset Reservoir, which lies at its headwaters; the Harriman Reservoir, the largest lake within the state with a north-south shoreline some 12 miles long; and the Sherman Reservoir, which straddles the Vermont-Massachusetts line.

"The Deerfield River is a major public resource," said VNRC Water/Wetlands Program Director and Staff

Attorney Chris Kilian. By creating the reservoirs, "New England Power Company built a big project on what is actually a small river, and the river has suffered as a result."

Primarily, VNRC is concerned about draw-downs that lower the storage reservoir water levels dramatically each year between June and the following March. The draw-downs provide flow for power generation downstream, but create significant fluctuations in the river and have a destabilizing effect on aquatic life. As a result, VNRC is concerned about the ecological stability of the reservoirs.

"We are asking the state to write a



One of several dams along the Passumpsic River.

water quality certificate that addresses the impact of the hydro project, particularly by providing adequate flow in the river and examining the issue of reservoir stabilization," said Kilian. Hydroelectric projects must receive water quality certificates from Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources to be relicensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

"We're looking at a broad package of improvements that would shift from a priority of power generation to restoration of a river," Kilian said. "We would like the agency to examine the river and reservoirs so they can make appropriate decisions."

Meanwhile, on the Passumpsic River, where four dams have already received state water quality certificates, VNRC has appealed those certificates to the Water Resources Board.

"The (minimum) flows required by the state are inadequate," said Kilian, "and there is no provision for fish passage."

The Passumpsic hosts a resident population of trout, which has been significantly impacted by the dams. But problems of flow sufficient to provide passage and habitat in the Passumpsic for all elements of the river's ecosystem remain unsolved.

VNRC hopes to settle differences with the generating utility, Central Vermont Public Service, before hearings

on the appeal begin. "We're interested in aggressively seeking a settled resolution to this matter," said Kilian.

Such a resolution appears less likely regarding the Lamoille River, where the issues again include fish passage, preservation of recreational settings, fluctuations of flow within the river, and reservoir stabilization — particularly at Arrowhead Mountain Lake, just north of Milton. Here, too, the state has written a water quality certificate, but both CVPS and VNRC have appealed it.

"The utility felt the agency was too stringent," said Kilian. "We felt that the agency was too lenient."

Historically, the Lamoille has been one of the best landlocked salmon rivers in the entire Lake Champlain basin, providing a natural setting for spawning. But the spawning run is blocked by the Peterson Dam, the first dam on the river.

"Last year, due to restoration efforts, more than 700 salmon came back to the Lamoille to spawn, but none got over the Peterson Dam," lamented Kilian. "The fish are ready to spawn but they don't have anywhere to go to do it."

To complement the

Champlain salmon recovery project, VNRC advocates that the certificate mandate either fish ladders or trap-and-truck operations to get the salmon above the three westernmost dams on the Lamoille.

Dams are relicensed in 30- or 40-year intervals, so this is an important opportunity for VNRC to bring ecological considerations to bear when dams along the Deerfield, Passumpsic, and Lamoille are reviewed. ■

Supreme Court Case Offers Broad Powers

Conservationists and states won a huge victory at the U.S. Supreme Court on May 31 in the case *City of Tacoma v. Washington Department of Ecology*. The court determined that states have broad powers under the Clean Water Act to protect water quality, including stream flow, aesthetics, recreational uses, and habitat. The decision gives great precedent in the Vermont hydro relicensing cases, particularly since VNRC's strategy has focused on pushing the state to exercise broad authority under the Act.

— Chris Kilian

CANADAY TRUST GRANT

VNRC To Use Funds To Hire Staff Ecologist

VNRC tapped into a major new funding source this summer, receiving a \$240,000, three-year grant that will strengthen the council in its efforts to protect Vermont's streams and rivers.

The Ward M. and Mariam C. Canaday Educational and Charitable Trust, a philanthropic organization, actually bestowed similar "collaborative" grants upon VNRC, the Conservation

Law Foundation, and the National Wildlife Federation. VNRC will receive approximately \$80,000 a year for three years, funds that Water/Wetlands Program Director and Staff Attorney Chris Kilian said will enable VNRC to add an ecologist to its staff with expertise in aquatic ecology.

The ecologist's primary focus will be the state's rivers, with the mutually supportive goals of ensuring that the rivers remain healthy, viable ecosystems and that the cleanliness and quality of the waters is protected.

"We're very pleased to have this new support," Kilian said. "It will enable VNRC to continue its efforts as a

leading voice in the protection of Vermont's water resources."

Kilian said one aspect of the ecologist's work for VNRC is to put together a general statewide assessment of the most serious risks to Vermont's water quality. VNRC expects to fill the new staff position this fall.

Stephen Holmes, VNRC Deputy Director for Policy, said all three of the conservation organizations received the same level of support under the grant. Holmes said CLF has hired a staff scientist with its allocation, and the NWF will add a resource economist to its Northeast Natural Resource Center staff, based in Montpelier. ■

LAMB BROOK TIMBER SALE

Hardwoods Harvest Challenged In Court

In the far southern reaches of Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest, just across a ridge from the Deerfield River and the Harriman Reservoir, stand 5,000 acres of secluded woods known by wildlife biologists as one of Vermont's finest black bear habitats. The forest is rich with beech trees, whose protein-rich autumn nuts help the bears prepare for hibernation.

The U.S. Forest Service, however, has instituted a plan to open the Lamb Brook area to selected timber cutting

by the private sector. It anticipates a yield of 3.2-million board feet from the beech, maple, ash, and other hardwoods in the tract.

The Forest Service performed an Environmental Assessment (EA) as required by law, examining such issues as the likely environmental impacts of the timber sale, reviewing alternatives to the sale, and determining whether such harvesting would be compatible with the forest's management plan. Some conservation benefit would accrue from thinning the beeches, many of which are diseased.

Yet the sale, as proposed, has drawbacks — and opponents, too.

Of particular concern is the plan to extend an existing road 1.3 miles into the woods to provide access to the most lucrative timber stands, which are isolated at the rear of the area. Green

Mountain Forest Watch, an environmental activist group based in Brattleboro, appealed the project through the Forest Service's own appeals process, contending that building a road to harvest timber violated the management plan and that concerns for wildlife and recreation should take priority over timber sales.

But its appeals were rejected, so the group took the Forest Service to federal court. At that level, the legal action was joined by the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, Restore The North Woods, National Audubon, the Audubon Council of Vermont, and the Conservation Law Foundation.

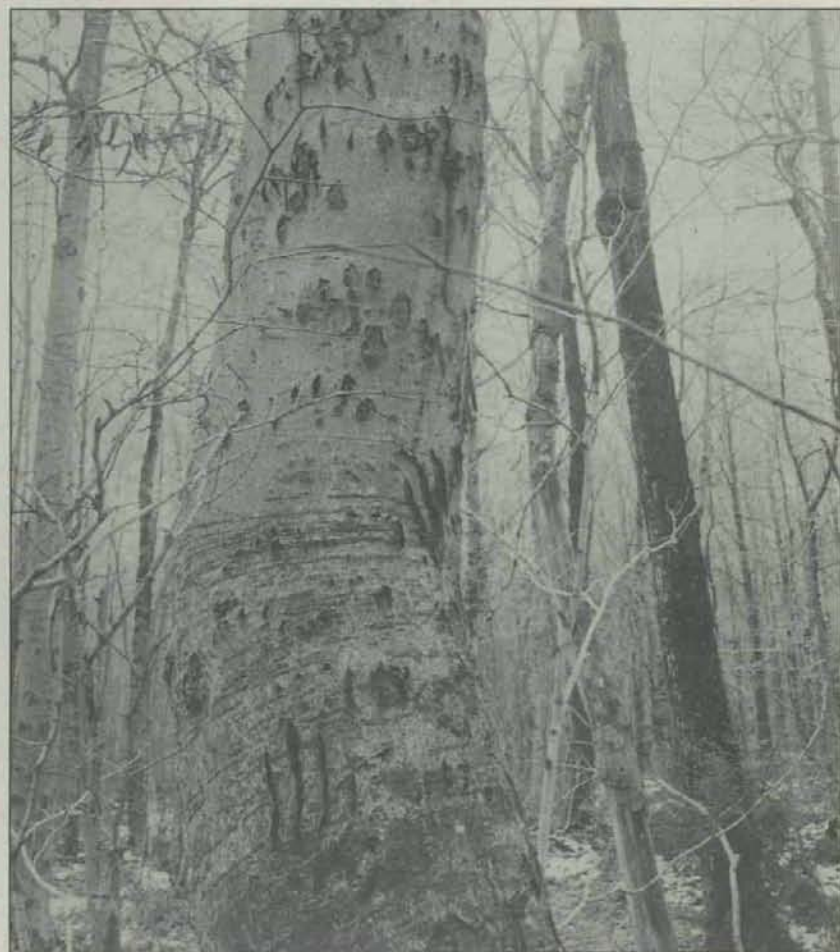
VNRC did not enlist in the suit. "Our feeling was that although the suit had some merit, the bigger issues of how the forest plan is being interpreted and implemented would not be addressed in a court battle. VNRC's goal is to get people to the table to resolve this conflict," said Jim Shallow, VNRC Forests, Wildlife, and Public Lands Program Director.

VNRC has advocated that the Forest Service prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to review management alternatives for the entire Lamb Brook area.

"Recent acquisitions have created, de facto, a 5,000-acre roadless area," said Shallow, "and once a road is put in, there could be lots of illegal uses, like ATVs and four-wheelers, disturbing the bears and other wildlife and closing off future options."

A further complication is that Green Mountain Power Corp. has proposed putting wind turbines on the western slope of the Lamb Brook area. Shallow said that the issues of wind towers, timber sales, and wildlife habitat make it important to assess fully the best uses of the area before any harvesting or other activities begin.

"The parties have supported VNRC's efforts to bring them together, and everyone says they're willing to sit down and talk," said Shallow. The Forest Service has agreed not to act in the area for at least a year, giving all those with a stake and interest in the future of the Lamb Brook area a chance to work it out peaceably. ■



The beech trees of Lamb Brook provide good bear habitat, as evidenced by bear claw marks on trunk.

TYLER BESCH

CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS

They're Sprouting Up All Around the State

Has your town considered forming a conservation commission? You'd be in good company if you did. More than 60 Vermont towns have voted to establish commissions or similar committees, with eight in 1994 alone.

A conservation commission is a municipal commission with three to nine members appointed by the town's selectboard. The major goal of a conservation commission is to establish community responsibility for its natural resources.

According to state law, a conservation commission can assist the planning commission with natural resources issues, inventory the town's natural, historic, and cultural resources; receive gifts of land for conservation purposes, and encourage public understanding of local natural resources. Each commis-

sion tailors its projects to the specific needs and interests of its town.

A town votes to establish a conservation commission at a warned meeting such as Town Meeting Day in March. The notice to create a commission must be put on the warning at least 40 days before the meeting.

It only takes one energetic person to establish a conservation commission. If you would like more information, including a fact sheet and a newsletter, contact Virginia Scharf, Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions, HC 32 Box 36, Adamant, VT 05640; tel 223-5527. ■

CLYDE DAM FIGHT CONTINUES

What Nature Tore Asunder, Officials Discuss and Debate

Since the Clyde River in Orleans County spoke up for itself last May — knocking down a hydropower dam that conservationists had been seeking to have condemned and removed — VNRC and local sporting groups have repeatedly seconded the action. The summer months, though, have been a battle to keep nature's act of declaration from being reversed by Citizens' Utilities, the company that owns the jagged walls of concrete that are the remains of Newport No. 11.

When the dam was up for relicensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission last winter, VNRC, Trout Unlimited, and other groups made the case that the best use of the river, both ecologically and economically, was not for hydropower. Instead, the groups argued that the dam be dismantled so the Clyde could recover as a spawning and fishing grounds for landlocked salmon from Lake Memphremagog. Newport's city council and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources concurred, strengthening the case before FERC.

Since Newport No. 11 was breached

last spring, advocates have had to fend off the utility's efforts to rebuild it. Company spokesmen have said Citizens' work in the river was solely for purposes of stabilization and would have to be done whether the dam was rebuilt or not. VNRC has taken a different view.

"The utility was preparing to make repairs of a very permanent nature," said Chris Kilian, Water/Wetlands Program Director and Staff Attorney for VNRC, noting that the company's plans included extending the dam 15 feet farther than its original design. "If the dam were substantially rebuilt, the utility then would be able to argue more forcefully against dam removal in the relicensing process," Kilian said.

Normally, Kilian said, oversight of river construction projects falls to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. But VNRC countered the company's efforts by convincing the federal Environmental Protection Agency to determine whether Section 404 of the Clean Water Act required that a permit be obtained for the reconstruction work.

"Our basic argument was that this was a complicated matter in which there was significant dispute over the facts," said Kilian. "We felt it should be declared a special situation and that the EPA should make the call."

VNRC asserted that the utility's work plan was more a reconstruction than a repair of the dam.

"We maintained that once the dam was breached it was so degraded it could not serve any purpose . . . not to impound water, not to divert water. The utility's wholesale reconstruction of the dam had to fall within the review required under the Clean Water Act," Kilian said.

In early September, the EPA ruled that a "404" permit was indeed required. Unfortunately, at about the same time, FERC approved the utility's work upon the river bank and the dam itself. Perhaps encouraged by this mixed message from Washington, Citizens kept its crews in the river despite the EPA's decision. Kilian said the company moved 3,000 cubic yards of fill into the river after the agency had issued its ruling.

The EPA, now finding a violation of the Clean Water Act, issued a stop-work order and initiated an enforcement action. VNRC believes that the sanctions imposed should include removal of the fill, removal of the dam itself, and appropriate fines.

Whatever the outcome, a deadline was looming — imposed not by Washington but by nature. Around Oct. 1, the Memphremagog salmon would begin their spawning season. VNRC hoped to see the river, with the dam out of the way, more hospitable to the fish than it had been in decades. ■

The Clyde is profiled in a feature article beginning on Page 19.

THE WAL-MART FRONT

What's Good for the Mega-Store May Not Be Good for St. Albans

What's good for Wal-Mart is not likely to be good for St. Albans and Franklin County. A 100,000-square-foot Wal-Mart store located outside the city limits would soon cause a drastic reduction in retail sales within the city, starting a ripple effect that would affect property values, employment, local tax revenues, state aid to education, and municipal public expenditures.

That was VNRC's message to the Vermont Environmental Board during hearings in July on Wal-Mart's controversial proposal to build a mega-store in St. Albans. The board heard the case on an appeal of the developer's Act 250 permit brought by VNRC and the Franklin-Grand Isle Citizens for Downtown Preservation. VNRC presented testimony and written conclusions to make its case that the proposed Wal-Mart was vastly oversized for the modest Franklin County community and could profoundly affect the economy, environment, and vitality of St. Albans, St. Albans Town, and neighboring Swanton.

The board was scheduled to announce its decision in late fall.

Stephen Holmes, Deputy Director

for Policy, said VNRC's consultants, Beth Humstone and Thomas Muller, pointed out to the board that the proposed Wal-Mart would be equal in square footage to between 30 and 40 average-sized stores in the St. Albans area, with retail sales equal to sales of between 50 and 75 average stores. Of its projected \$30.27 million in annual sales, \$22.3 million would be drawn from existing stores. Furthermore, the project would consume 44 acres — an area approximately the size of downtown St. Albans.

Humstone and Muller calculated that Wal-Mart would add \$5.4 million in property value to the St. Albans area, but would cause a reduction in property values of \$6.8 million as existing businesses declined — a net loss of \$1.4 million. And as smaller stores withered in competition with the huge retail chain, 167 local jobs would fade within 10 years. All for a company that employs people for only 28 hours a week at \$5 to \$6 an hour.

"Plus, the project will worsen the strip development that is beginning to occur (near the store's proposed site)," said Holmes. "Secondary development traditionally follows a Wal-Mart . . . fast food places, quick stops, and so forth."

VNRC has steadfastly opposed Wal-Mart's entry into Vermont as long as the company insists on doing business here as it has done elsewhere — paving the countryside to build stores outside traditional retail areas, and with

its vast competitive resources depleting downtown centers. In Williston, where another Wal-Mart and an accompanying Sam's Club are proposed for Taft Corners, the issues are similar.

"This is supposed to be a sub-regional shopping area, emphasizing business development," said Steve Bradish of Williston Citizens for Responsible Growth. The project figures to consume 247,000 square feet. It received an Act 250 permit in July, but the developer has filed a motion with the board to alter conditions attached to the permit that would delay construction until some \$15 million in road improvements are performed.

"If they don't get what they want out of the motion to alter, they could appeal to the (Vermont) Supreme Court," said Bradish, "so this thing could just keep going . . . unless they decide to be smart and take the downtown solution (in Burlington)."

The "downtown solution" has been advocated by VNRC, as well, in its response to Wal-Mart's designs on Vermont. Interestingly, the company recently announced plans to build a smaller (75,000 square foot) Wal-Mart within the established retail center of St. Johnsbury.

"Wal-Mart appears to be heading in the right direction with the St. Johnsbury proposal," said Holmes. "But it's only conceptual right now. Until we see the details, we're going to have to reserve taking a position on this one." ■

NORTHERN FOREST LANDS COUNCIL

*Hard Work Done,
But Harder Work Ahead*

They came, they worked hard, they did their job, and now they are gone. But the work must continue.

The 16 members of the Northern Forest Lands Council, authorized by Congress and appointed by the governors of Vermont, New Hampshire,

Maine, and New York, issued their final recommendations Sept. 19, listing 37 areas where they believe policy-makers must focus reform and resources if the 26-million acre Northern Forest is to be conserved. By the end of the month the council, created in 1990, had dispersed.

Jim Shallow, VNRC Director of Programs for Forests, Wildlife, and Public Lands, said the council's termination begins a new chapter in the effort to conserve the Northern Forest. Regional cooperation will be the key; but pointing the way toward effective synergy among conservationists in the northern

states is an area where the council fell short.

"Now it's up to everybody else to try to interpret and implement their recommendations," said Shallow.

Release of the group's final recommendations followed a very public process in which the council conducted a comprehensive study of issues related to the vast territory, then issued draft, or proposed, recommendations and invited comments. Public discussions were held throughout the region in April. Shallow said changes to the final

(Continued next page)

recommendations reflected citizen input. Now, in the absence of an entity to push the recommended reforms into legislation and practice, Shallow said citizens need to continue their involvement with issues of the Northern Forest.

"The only way those people will see a return on their efforts will be for them to remain in touch, to push the state and federal governments to make sure these things happen."

Key issues addressed by the NFLC were the need for tax reform related to property ownership and inheritance, support of forest-based economies, and strengthening programs for public land acquisition. Shallow concurred with these findings.

"Property tax reform is a serious problem if we want to have open and productive land in Vermont," he said, for when landowners feel forced for economic reasons to sell their holdings it increases the risk of subdivision and development. "And the Council acknowledged that each state should assess ongoing forestry practices in light of whether they are sustainable. I think that's important, because in Vermont we still have people saying it's not an issue even though we've had clear-cutting on thousands of acres."

VNRC Northern Forest Project Director Brendan Whittaker, who was a member of the NFLC's Vermont

contingent, said that three themes in the recommendations were added or embellished after hearing public input. Among them were forest practices on both public and private land. Property taxes and the current high prices for timber are temptations to clear-cutting, which, Whittaker said, had become widespread in Maine and are becoming more of an issue in Vermont.

New importance was also given to the link between forest practices and water quality. "Just as agriculture can produce pollution through erosion and run-off, the same things can happen when loggers go into an area and the water runs down the skidder ruts," he said. "What you do to a water regime when you cut affects the whole hydrologic cycle. It could be that we'll have to consider keeping away from stream banks altogether when we cut."

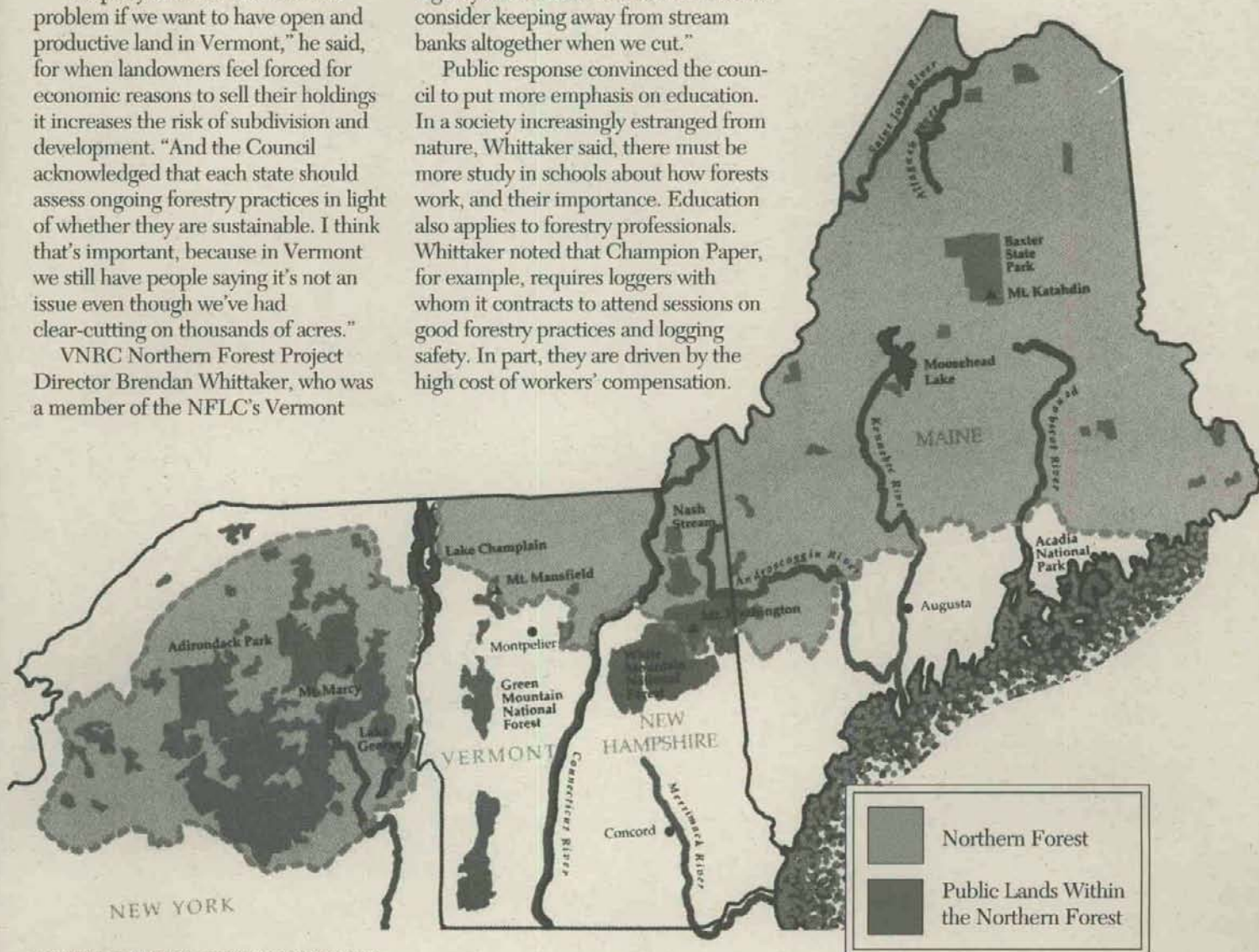
Public response convinced the council to put more emphasis on education. In a society increasingly estranged from nature, Whittaker said, there must be more study in schools about how forests work, and their importance. Education also applies to forestry professionals. Whittaker noted that Champion Paper, for example, requires loggers with whom it contracts to attend sessions on good forestry practices and logging safety. In part, they are driven by the high cost of workers' compensation.

"I have some hope that parts of the industry are learning to do a better job, not only in public relations but also on the ground."

But he said a fundamental question arose in the council's deliberations: whether the way we do business in the United States is simply incompatible with the long-term goals of forest preservation.

"The quarterly bottom line isn't tying in well with a 50-, 60-, 70-year timber rotation. The cycles don't click," said Whittaker. "It calls for all of us to do some sober rethinking." ■

The importance of forest ecosystems is discussed in a feature article beginning on Page 23.



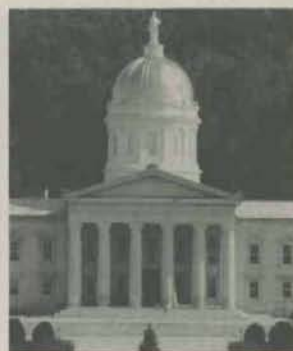
GOLDEN DOME PREVIEW

Perhaps a Chance To Take to the Offense

As the calendar pages flutter by, January grows closer, and with it the start of a new legislative biennium. The 1994 session was marred quickly by the Senate's rejection of three incumbent members of the Environmental Board for reappointment, resulting in a contentious atmosphere that undermined hope for progress on environmental issues.

But VNRC Deputy Director for Policy Stephen Holmes expects 1995 to be different.

"For the environment, 1994 was a defensive year," said Holmes, "but this year we hope to go on the offense with some positive initiatives that will benefit the environment, rather than always trying to put out brush fires and attacks on environmental laws."



The thrust of those legislative efforts will be to:

- reform on-site sewage disposal and water-supply regulations,
- strengthen Act 250,
- respond to the recommendations of the Northern Forest Lands Council,
- safeguard funding for planning under Act 200, and
- reform Vermont's property tax laws.

Issues related to waste-disposal systems already are being studied by the On-Site Sewage Committee, a group of engineers, designers, and

installers called at the behest of former Natural Resources Secretary Chuck Clarke. The committee started public hearings in Vermont's 12 regional planning areas in September, and has solicited recommendations from VNRC.

Currently, subdivision regulations allow development on more than 10 acres without obtaining approvals for sewage disposal systems. But even on large parcels, geological factors such as ledge and the depth of ground water can make it difficult to install waste-disposal systems that are safe both from environmental and public health perspectives.

"Removing the 10-acre loophole has been talked about for years," said Holmes. "With the committee involved, this might be the time to do something about it."

Act 250, now 25 years on the books, in some regards needs to be updated, Holmes said. "Particularly, we found in dealing with the St. Albans (Wal-Mart) project, that Act 250, although designed

(Continued next page)

SUMMER GARDEN PARTIES

A Way To Say "Thanks" To Our Many Members

In a picturesque and historic barn, in a colorful, award-winning flower garden, and in a rustic, turn-of-the-century summer home on Lake Caspian, staff members of VNRC convened in pleasant evening gatherings this summer with members of the organization, their families, and friends to thank them for keeping VNRC alive and vibrant.

"VNRC wanted a forum to simply thank its members for their support," said Marie Frohlich, VNRC Operations Manager, adding, "It was a great opportunity for Jane Difley (VNRC's new Executive Director) to meet members face-to-face and describe what the

current programs and issues are all about."

Three parties were held this summer, either at the homes of board members or at friends' homes with a board member organizing the event. The first gathering was held June 11 at the Dummerston home of Anita Dunlap-Childs and her husband, Ned Childs. This was followed July 9 by a second garden party, hosted by Patsy and Paul Highberg in Woodstock. On Aug. 5, board member Melissa Cunningham coordinated a party in Greensboro, hosted by Liz and Pat Pritchett.

At each setting 30 to 40 people attended. There were hors d'oeuvres or dinner, and plenty of chat about environmental and conservation issues.

"We typically get together with members to strategize, or in the face of some sort of crisis," said Hollis Burbank-Hammarlund, Chair of VNRC's Board of Directors. "This was

a chance to get together in a more relaxed atmosphere, to meet people and talk with them, and to thank members for their support, their contributions of both time and money."

Burbank-Hammarlund, from Newfane, attended all three gatherings. She stressed that the summer garden parties were not fund-raisers. To make the gatherings truly informative, she said, key VNRC personnel attended each party along with Difley. Water/Wetlands Program Director Chris Kilian was in Dummerston, Northern Forest Project Director Brendan Whittaker visited Greensboro, and Jennifer Ramming, former Development Director, went to Woodstock.

"These were enjoyable gatherings that we felt were helpful and pleasant for everyone involved," said Burbank-Hammarlund. "And we are very grateful to those who hosted and arranged them, for the chance to bring us all together." ■

to look at environmental criteria, was ill-suited to adequately address mega-store developments."

VNRC is evaluating possible improvements to the law.

During last year's session the Legislature altered the law that earmarks funds from the property transfer tax to support local and regional planning under Act 200, and the Housing and Conservation Trust Fund. Starting in Fiscal 1996, that tax money is to go to the state's general fund instead.

"We're going to try to reverse the decoupling of those funds from the transfer tax," Holmes said. "People might remember that in 1988 that tax was increased specifically to provide money for those two important funds. We also hope to restore funding for local and regional planning that was cut last year."

With many House and Senate candidates stressing the need for property tax reform, Holmes said VNRC would welcome a new effort to find a better way to finance local education costs. But full funding for the Current Use program — which has been underfunded for several years — or designing property tax reform to achieve the same purposes as Current Use, must be a part of such efforts, Holmes said. If not, VNRC will push to return to full funding for the Current Use program.

Also, VNRC will encourage the Legislature to respond to recommendations by the Northern Forest Lands Council to assess and improve regulations and standards governing forest practices. Particularly important is reducing clear-cutting, protecting habitat, and improving water quality in managed forests.

"Since the NFLC left us no way to implement its recommendations through a regional entity, we feel we have to take the initiative in the state, and this is one way we can do something to effect those recommendations," Holmes said.

In all, the environmentalist stance will be more aggressive and proactive in 1995. For a broader discussion of those plans, members are encouraged to read the "Legislative Platform" in the next issue of the VNRC *Bulletin*. ■

SURFACE WATER RULES

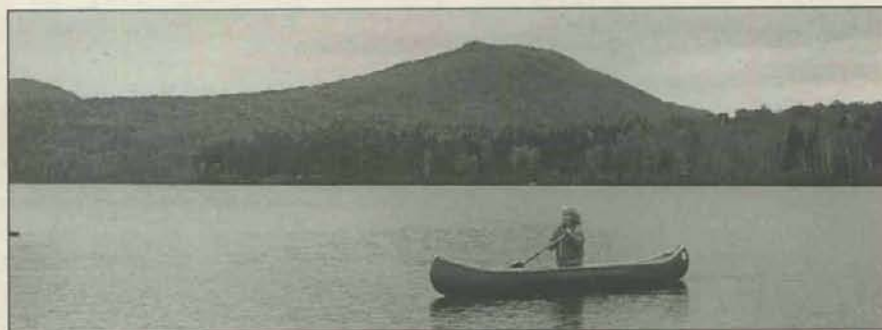
One Oar Forward, One Oar Aft?

After encountering criticism for scuttling a controversial set of rules it had proposed to regulate uses of the state's lakes and ponds, the Water Resources Board this summer resurrected the rules and sent them, with some alterations, to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules. The committee's approval represents the final hurdle on the way to the rules' becoming law.

VNRC was among the board's critics last spring, contending the board had an obligation to make decisions, no

And while one of VNRC's fears was averted — the board banned intrusive jet skis on surface waters smaller than 300 acres — another came true: The rules would increase the total acres allowed for high-speed boating in Vermont from about 1,000 acres to about 30,000, while prohibiting gasoline motors on only about 7,000 acres.

"The natural values of a lake — meaning its shoreline, the environment around it, and the ecosystem dependent upon the lake — should be protected as a top priority," said Kilian. And while non-polluting uses should be given preference over uses that cause pollution, it is not a simple matter of banning power boats in favor of canoes, he said, for canoes can cause disruption of nesting loons and



WILL LINDNER

matter how difficult, pertaining to Vermont's surface waters. The council, therefore, was gratified that the board revived the proposed rules for consideration.

But the final version of the rules does not have VNRC's full support. VNRC has asked the Administrative Rules Committee to recommend amendments so that a better version can be written.

VNRC is concerned that the proposed rules focus more on mediation between parties proposing conflicting uses of the waters than upon protection of the waters themselves, said Chris Kilian, Water Program Director and Staff Attorney for VNRC. Consequently, the proposed rules reflect a formulaic approach to water uses, allowing or prohibiting certain uses based more upon the size of the pond or lake than upon its ecological needs and characteristics.

delicate shoreline areas. The rules need to take the waters' natural uses further into consideration when devising what uses people can make of them.

VNRC advocates three specific alterations of the rules. First, the burden of proof that no ecological damage will result should be placed on those who advocate an intrusive use of the waters. Second, the rules should reflect that the least intrusive use will be preferred over more intrusive uses, if there is a conflict between them.

And third, the rules should ban uses that are contrary to the natural values of the waters when potential or real disruption can be shown. The ban on jet skis on all smaller lakes (the earlier proposals could have grandfathered them in several areas) is a step in that direction. But more steps are needed before the state's surface waters will have the protection they need. ■



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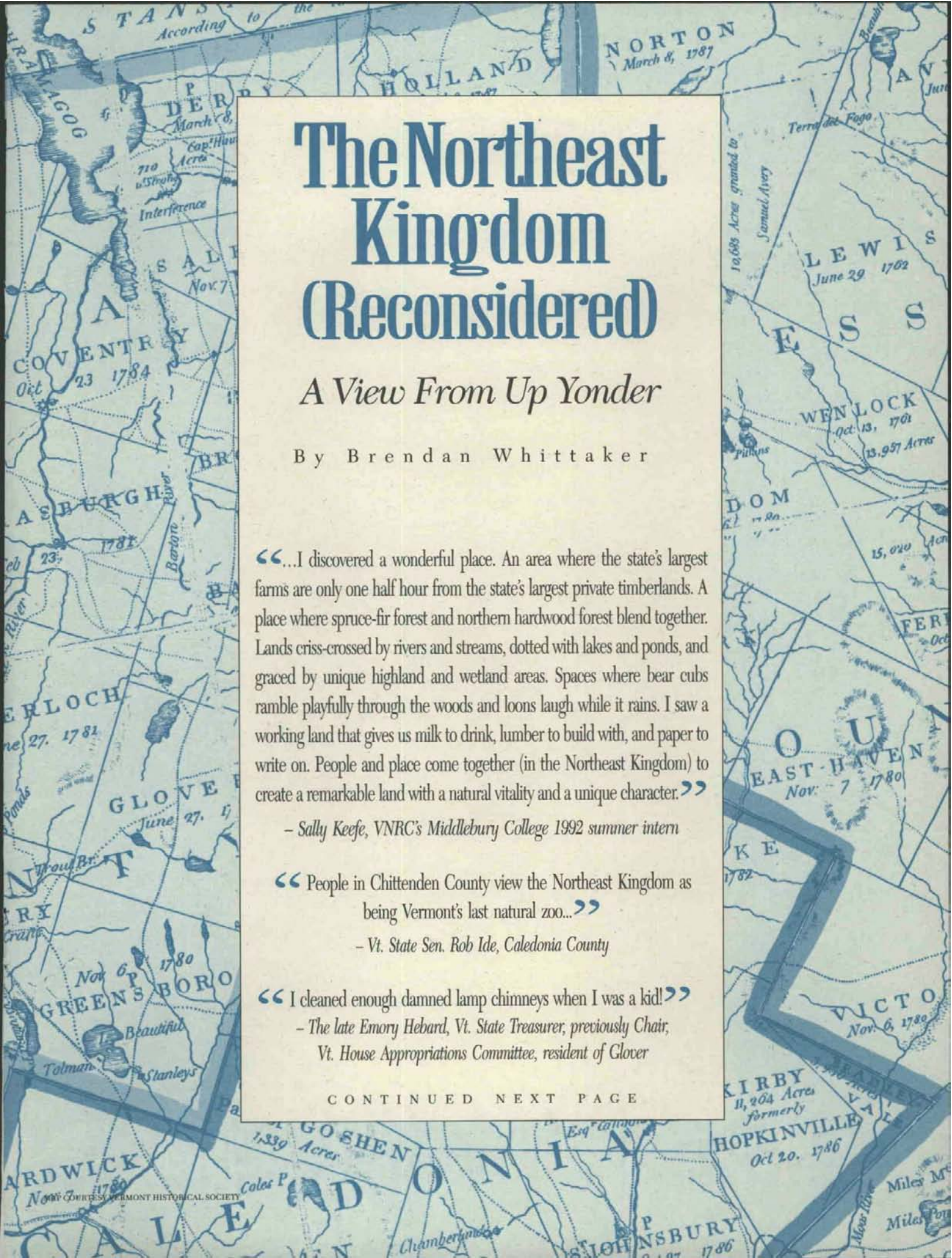
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A detailed historical map of Vermont, showing various land grants and town boundaries. The map is in a sepia tone with blue ink for text and lines. It includes names of towns like COVENTRY, ASBURY, WENLOCK, EAST HAVEN, and GLOVER. It also shows dates of grants, such as 'March 8, 1787' for NORTON and 'June 27, 1781' for GLOVER. The map is oriented with North at the top.

The Northeast Kingdom (Reconsidered)

A View From Up Yonder

By Brendan Whittaker

“...I discovered a wonderful place. An area where the state's largest farms are only one half hour from the state's largest private timberlands. A place where spruce-fir forest and northern hardwood forest blend together. Lands criss-crossed by rivers and streams, dotted with lakes and ponds, and graced by unique highland and wetland areas. Spaces where bear cubs ramble playfully through the woods and loons laugh while it rains. I saw a working land that gives us milk to drink, lumber to build with, and paper to write on. People and place come together (in the Northeast Kingdom) to create a remarkable land with a natural vitality and a unique character.”

– Sally Keefe, VNRC's Middlebury College 1992 summer intern

“People in Chittenden County view the Northeast Kingdom as being Vermont's last natural zoo...”

– Vt. State Sen. Rob Ide, Caledonia County

“I cleaned enough damned lamp chimneys when I was a kid!”

– The late Emory Hebard, Vt. State Treasurer, previously Chair,
Vt. House Appropriations Committee, resident of Glover

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

The Northeast Kingdom

The attempt at a definition of "The Northeast Kingdom" in itself hints that the area is seen as a distinct region within Vermont. In Montpelier, during the 1970s, when, as Natural Resources Secretary, I was responsible for the entire state, I was well aware of such places as "The Rutland Region," "The Champlain Valley," "Precision Valley," "The Route 7 Corridor," and "The Land of Milk and Honey" (Addison County). But, the "Northeast Kingdom"—just "The Kingdom" for short—seems to have the most permanency as a region-name in the minds of Vermonters and many out-of-staters.

This northeast region of the state, its boundaries never really precisely delineated, usually is defined as all of

to fish at Quimby's Camps on Forest and Big Averill lakes in the northern wilds of Essex County.

As one who has had a home in Essex County for close to 35 years, I have been asked to provide a description of the Northeast Kingdom of today. This account is by one who has regularly been driving the roads (both public and paper company woods roads), working in the woods and on my spouse Dorothy's commercial vegetable (very short season!) farm, enduring or rejoicing in the long winters (depending on a given day's mood), and finally, tending for the last 10 years to a small parish flock of Kingdom-dwellers and far northern New Hampshireites, just generally living life with them in this most remote part of Vermont. This experi-

think she got it just right. (So much so, in fact, that we used Sally's quote on the cover of VNRC's Fall 1993 *Northern Forest Report*; if her words look familiar, you first saw them there.)

Her description of a spruce-fir forest with northern hardwoods is apt. We have up here a transition between the typical Vermont hardwood forest of sugar maples and the lowland spruce-fir boreal forests found in eastern Quebec and the farthest northern tip of Maine. It's sometimes named by forest scientists as the "Acadian Forest," with the beautiful red spruce as a hallmark of its timber stands. Her "working land that gives us milk to drink" is also correct: Orleans County ranks third among Vermont counties in dairy production, and the entire region sells about \$80 million



ALLEN GILBERT



ALLEN GILBERT

Caledonia, Orleans, and Essex counties, along with the greatest part of Lamoille County (excluding Stowe) with maybe some touches of northeastern Washington County as well. Included are such towns as Eden, East Richford, and Albany (Vermont—not New York), Coventry, Wheelock, and Irasburg (but not Ira, or Irasville), Morgan, Concord (lots of folks think that's in New Hampshire), Lemington, and Averill, as well as St. Johnsbury ("St. J"), Newport, and Hardwick. The origin of the name "Northeast Kingdom" apparently can be traced to one person: former U.S. Sen. George D. Aiken who, I was reminded recently by his friend and former aide Steve Terry, kept in close touch with constituents here and loved

ence has given me, among many other gifts, a profound respect and love for this roughly 2-million acre part of Vermont, this Kingdom land and its people. Others have felt this gift, too.

The first quote at the beginning of this article is by Sally Keefe, VNRC's 1992 Middlebury College Northern Forest intern, who now is doing full-time environmental work in Colorado. Sally came to VNRC that summer from her native Maryland, by her own admission a "true flatlander," a salt-water baywoman from the Chesapeake Bay region where her family earns its living. So the word picture was from a knowledgeable, yet first-time, visitor to the Kingdom. And I

worth of all the state's farm commodities annually, including maple products—over 20 percent of Vermont's total annual state agriculture sales. Indeed, VNRC's Landsat satellite-based 1991 Northern Forest Region land-use map shows a surprising amount of farmed land remaining in Caledonia County as well as Orleans. Even in my own Essex County, the most heavily forested in Vermont, VNRC's map shows working farms almost the entire length of the strip of fertile Connecticut River lowland from Lunenburg to the Quebec border at Canaan. These are, almost universally, family working farms and—BST threat or not—nearly everyone in the Kingdom hopes that they long survive and prosper. These farm

The Northeast Kingdom

families are our neighbors and friends, and they mean much to us up here.

Sally's words about lands "criss-crossed by rivers and streams, dotted with lakes and ponds" are accurate, too. The Kingdom has the largest share of Vermont's waters (excluding Lake Champlain), and we can even rival the big Champlain with our own international Lake Memphremagog, complete with its own monster named "Memphry." Headwaters of many streams rise in the Kingdom, including the Missisquoi, Lamoille, Winooski, Barton, Black, Clyde (the Clyde is featured in a related story on Page 19), Passumpsic, Moose, and Coaticook rivers, and a portion of the very upper Connecticut feeder streams, especially the wild three main branches of the

folk to earn a livelihood. In fact, it's a *tough* place to earn a living. Newport, for example, quite often has Vermont's highest regional unemployment rate. There are not lots and lots of job opportunities; a person often really has to scramble to put together the means to stay here permanently. Thus, another generalization: Most people who live year-round in the Kingdom are here because they want to be, in spite of the obstacles (unless one is retired, or has some other income source "from away").

This can lead to a judgment that is difficult to make about the Kingdom: Is this region and its people really so different from the rest of Vermont? Another way to ask is by noting Sen. Ide's statement — one usually goes to a zoo

concerns of VNRC and the state, as well as concerns of local residents expressed through our very capable Kingdom regional planning entity, the Northeastern Vermont Development Association.

Most of our towns, including mine, are members of NVDA and support thoughtful local and regional planning up here in this area that is always supposed to resist such efforts. More town plans have been approved under Act 200 in NVDA's territory than in any other Vermont planning region. In solid waste management the Kingdom has been right there with the rest of the state. The most rural small towns such as mine, as well as cities, are fully recycling trash.

There is a pride in living here and a

There is a pride in living
here and a growing
determination that we take no
back seat to any other
region but are a contributing
part to the state overall

Nulhegan, Vermont's first major Connecticut River tributary, flowing out of totally unsettled territory in the heart of northern Essex County. It was through the Nulhegan wilderness that Rogers' Rangers made that November 1759 walk from what is now Island Pond to the Connecticut, nearly starving to death on the way. The place where the ragged survivors of the Quebec raid finally stumbled out onto the big river, described so well in Kenneth Robert's classic novel *Northwest Passage*, is just two miles north of my dooryard.

Finally, Sally's description of "people and place coming together" brings us to the humans. Approximately 12 percent of Vermont's population lives here. The Kingdom is not an easy place for these

to look at life forms and styles quite different from one's own. Just how unique then, is the Kingdom and its people?

Sen. Ide's comment came in a press story on Wal-Mart's attempt to enter Vermont, the only state in the country without one of the retail giant's mega-stores. Isn't it ironic that Wal-Mart may come first to the Northeast Kingdom — but on our terms, not sprawling out on prime farmland or productive forest but locating a scaled-down store near downtown St. Johnsbury, utilizing the site of an old feed mill? Wal-Mart seems to be taking a step away from customary corporate siting policy, perhaps in response to the

growing determination that we take no back seat to any other region but are a contributing part to the state overall. Sen. Ide, again, touched on this when he announced for office in 1992. He said, in effect, that the Kingdom area he would represent not only has his loyalty but so would *all* of Vermont, that we do not have to beg or apologize for being the Northeast Kingdom; rather, we are a proud part of a great state, and that we are all in this together. The Kingdom has its contributions to make to the rest as all of us work together for the good of "the (entire) State Of Vermont."

One contribution the Kingdom certainly makes to Vermont is wildlife. We have more moose than any other area

of the state; roadside moose-watching is a favorite pastime of an evening, and we remain the state's "moose-nursery," as it were, from which the large creatures have repopulated Vermont as far south as Bennington and Vernon and on into Massachusetts.

The Northeast Kingdom may be one of the few places in the eastern United States that still runs mostly on Nature's time clock. When it's time to cut wood, tap maples, plant, weed, make hay, haylage, or silage, or sap-peel a bunch of fence posts, most often, *you* don't get to choose the time or opportunity. Nature says when, and if you muff it, it's too late, wait 'til next year. That leads to a rugged practicality of our citizens.

It's this practicality of living that leads us to the last quote at the article's beginning, that of "Em" Hebard of Glover (who I always thought would have made a grand governor, and I used to tell him so). His comment came during a hearing on Vermont's energy future, held back in the 1970s when one venturesome attendee suggested that we might well get along in the Kingdom without any electricity at all, as our forebears had done. (It is true

that the last two towns in Vermont to gain regular electric service are in the heart of the Kingdom: Victory and Granby, where the utility poles came as late as 1959.) Em's comment on his childhood chore of cleaning the family's glass coal oil lamp chimneys was not intended of course to *squelch* the idea of a totally non-electric Kingdom, but just to throw a little Clover-style practicality and "institutional Kingdom memory" on it. Philosophizing and speculation are an essential part of life here; have all the ideas you want, but it's a basic Kingdom tenet that *then you have to make them work!* In a word: Is it practical?

One last note on practicality, Kingdom-style: woodpiles, and the felling, skidding, splitting, stacking, and drying that take place in their construction, are serious matters here. Possible or newly arrived employers and supervisors "from away" should know that if someone in your employ from the Kingdom tells you that he or she needs time off to get up a woodpile, give them the time! It's not an excuse, and it's not an option; it's serious business. On an early morning last winter I began the 90-mile trek to the VNRC home office in Montpelier, starting out at -32 degrees in

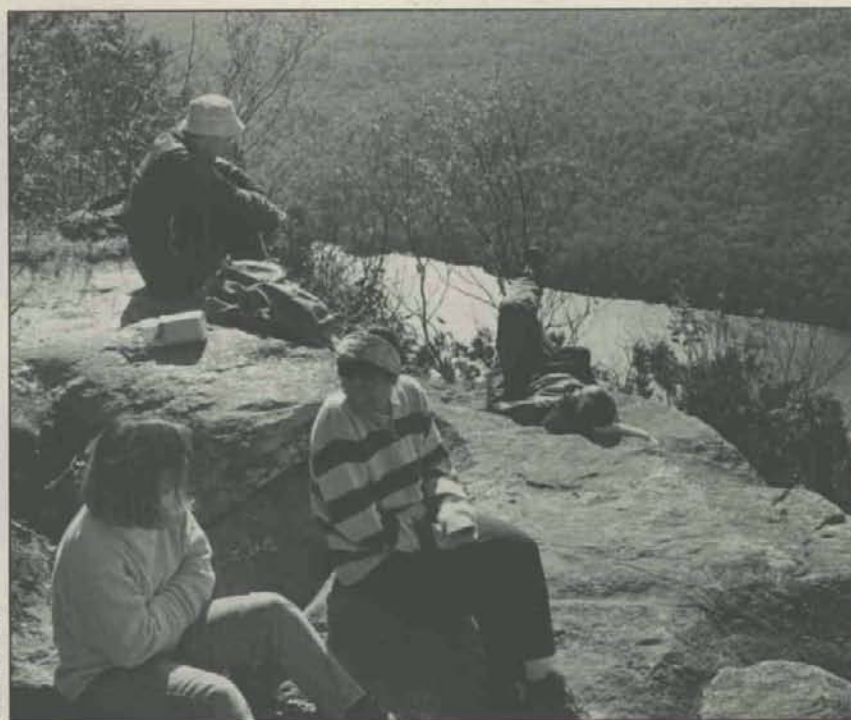
Brunswick and in a few miles drove through what the weather folk on radio and TV call "The Cold Spot In The Nation Today." In the unorganized Essex County town of Ferdinand that day, it was -42 degrees (unofficial reading — but that low, who cares?).

In recent months I've been traveling on VNRC assignments through other parts of Vermont, my first time in seven years or so that I'm "out of the Kingdom" quite a bit. In becoming re-acquainted with the rest of the state a thought is dawning, a possible answer to the question, "Just how different is the Kingdom?" In lots of places I visit in other parts of Vermont I see the obviously essential woodpiles, I see flower and vegetable gardens, managed forests, and well-cared-for land. I see practicality abounding. I sense that perhaps in *no* place in Vermont are jobs abundant, that there is *no* area of the state where most people do not have to scratch, even if a little, to make a go of living, and, above all, no place in the entire state that is not, in some way, simply beautiful — which, in the end, is why people stay in our part of northern New England.

"Is it possible," I begin asking myself as I head again northeasterly toward my home, "that back here this Northeast Kingdom is really a distillation of what is best in all of Vermont?" Could it be — as St. J's Rob Ide indicated so well and as Glover's Em Hebard demonstrated in his lifetime of service to the whole state — Kingdom or out of Kingdom, we are all in this together as one really great state with each region making its contribution?

A final thought as I pull into our own Brunswick dooryard (which is about as far to the northeast as you can get in Vermont and a long long way from Pownal and Bennington): Perhaps, after all, the Kingdom is just like the rest of Vermont — only perhaps, just maybe — more so. ■

Brendan Whittaker is VNRC's Northern Forest Project Director. As a former state Agency of Natural Resources Secretary, a minister, and a resident of Brunswick, he knows Vermont — its human and natural resources — well.



ALLEN GILBERT

Hiking on Mt. Pisgah above Lake Willoughby.

The Clyde— A River of the Kingdom

BY WILL LINDNER

When the Clyde ran free, land-locked salmon chased spawning smelt at spring melt-out. Fishermen of all ages rejoiced in the opportunity to catch a gleaming silver salmon, and many succeeded. Here is a photograph from those days before dams obstructed the river and Newport was, for a short time every year, the place for fishermen to be.



COURTESY NORTHEAST KINGDOM TROUT UNLIMITED

Standing on the wooden bridge, elbows on the rail, you can nearly recapture those earlier, exciting times in

Newport. Below you, the waters ripple as the Clyde River flows languidly into Lake Memphremagog. Before you is spread one of Vermont's loveliest scenes. The broad lake, with Canada calling at its northern end, tapers here at the southeast, its shoreline bending around Indian Point and narrowing to a small channel leading to tangential South Bay; the low, arched peak of Owl's Head rises abruptly beyond the far shore, proving mountains needn't be high to be dramatic; the tilted white triangles of distant sailboats and the aged wooden timbers of old docks and marinas at the city's waterfront reveal a rich and surprising aquarian banquet for the landlocked people of Vermont's Northeast Kingdom.

It was on this bridge, some 250 feet long and six feet above the water, that the action took place year in and year out until the 1950s. Every spring at ice-out the smelt living in the deep waters of the lake would swim into the mouth of the Clyde River to spawn. And in hot pursuit — for the smelt are their food supply — came a torrent of gleaming silver salmon, a landlocked cousin of the Atlantic salmon cut off from the sea when the glaciers reshaped the earth's contours and then receded.

The bridge in those days was a railroad bridge owned by the Canadian Pacific. It was, in a sense, a tollbooth across the mouth of the river, for there was no way the salmon could reach the

holiday captured in black-and-white photos. Business boomed as the three hotels — the Newport House, the Raymond House, and Hurst's Hotel — filled with guests during May and June. Railroad workers caught 10-pound salmon off the bridge on their lunch breaks, and merchants fed the frenzy by offering prizes for the biggest fish, the best catch by a lady, and so forth.

Warren "Jersey" Drown, a forester who remembers those days, says that the Airline Train, running between Boston and Montreal, refueled in Newport and everyone tried to have a fish on the line at 6 a.m. when the train pulled in, a bit of a show for the passengers.

Drown also remembers the spring of 1926, when as a boy of 12 he had the distinction of catching the first salmon of the season. He carried the fish proudly up Main Street and his family fed sumptuously that evening. Next day, however, he was berated by townspeople who told him the first salmon was traditionally sent, on ice, to the White House (which was then occupied by Vermonter Calvin Coolidge).

Drown recalls dryly: "I ate the president's salmon and enjoyed it."

A Dam Stops the Salmon

The president, assuming the tradition continued, has not had a Memphremagog salmon since 1957, when Citizens' Utilities completed work on a concrete dam nearly half a mile up the river. The dam, known as Newport No. 11, shut the flow off like a spigot. With the end of the flow came the end of the annual fishing frenzy off the railroad bridge, the end of heydays for the hotels (old wooden structures that eventually burned down), and a great dwindling — if not exactly the end — of the autumn salmon spawning, when the jut-jawed fish would swim upstream, leaping over rocks and rapids, to deposit their eggs in the gravel beds of the Clyde River.

These pleasures were sacrificed, over the protests of local people and several state officials, upon the altar of hydroelectricity.

Civilization needs electric power.

Dave Smith and Kevin Coffey, members of the local chapter of Trout Unlimited, concede that. But the way it has been extorted from the Clyde has wrought an ecological price painful to behold. Once completed, Newport No. 11 was operated in a peak-power mode, meaning the once-thriving riverbed was virtually dried out as the company held back water to release when electric demand increased. If the de-watering wrecked the river and the fishery, allowing saplings and grass to grow among the rocks of the river bed, those sudden flushes of water weren't much better. They spread soil, seeds, and sediment, making the river shallower and filling in the deep pools salmon seek to deposit their eggs.

"It's amazing that there's any salmon left in that river at all," says Coffey.

Smith, TU's local president, agrees. "It's against all odds. You've got to have profound respect for those fish."

And then there were the fish kills. When water was released, fish swam up from the lower reaches where the river meets the lake. But when the gates were closed the flow abruptly ended, and perch and other fish were sometimes caught high and dry at the edges of the stream. TU member and Newport resident Gary Ward has collected photos of such tragedies over the years.

"People consider hydro-power a clean source of energy," says Coffey, grimly. "There's nothing clean about hydro-power. It's devastating."

The River Rebels

Not surprisingly, Smith and Coffey were among the festive, awestruck friends of the Clyde who gathered on its bank that magic Sunday last spring when the river finally rebelled. Most Vermonters know by now that, with impeccable timing, the Clyde rose on May 1, tearing away at the dam and earthen bank and flowing freely again in its old river bed — a riparian self-proclamation delivered precisely when the Clyde had the attention of state and federal officials, sporting and conservation groups.

Newport No. 11 was up for its first relicensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The dam had



Fish kills occur on today's Clyde when flows are suddenly restricted by the closing of a dam's gates.

Clyde but by passing beneath it, and the species paid with a tithe upon their population. For once the word was out that the fish were moving, anglers came from every street in the city, from every town in the Kingdom and from points beyond Vermont, and the bridge was jam-packed with people dropping their lines in the water. The more refined anglers, with their fly rods and waders, cast their aerial loops farther upstream but still within the city limits.

For weeks, then, Newport became a giddy fisherman's paradise, a riotous

The Northeast Kingdom

few friends. TU, VNRC, the Derby and Orleans rod and gun clubs, the Abenaki Council, the Newport City Council, and the state's Agency of Natural Resources, among other groups, had all reached the same conclusion: The fish habitat was more important than the power gleaned from the dam, so the dam must go.

The power company disagreed, and FERC, which Smith characterizes as long on meetings but short on resolution, was indecisive.

The river, however — the tamed, broken, captive river — was not. It made an end run around the dam and around the power company officials and allegedly irresolute bureaucrats.

"The river decided its own fate," said VNRC's Chris Kilian, Water/Wetlands Program Director and Staff Attorney. (Kilian has been in the center of the effort to keep Citizens' Utilities from rebuilding the dam.)

"We'd been fighting that thing for so long, and then it went out on its own," a

still-excited Kevin Coffey said in August. "There was a stream of people up there on that day. It was like a religious pilgrimage."

The Water's Journey

But it would be unfair to the Clyde River to tell its story only in terms of power dams and thwarted salmon. For the river is 32 miles long, and by the time it reaches Newport No. 11 (or the dam's remnants, now) it has covered a lot of Vermont countryside and changed its appearance repeatedly.

The Clyde originates at the northern tip of Island Pond (the name of both a small lake and the village beside it), flowing through an aqueduct beneath the Clyde Hotel as it starts toward Memphremagog. It is the quintessential Northeast Kingdom river: rich in trout, a resource for mammals, from the beavers whose stick dams presage the concrete obstructions farther on to black bears

and moose; scenic, and secluded.

The Clyde is not the only river in the Kingdom, of course. Francis Smith, who is Dave's son and partner in a fishing-guide and fly-tying service out of Derby, fishes the Black for rainbow trout in the springtime and browns late in the season. The Barton, and particularly the Willoughby, are famous for rainbows, and all three run north to empty into Memphremagog's South Bay. Smith sometimes takes his clients to the fringes of the Kingdom, to explore the Missisquoi to the west or the Lamoille to the south. But for a true wilderness experience, to help his urban customers get away from it all and perhaps encounter a moose or bear on their trout expeditions, the Clyde, says the younger Smith, is the river of choice.

The most popular place to snag a salmon back in the 1950s, before the Clyde was dammed, was the Canadian Pacific railroad bridge in Newport.



Harry Burnham of Island Pond says the Clyde also offers the best canoeing in the region. In fact, Burnham, who rents canoes, says that the rivers of the Kingdom, other than the Connecticut and the Clyde, are little more than mountain streams. Among them, only the Black affords satisfactory canoeing, and that only in short stretches and at certain times of the year.

To see the Kingdom from canoe the Clyde, especially its eastern portion between Island Pond and West Charleston, is the place to go. In high summer the river is narrow — 15- to 20-feet wide in most places — and only waist-deep, but its sandy bed is forgiving of navigational error and its gentle currents make for an easy ride through dense forests of maples, willows, white cedar, and birches. In places, the Clyde opens into broad marshlands where pale grasses wave rhythmically in the wind. Cradled in the valley, with new-mown fields visible on distant hill-sides, you can hear the whisper of traffic on Route 105, while ospreys hover on the lookout for a fish dinner.

beautiful, with pools and little rapids. There are a lot of hatches in there . . . cicadas and may flies." That's why, he adds, "if the dam is (removed) you're probably going to see a great expansion of the amount of fish there."

Or so people hope, be they anglers or people who simply wish to see the Kingdom's richest river freed from its bonds. But there will be more to restoring the Clyde than dismantling the ruins of Newport No. 11, if that is the outcome of the tortuous negotiations, for the dam is just one of several obstructions in the river's final mile.

And disputes about minimum flow, proffered trade-offs of power potential for the right to continue generating, maddening references to a manmade canal that skirted the dam as "the river" while the true river bed is called "the lower bypass," these attest to how severed the Clyde is from its natural heritage — the heritage, rightfully, of everything and everyone in the Kingdom's vast ecosystem.

Nature's Course

Meanwhile, next spring, the sun again will warm the white slopes of Bluff Mountain and Middle Mountain way up in Essex County, and as thaw sets in water will trickle in singing rivulets down toward the Pherrins River. Under its brittle skin of ice, the replenished Pherrins will spill toward Island Pond and its rendezvous with the eastern Clyde, there to impart its mysterious elixir.

And just at that time, frozen Memphremagog will soften in the sunlight, and the smelt, perch, and salmon will drift toward the old railroad bridge in Newport. Tentatively, they will probe the promising mouth of the Clyde.

How far, if they undertake the journey upstream, will they get one year hence? How far the year after? ■

Will Lindner of PressKit has also written a profile of the Clyde River for the November-December issue of Audubon magazine.

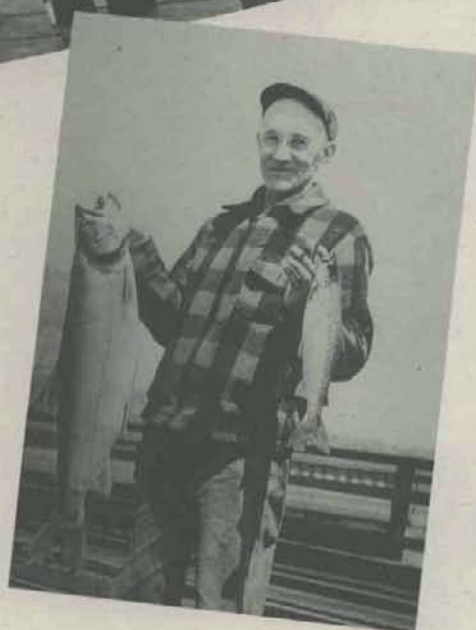
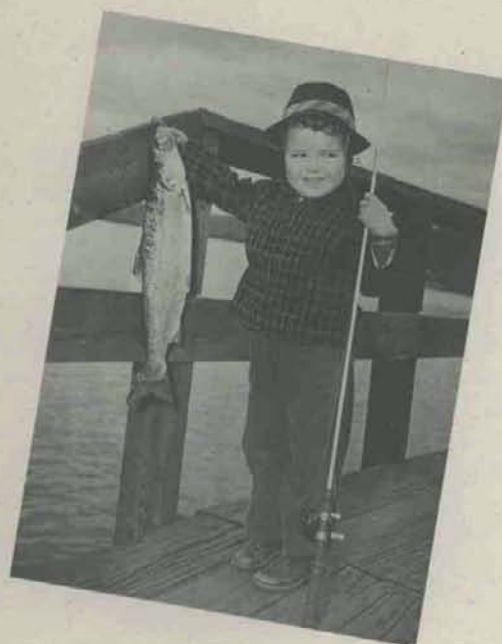
Almost Two Rivers

As the western Clyde is renowned for spawning salmon, the eastern Clyde has its own claim to fertility. Near its starting point in Island Pond it is joined by the little Pherrins River. Formed of snow melt and fed by Norton Pond up north in Warren Gore, it's the chill water of the Pherrins, local anglers aver, that nurtures the Clyde's populations of rainbow and brown trout, its abundant brookies . . . and even the Memphremagog salmon.

If so, the fertility imparted at the river's east end must be potent, indeed, to survive the hazards of its last 12 miles, for once the Clyde reaches West Charleston it is subjected to dams, power stations, storage ponds, and penstock — the instruments of hydro-power.

Still, the western Clyde, for all that exploitation, remains a living stream, splashing among boulders and quickening its pace as it heads toward Newport.

"You can almost cut the Clyde into two rivers," says Francis Smith. "It's slower upstream. Downstream it's



COURTESY NORTHEAST KINGDOM TROUT UNLIMITED

The Northern Forest

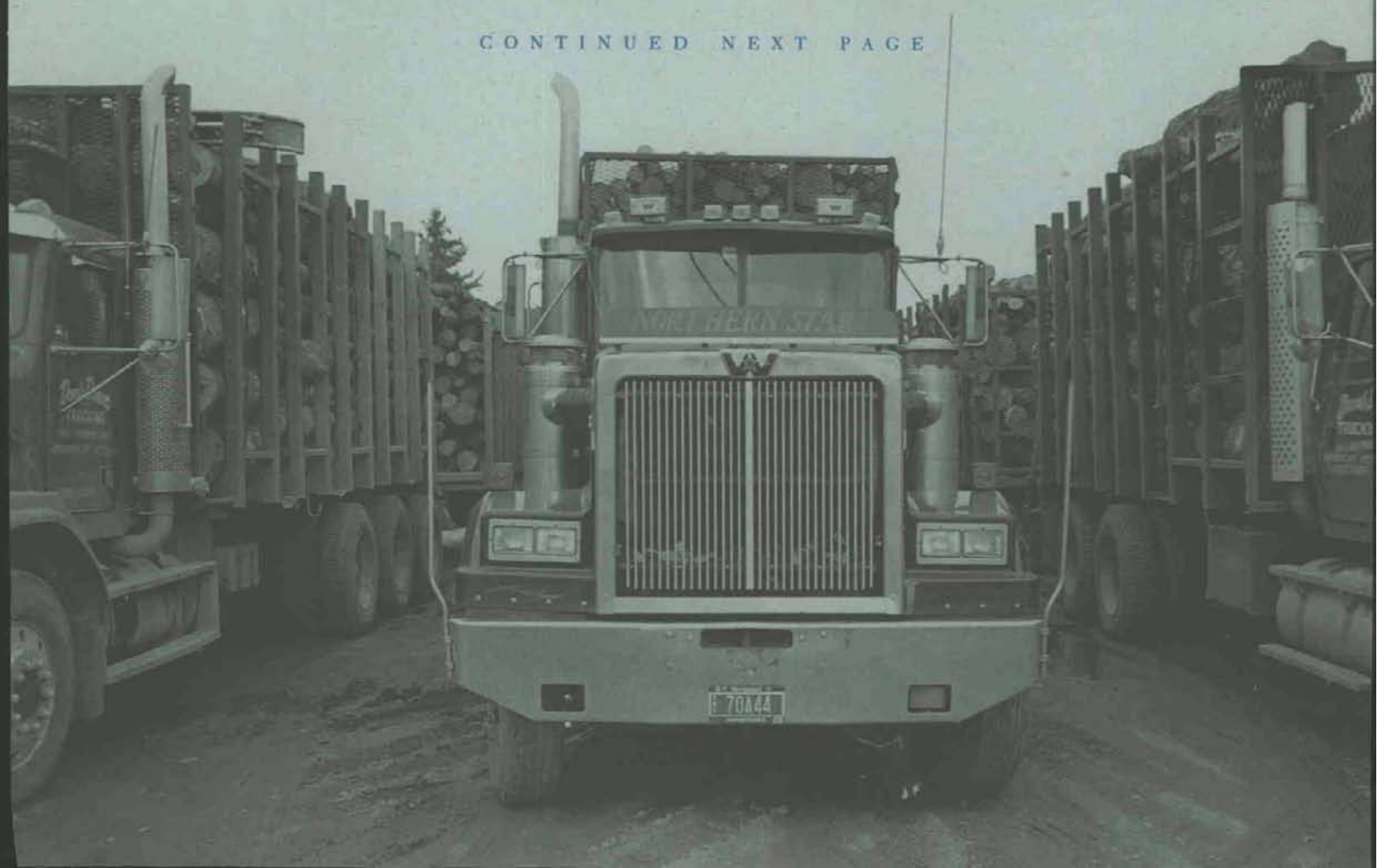
Ecological Health and Social Well-Being are Intimately Linked

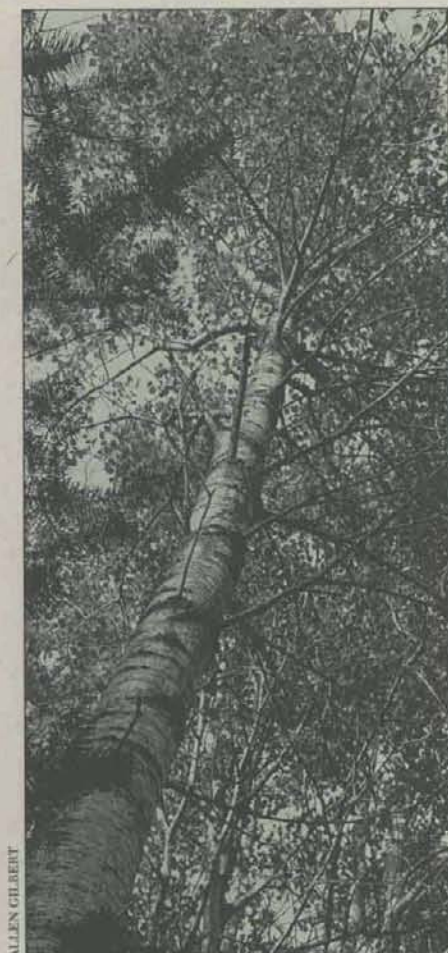
By Stephen Trombulak

As a conservation biologist, I have viewed the debate over the future of the Northern Forest, including the forests of the Northeast Kingdom, with a tremendous amount of interest. The original focus of the Northern Forest Lands Council (and the Governors' Task Force and Northern Forest Lands Study that preceded it) was primarily on trends in land conversion and the economic health of the forest-products industry. However, concerns expressed by residents throughout the region about the ecological health of the forests forced the Council to focus also on

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

PHOTO BY ALLEN GILBERT





ALLEN GILBERT

biological diversity and forest practices. Although some viewed this as a deviation from the Council's mission, the truth is that ecological health and social well-being are intimately linked, and any attempt to discuss one without the other is, at best, a waste of time. Now that the Council's work has drawn to a close, and discussions on forest policies will most likely continue within each state separately, it is important that all citizens of Vermont continue to work towards improved ecological and social conditions in our state.

I speak with little authority about what the specific elements of social well-being are, but I feel they probably include such basic features as the development of diversified employment opportunities that can be maintained over the long-term, the development of an economic infrastructure that maximizes the retention of profit within the region, and the promotion of cultural traditions.

As a biologist, however, I am certain of the importance of biological integrity. Promoting biological integrity is more than just protecting a few high-profile endangered species or maximizing the number of species on every acre of land. It involves promoting the existence of *all* native species and ecosystems in their natural patterns of abundance and distribution, as well as the ecological and evolutionary processes that connect them over the landscape and over time.

Any conservation strategy that hopes to achieve biological integrity must:

- Maintain healthy populations of all native species in natural patterns of abundance and distribution;
- Represent all native ecosystem types and successional stages across their natural range of variation;
- Maintain ecological and evolutionary processes;
- Provide for responsiveness to short-term and long-term environmental change; and
- Maintain the evolutionary potential of all organisms.

It is important to understand why each of these characteristics must be met, lest we fall into the trap of believing that protecting one or two small populations of a few charismatic species is enough to succeed at conservation.

First, populations of all species live within communities, each species connected to others by processes, such as predation, competition, symbiosis, and decomposition. Changes in the composition of a community, either by adding or removing species, or changing their numbers beyond their normal ranges, can have enormous consequences for everything else living there. One only has to consider the impact of increased abundance of deer (with their tendency to carry brain worm) on moose, the introduction of Eurasian milfoil on native aquatic plants, and the local extinction of fishers on the destruction of trees by porcupines to see why we need to consider the natural world as an interconnected set of species that function together as a whole.

Although some species in a community might well be unnecessary to the operation of the whole, we do not have nearly enough knowledge to know for certain what those species might be. By emphasizing the conservation of only a few native species at the expense of all the others we run the risk of managing communities to collapse.

Similarly, communities are connected to the non-living parts of the environment, such as air, water, and sunlight, to make ecosystems. Some species are restricted to specific ecosystems, and their loss or degradation, such as is occurring to alpine ecosystems on Mt. Mansfield and Camel's Hump, leads to the extinction of many species together. Many animals spend parts of their lives in different ecosystems, and the loss of one or the presence of barriers may also cause catastrophe. Atlantic salmon, for example, depend on both lakes (or the ocean) and streams to carry out their entire life cycle. When barriers like dams, such as the one on the Clyde River in Newport, are built, populations of Atlantic salmon that once numbered in the hundreds of thousands virtually disappear.

Of course, ecosystems themselves are not static entities but change over time. Young spruce-fir forests become old spruce-fir forests, bringing about changes in a whole host of characteristics, such as light levels, composition of under-story communities, and soil conditions. Many species of organisms are specific to forests of a particular age; for example, several species of hardwood-forest lichens are known only from large stands of old-growth. Therefore, protecting forest ecosystems based solely on tree species composition and ignoring such features as age may also lead to the loss of biological integrity.

The loss of any ecosystem or successional stage is of concern, yet in the Northeast Kingdom one of the greatest problems is large-scale clear-cutting. For example, in Concord and Lunenburg, at least 25 percent of the forests have been cut in the last few years, creating conditions for large expanses of even-aged, juvenile forests with none of the diversity found in for-

(Continued Page 26)

Mapping Clear-Cuts in the Kingdom

(Editor's Note: Terry Kellogg worked with VNRC as an intern this summer. He is finishing his studies at Middlebury College, where he is an economics major, captain of the Nordic ski team, and runs cross-country. He writes about his participation in a VNRC clear-cut mapping project.)

In January 1994 I saw a particular series of Northeast Kingdom clear-cuts for the first time. On that occasion, I could not have known that those areas would become the focus of so much attention, much less my own attention. But as more travelers witnessed the devastation visible from U.S. Route 2 as it snakes through the towns of Concord and Lunenburg, the word spread, concern grew, and the need to, at the very least, document the situation became apparent.

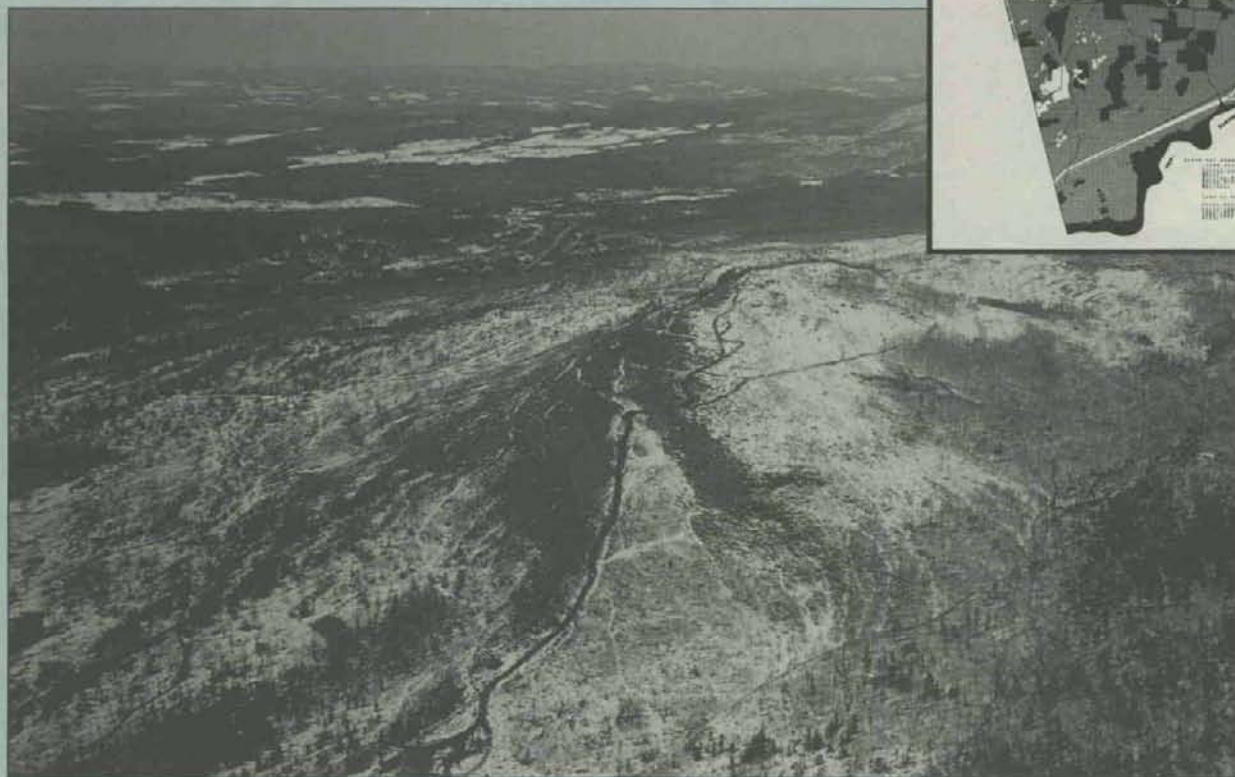
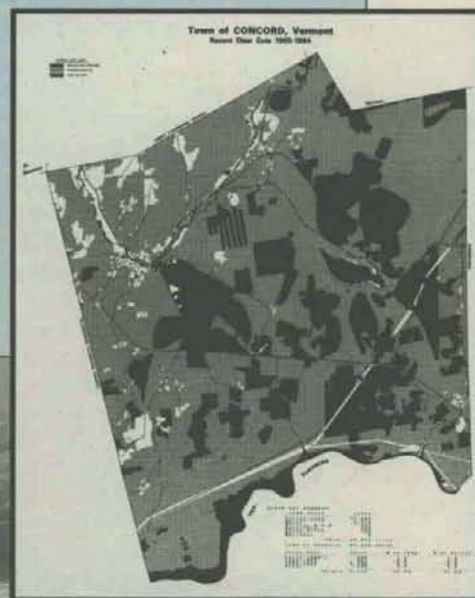
And it was with that intent that I saw those clear-cuts for a second time, accompanied by Brendan Whittaker of VNRC and Todd Norman, a University of Vermont graduate student. Our tour

and discussion that day was one of the first steps in a clear-cut mapping project sponsored by VNRC this summer.

Mapping focused on clear-cuts that occurred in Concord, Lunenburg, Brighton, and Newark between 1982 and 1994. Our primary data sources were three sets of aerial photographs from 1982, 1986, and 1992. Aerial fly-overs were also used to locate areas harvested after the most recent photographs were taken. These sources were supplemented by "windshield" surveys and interviews with county foresters to verify our information. Data were compiled using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to create the final maps.

Working for VNRC was exciting, challenging, and rewarding. I eagerly await the finished product and hope to stay in close touch with the individuals and organizations that I worked with this summer. I am also interested in further study of the many issues related to the type of clear-cutting currently taking place in northern Vermont.

The winter photo below shows Miles Mountain in Concord; the brown areas on the mountain are mud, where clear-cutting has occurred. The graph below is one of the maps produced from the project data: a map of the town of Concord, with areas clear-cut between 1980 and 1994 shown in black.



ests that are older and of mixed-age. The ecological issue here is not that trees were cut, but rather that so many were cut over such a large area that the maintenance of successional types and their affiliated communities has been made all but impossible for two centuries.

The final three characteristics emphasize that the goal of conservation is not simply to maximize the number of species, but to allow natural processes to operate as well. Connections within and between ecosystems, such as predation, competition, decomposition, nutrient and water cycling, and soil retention, are essentially the processes of nature. Without these, ecosystems tend towards collapse, and society is forced to expend time, energy, and money to prevent it from happening. These processes can operate either over short periods of time, like minutes and days, or longer periods, like centuries or millennia. What happens to vegetation when the average yearly temperature increases? In the past, plants migrated northward by the slow process of seed dispersal. After the retreat of the last ice sheet from Vermont about 10,000 years ago, tundra vegetation, such as is now found 1,000 miles north of us, migrated into the area from the south. A few thousand years later, coniferous forests arrived and the tundra migrated northward. Later, northern hardwood forests replaced the conifers in many places. A goal of any successful conservation strategy must be to ensure that barriers to migration or any response by species to environmental change do not exist.

As the Northern Forest Lands Council ends its discussions, the work to craft a new and better future for all of Vermont goes on. Recognition that the protection and restoration of biological integrity is a fundamental necessity for any sound future is a must. Failure to begin discussions without these characteristics clearly articulated casts our future in doubt and guarantees endless bickering by warring special interests over who is to blame for our social and environmental problems.

VNRC now has the opportunity to decide where to place its efforts concerning the future of the forests and the forest-dependent communities of Vermont. I am certain these efforts will continue to be characterized by community participation and grassroots partnerships. Beyond that, however, we must not lose sight of the fundamental importance of protecting and restoring biological integrity. Addressing the issue of abusive forest practices is an obvious place to start. Clear-cuts half the size of some towns do little to promote ecological health and make it more difficult for foresters who practice sound stewardship to counter negative public reactions to any form of timber harvesting.

But limiting the size of clear-cuts addresses only part of the problem. We must look at the entire landscape of forests in Vermont as a matrix of forest-use types, in which large tracts of land where cutting and development do not occur exist along with tracts of working

forests. We must begin to re-introduce species to the region that have been driven locally extinct, such as the timber wolf. We must permit the restoration of older-aged forests. We must minimize the barriers to the movement of native species, such as roads and dams. We must, to the best of our ability, remove species introduced to the region from other areas.

All of this, and much more, will be easier to achieve than one might think. What it requires, however, is our recognition that biological integrity is a fundamental necessity, and our agreement to adopt political and economic traditions that operate within, rather than apart from, the laws of nature. Then we will truly have created a society that promotes both a healthy environment and healthy human communities.

Dr. Stephen Trombulak is a professor of biology and environmental studies at Middlebury College.

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COMINGS AND GOINGS

Best Wishes

A valuable resource and support for our organization, Operations Manager **Marie Frohlich** is leaving VNRC to spend more time with her

family and to seek a master's degree. Marie has been with VNRC for more than four years. She will be greatly missed; we wish her well.



Nadell Fishman, VNRC's Membership Director for the past two-and-a-half years, left VNRC Sept. 1. Nadell was instrumental in revitalizing the membership data base and getting membership services on a stable footing. The staff and board wish Nadell well and great success as a poet.

Welcome

Susan Higby joined the VNRC staff Nov. 1 as the new Deputy Director for Development. Sue comes to VNRC after working for the past 11 years in development positions for nonprofit environmental organizations in Washington, D.C. Most recently she was Director for Science Development at The Nature Conservancy. Previous work includes senior development positions with Resources for the Future and Trout Unlimited.

Sue is no stranger to Vermont, having worked for Cross Country Ski Areas of America in Brattleboro in 1982 and 1983.

VNRC is fortunate to have **Tom Gilbert** now working full-time as our new Outreach Coordinator. Tom has been with VNRC part-time since October 1993; his expanded duties began July 1. Tom will be dividing his time between staffing the Grassroots Action Project and organizing and providing outreach for the Northern Forest, Water, and Land Use programs.

Thank You

Terry Kellogg, a Middlebury College senior, and **Todd Norman**, a University of Vermont graduate student, completed a successful Northern Forest mapping project as VNRC interns this past summer. The project, a joint effort of VNRC and the Northeastern Vermont Development Agency, consisted of mapping clear-cutting in several towns in Essex County. (Terry's description of his work appears in this VER.)

Many thanks to **Bill Roper** for his hard work representing VNRC before the Environmental Board in our appeal of the St. Albans Wal-Mart Act 250 permit. Thanks also to his law firm, Neuse, Smith, Roper & Venman of Middlebury, for giving Bill the room to take on the case. During the spring and summer, many of Bill's days started at 4 a.m. with Wal-Mart, and then he went to work at 8 a.m.!



STAFF RETREATS should be — well, retreats, where you can gather in a relaxed manner with the people you work with professionally day-in and day-out, to discuss how best to further the organization's mission. VNRC staff did just that in early September; we thank Ann Day of Knoll Farm for donating space for the meeting. Above, pictured from left, seated, are Jane Disley (with dog Jody), Steve Holmes, Jim Shallow, and Tom Gilbert; standing, Kimberly Taylor, new Development Director Sue Higby, Chris Kilian, Bren Whittaker, and Marie Frohlich.

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteer help is needed in our busy Montpelier office. VNRC is currently involved in efforts to protect and restore Vermont's rivers, conservation of the Northern Forest, the fight against Wal-Mart and other mega-stores in Vermont, and other exciting and important issues. Volunteer applications are available for general office support, including data-entry, answering phones, working on mailings, filing, etc.

If you are interested in committing a few hours a week or more to lend us a hand, please call Tom Gilbert at 223-2328 extension 20 for more information.

BULLETIN BOARD

Internship Opportunities

VNRC has several internship positions available for this fall and spring. Work covers conducting outreach, organizing efforts, planning events, and coordinating volunteers. There is also an excellent opportunity for the right person to serve as a legislative intern in the upcoming legislative session. Previous related experience is preferred.

Contact Tom Gilbert at VNRC for more information.

VNRC Open House for Legislators

VNRC will host a breakfast open house for the new Legislature Feb. 1 at our 9 Bailey Ave. offices. It will be a good opportunity to introduce new as well as veteran legislators to VNRC staff and programs. We will also give legislators a brief overview of our legislative agenda.

Equipment for Sale

VNRC has the following computer equipment for sale or trade. We'll take the best offer. Call our Montpelier office (223-2328) for more information.

- 1992 Epson EQII + keyboard, model 0203A, serial number 0C50554279. Purchased Epson keyboard on 11-24-92.
- 1988 Epson Equity II+ hard drive, serial number A033067.
- 1992 Hyundai amber monitor HM-1200A 12" SN#MLHA110521556.
- 1988 Epson LQ1050 dot matrix printer, SN#OFG1002596.
- M150 video controller, Rybs AT HiCard 512AT and,
- 1988 RLL AT Cont. SN#WD10003RAH plus 1B-AT-6 cable.
- 1988 Q&A software.
- 2 NEC computers 286 SN#A915044873 and

SN#A915045020 with 20 MV hard drives, mono monitors DOS 3.3, 512KB memory.

- 1 NEC laser printer SN#289211766.

VNRC/VLS Law Conference

The annual Law Conference is set for early in 1995. Look for a detailed package in the mail with the exact date, location, and topics; or call VNRC for details — 223-2328.

QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment Fellows

From September 7 through 14 VNRC hosted two fellows sponsored by the Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment's Fellowship Program for Latin American/Caribbean Conservation Professionals.

Frances Griffith, Administrator of the Belize Center for Environmental Studies, and Olga Alicia Nieto Cardenas, a medical doctor and Director of Community Participation at the Ministry of Health in Colombia, both represent "NGOs," which are involved in land conservation and stewardship in their respective countries.

They spent the week with VNRC, National Wildlife Federation, and Nature Conservancy staff, immersed in a wide variety of activities; they also attended VNRC's Annual Meeting. Both met with all VNRC staff; local, regional, and state agency planners; and tree farmers. Frances also toured the Northeast Kingdom with Northern Forest Project Director Brendan Whittaker, and Olga met Gov. Howard Dean.

Visitors Frances Griffith (right) from Belize and Olga Alicia Nieto Cardenas from Colombia.



ANNUAL MEETING

"Environmental Protection for the 90s: Sustainability and Citizen Involvement" was the topic of VNRC's Annual Meeting, held Sept. 10 at Vermont Law School in South Royalton. Featured speaker was Patrick Parenteau, Director of the law school's Environmental Law Center and former Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner.

Awards were given to a number of people who contributed greatly this year in helping protect and conserve the natural resources of the state and nation:

- VNRC Citizen Activist Awards — Karen Coffey of Irasburg, and Barbara and Richard Alexander of Craftsbury Common.

- VNRC Grassroots Leadership Award — The Clyde River Committee of the Northeast Kingdom of Trout Unlimited, accepted by Kevin Coffey on behalf of Dave Smith for the Clyde River Committee.

- VNRC Policy Award — John Finn of St. Albans.

- VNRC Grassroots Conservation Achievement Award — Jersey Drown of Newport, Clyde River activist.

- VNRC Award for Outstanding Service and Dedication — Marcy Harding of Richmond.

- VNRC Special Conservation Achievement Award — Pat Parenteau of Thetford Center.

Elected as new members of the VNRC Board were Mary Ashcroft of Rutland Town, Allison Hooper of Brookfield, and George Little of Burlington. Elected to second terms were Hollis Burbank-Hammarlund (Board Chair) of Newfane and John Lippincott of Saxtons River.



At the Annual Meeting

Above, Patrick Parenteau speaks on the theme, "It's the Environment and the Economy, Stupid!" From his right are VNRC Chair Hollis Burbank-Hammarlund, VNRC Treasurer John Lippincott, and VNRC Executive Director Jane Difley.

Award winners are lauded by Difley and Burbank-Hammarlund in series of photos. Top row left, Difley, and right, John Finn; second row left, Karen Coffey, and right, Jersey Drown; third row left, Kevin Coffey, and right, Marcy Harding; bottom row left, Barbara and Richard Alexander, and right, Burbank-Hammarlund.



The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job, and the Scale of Creation

By Bill McKibben
(Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
1993. 95 pp.)

Noted environmental author and social critic Bill McKibben (an Adirondack friend and neighbor to us at VNRC) looks to the Bible for a "new paradigm" to reverse the seemingly headlong rush in some quarters toward environmental destruction. It's to the *Book of Job*, and not the usually quoted *Genesis*, he has turned to produce a deeply moving, thoughtful, and powerful call for human humility in Job's pattern.

"Humility first and foremost" is Job's reaction, according to the author, and it should be ours as we have the admitted ability now to destroy — wipe out — innumerable other life forms. It is no joy to McKibben, who is a young father, that when he was born he shared this planet "with perhaps thirty million other species" and when he dies "there may be one-tenth that number." True joy may well come rather when we turn from destruction of so much around us, struggle with the orthodoxies of our day, as did Job (doesn't today's orthodoxy proclaim that "bigger is always better" and "growth is always good"?), and seek a deeper organic connection with God's creation, as did that grand old hero Job, who finally had his eyes opened.

Comforting Whirlwind is a great addition to a rapidly growing body of thought and writing on the religious world's connection to our natural environment and its care and stewardship.

—Brendan Whittaker

Living in the Northern Forest

By David Dobbs and Richard Ober
(White River Junction: Chelsea Green Press, 1994)

The "Northern Forest" is a term that has come into currency during the last several years as worries have surfaced, studies have been done, and recommendations have been made as to the fate of the large expanse of woodlands in northern New York state and New England. In one sense, the term can be neatly defined in geographic statistics: 26 million acres spread across four states, the largest unbroken expanse of woodlands in the eastern United States. But in another sense, the term is difficult to define. Do people in Maine and upstate New York really have that much in common? Are problems of woodlands or farms in one state the same or similar to those in another? Is there really some defining feature or features to this vast area other than geography?

David Dobbs and Richard Ober provide some answers to questions such as these in their new book, *Living in the Northern Forest*. Dobbs and Ober, conservation writers from Vermont and New Hampshire respectively, have spent time with loggers, farmers, innkeepers, tree farmers, and others in each of the forest's four "host" states. Their stories are eloquent statements of what makes this area unique, and why it is important to conserve its natural resources.

"This book is about one of America's last great forests and some of the people who live there," they write. "We could not write about one without the other, for the Northern Forest has shaped its people as surely as they have shaped it. This is a place where lives are lived close to the land, prospering or wanting according to the ebb and flow of its natural cycles, and to the way they respond to those cycles. This relationship to the land, an elemental part of the life of both forest and people, is at once the thing most endangered by the problems facing the Northern Forest and the best hope we have of solving them."

Their section on Vermont is based around a multi-generational family that has farmed, logged, sugared, tree-harvested, built, and taught in towns strung across northern Vermont. There is simple yet timeless wisdom in some of their remarks: "the lesson Jim and Larry still cite as the central economic fact of farming and logging [is] that while you must always work smart, you must often work harder and longer as well." Through historical vignettes of economic trends, you learn details not offered in most Vermont history books. And there are humorous moments, such as the "Pretty Trees and Pig Shit" retelling of the fight between a Craftsbury inn and neighbors over what sort of thing should be built where.

If Dobbs and Ober's premise that people's lives best describe the uniqueness of the Northern Forest, they succeed admirably. This book uses well an approach that takes as its perspective the view of single human beings within a vast ecosystem, an ecosystem of complex interrelationships that one with a modern, urban mentality may not be able to comprehend easily.

"Have we grown so distant from the land that we can no longer forge a lasting relationship between humans and natural resources?" they ask. Land conservation efforts, they argue, "that ignore the needs of local people are doomed to fail, and must be replaced by innovative approaches that entrust these people with real power and input."

—Allen Gilbert

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM VNRC

The following materials are available by contacting VNRC at the address or phone below.

Back Against The Wal
18 Minute Video
Ann Cousins & Townsend
Anderson, 1994.
\$10.00 postpaid.

VNRC and the Preservation Trust of Vermont present a new videotape that documents the effects of Wal-Mart-type development on small rural communities in the Midwest and Texas. According to Cousins, the video poses the following questions: "What happens to the local tax base when businesses loose out to giant national discount chains? What does it cost to bring back a downtown? Who is paying the price tag? As the number of local merchants dwindles, who takes over community services that traditionally relied on their involvement?"

***Vermont's Northern Forests:
A Resource for the Future***
Free tabloid

This is a summary of VNRC's three-year-old Northern Forests Project. It includes a discussion of the Northern Forests and the issues, including changes that resources face and the results of over two dozen meetings held in people's homes to discuss local perspectives on the future of Vermont's Northern Forests. Included also is a summary of the Northern Forest Lands Council recommendations and how people can get involved.



VNRC's Citizen Action Guide
\$6.00 / members; \$11.00 / nonmembers

This indispensable activist guide includes tips on what to do when unwanted development comes to town, how to enlist others on your conservation issues, possible protective action initiatives, guides to Vermont's state and local planning and regulatory processes, and many more resources!

The Impact of Act 250

***Made in Vermont:
The Dividends of Act 250***
(VNRC, 1993)

VNRC presents a 20 minute videotape showing Act 250's impact, in the words of Vermonters who have experiences with the law. A diverse range of businesspeople, including Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's, former Vermont Development Secretary Elbert Moulton, and banker Zoe Erdman present their views on Act 250's importance to Vermont's economy. In addition, citizens who have protected their homes and businesses through Act 250 speak about the importance of public participation. Available on a 2-week loan basis with \$2.90 for postage.

***Act 250: A Positive Economic
Force for Vermont*** (VNRC, 1992)

This paper sets out the relevant evidence to support the claim Act 250 is a valuable economic asset. It explores the fallacy of the "negative impact theory" and the nature and extent of the positive relationship between Act 250 and Vermont's economy. \$3.00 plus \$1.00 postage.



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