

VNRC

Published
by the
Vermont
Natural
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Vermont

Environmental Report

GROWTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND ENERGY:

**What Are
the Stakes in Vermont?**

Spring/
Summer
1996



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The John Merck Fund and the W. Alton Jones Foundation contributed to the printing and distribution of this publication.

The Vermont Natural Resources Council is a nonprofit environmental organization founded in 1963 to protect Vermont's natural resources and environment for present and future generations through research, education, and advocacy.

VNRC is the Vermont affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation.



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Vermont Environmental Report

Published by the Vermont Natural Resources Council

Spring/Summer 1996

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Credits: Cover photograph by A. Blake Gardner; Pages 4, 7, 20, 21: Photographs by Sue Higby; Pages 8, 9, 11: Photographs by Richard Ewald; Pages 12-16: Period advertisements from Primrose Hill; Pages 14, 15: Maps and photographs provided from Vermont's Air Pollution Control Program; Page 17: Photograph by the Vermont Travel Division; Page 26, 27: Photographs by Emily Sloan; Page 27: Photograph by Jim Shallow; Back cover photograph by Joel Gardner.

A CHANGING VERMONT AND CHANGES AT VNRC

JANE A. DIFLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Change is one of the few things we can count on in life. Some change we can choose to manage, like the growth in the garden. Other changes are out of our control, like the process of aging or the seasons.

Changes in ecosystems tend to happen gradually, although a fire or storm can suddenly alter a familiar landscape. But sometimes it's the cumulative effect of small, mundane changes that have the greatest impact. In this issue of the *Vermont Environmental Report* are three articles on how change is affecting Vermont.

As Carl Reidel points out in his article on land use, not all recent change has been for the worse. But the development at Taft Corners could have been done sensibly, with more land conserved, less impact on traffic, and more taxes generated for the town. As a model for other developments in Vermont, Taft Corners is a disaster.

Transportation planning and road standards are another area of potential—for maintaining Vermont's character or for altering it beyond our recognition. As Richard Ewald explains in his article on transportation planning, the implications of road design standards for Vermont are startling. Decisions about standards can make the difference between safe, sensible roads that meet the needs of citizens and business and a road network worthy of Los Angeles.

Steven Heim's piece on the restructuring of the electric utility industry raises the issue of unknown consequences for the air we breathe and the rivers we fish. Whether those consequences are positive or negative will depend on what happens in the next few years as states, the region, and utilities struggle with projecting the impacts of various courses of action.

For citizens who care about the environment and about the character of Vermont, these changes mean we must pay attention and develop a broader view of what changes mean for our future.

Speaking of change, this is my last column as the Executive Director of VNRC. In August I will become the president/forester at the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests in Concord. As a forester, it was difficult to pass up the opportunity to lead one of the nation's most respected and effective forest and land trust organizations. Choosing change doesn't mean it is easy. Leaving Vermont and VNRC is bittersweet. I'm proud to have worked with the VNRC staff and Board and with the Vermont conservation community as a whole. My role here has put me in the center of a network of dedicated individuals who work to keep Vermont healthy and livable.

Steve Holmes has been appointed by the Board to assume duties as the Acting Director of VNRC. He is perhaps best known for his work at the Capitol as VNRC's chief lobbyist and Deputy Director for Policy. With Steve at the helm, VNRC is in capable hands. A search committee of Board and staff has been appointed and hopes to have a new director in place by January. Little will change in day-to-day operations; VNRC will continue to advocate sensible environmental protection for all of Vermont.

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KEEP ACT 250 STRONG

I cannot believe that the original writers of Act 250 intended for the interpretations we are seeing today.

Stratton Ski Area has apparently received a permit to develop a mountain top complex unlike anything in the state and which may very likely open the gate for other such projects.

The Act, as I formerly believed, prohibited development above 2500 ft. altitude. At least Vermont's mountain tops would be preserved, or so we thought.

Act 250 has done a good job — think where we'd be today without it. However it must be strengthened, the loopholes closed and its original vision maintained.

William C. Miller
Greenwich, CT

ENTHUSIASTIC MEMBERS SPEAK OUT— THANKS!

You do great work and we appreciate all you do for Vermonters!

Gaye R. Symington and Chuck Lacy
Jericho Center, VT

Keep up the good work! The voice of conservation is loud in the land — thank God!

Dr. John Cannon
Greensboro, VT

Keep up the good work at VNRC. I depend on you guys and the Conservation Law Foundation to keep the politicians, developers, and bureaucrats honest.

Gayle Lawrence
Huntington, VT

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

The 1996 Legislative Platform was very well presented in the Bulletin. However, I really want to urge VNRC and all environmental organizations to become publicly supportive of, and, linked with the low income community and the social justice advocates. Our fates are inextricably linked and unless we all join together, we will be divided and conquered, trees will be pitted against people, and we will all be fighting for the same piece.

VNRC has an opportunity to reach out and join with the Vermont Low Income Advocacy Organization, human services, and others to prevent wholesale dissolution of the safety net for Vermonters. That the Vermont Housing and Conservation Trust Fund provides money for affordable housing needs to be understood and explained as the homelessness prevention for the poorest Vermonters. The National Wildlife Federation's recent conference in Nashua neglected (as did VNRC's Environmental Conference) to include social justice issues as part of the environmental debate.

VNRC can do better, we can all do better in forging relationships and pursuing public advocacy together with those most vulnerable.

Good luck.

Ginny McGrath
Montpelier, VT

VNRC LOSES A FRIEND

Mollie Beattie of Grafton, Vermont, and Alexandria, Virginia, died June 27, 1996, at Grace Cottage Hospital in Townshend after a year-long struggle with brain cancer. Mollie was a long-time member of VNRC (since 1975) and a Board member from 1981-1984, serving as Vice Chair in 1983 and Chair in 1984 and a Board member from 1991-1993, when she resigned to move to Washington, D.C. Until early June, Mollie was the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where she participated in the reintroduction of wolves in the greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. She was a staunch advocate for ecosystem conservation and a vocal supporter of the Endangered Species Act. We will miss her friendship and her inspired leadership.

Mollie's final days were spent in peaceful comfort at Grace Cottage Hospital. She hoped friends and colleagues would help her to assist Grace Cottage by making tax deductible contributions to: Mollie's Money for GCF, Box 232, Townshend, VT 05353.

Mollie's face radiates her joy from releasing the eagle, "Hope," in the Black Water National Wildlife Refuge on July 4, 1994.



VIDEOTAPE DEPICTS NATION'S CONCERNS

I received an extra videotape of "Back Against the Wal" due to a duplication in ordering. However, I thought the local committee opposing Wal-Mart might be interested—and they were, so I passed it on to them.

Thank you for your patience and for the fine work your organization is doing for the rest of the nation.

George Beland
Auburn, CA



GROWTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND ENERGY: WHAT ARE THE STAKES IN VERMONT?



VERMONT'S



Spirit of Place— LAND USE AND COMMUNITY

BY CARL REIDEL

We have a sense of community which cannot be replaced once it is gone. We have a respect for our environment which stands out in this decade of retrenchment and retreat on environmental protections.

We talk about the quality of life in Vermont and most of us live here because of it... we know where our towns begin and end, we know who our neighbors are, and where our loyalties are...

This quality of life does not exist in much of America today. We are the envy of other states because of our pride, our independence, our sense of community, and our environment. We must never lose these.

In the next century, I see a challenge much greater than budget difficulties inflicted on the state by Washington. We are in danger of being homogenized into a regional economy and losing our sense of who we are. Unless we begin to confront this threat, it will undermine not only our financial well-being, but the values we cherish as Vermonters.

Governor Howard Dean,
January 3, 1996
State of the State and Budget Address

When Governor Dean gave his State of the State address before the General Assembly in January, he invoked several phrases used often to describe the character of Vermont... *sense of community... quality of life... respect for our environment*. The cynical among us may dismiss this as political rhetoric. After all, what do these words really mean? Of what practical use are these abstract ideas, which environmental philosopher Rene Dubos once called Vermont's *Spirit of Place*.

Since its founding, VNRC has looked to the land to define this elusive *spirit*—the patterns of natural landscapes, land uses, and communities which are the fabric of our lives. In more recent times the term *ecosystem management* has been coined by some natural resources professionals to better define these landscape qualities in scientific terms. But for all its power as a potential land management tool, *ecosystem management* fails to capture the notions of value and quality-of-life inherent in Dubos' *Spirit of Place*.





A LOOK OUT THE WINDOW

For me, VNRC epitomizes the Vermont way of dealing with such abstract, but important ideas: look to the land itself and the people who live there to discover the spirit. Conservation historian Roderick Nash puts it this way:

Look out the nearest window and consider the face of the land... Its condition, rightly seen, reveals a society's culture and traditions... The landscape, either developed or wild, is an historical document... not only a document revealing past thought and action but also a slate upon which the present outlines the kind of life it bequeaths to the future.

Look out the nearest window. What's different from what you saw when you first looked years or decades ago? Has your *quality of life* and *sense of community* been enhanced by the changes you see? Is your view one that outlines the kind of life you wish to bequeath to the future, to our grandchildren?

In talking with many others before writing this essay, I was amazed at how many people found the view alarmingly threatening. And they weren't just Chittenden County folks looking through windshields on I-89 near Taft Corners or along Shelburne Road. It included foresters in the Northeast Kingdom viewing huge liquidation clearcuts, Middlebury and Rutland residents watching strip development spreading south of town, and farmers statewide looking to

abandoned fields returning to brush on failed farms and 10-acre house lots along rural roads.

For many concerned scientists and policy analysts, the view out the window (albeit Windows 95) is less obvious on the land itself, but no less alarming. Land

exchange records reveal accelerating fragmentation of forest lands into small unmanageable tracts, increasing subdivision of farmland into odd-shaped housing lots to avoid public health regulations, hundreds of telecommunication sites planned on mountains large and small to meet demand for cellular coverage and radio stations, and spreading patterns of air and water pollution statewide silently altering forests and aquatic ecosystems.

For many of us, the actual view is deceptive. Large-scale development plans are already drafted for many landscapes that look now as they have for decades—plans not in the public view, but which will cause major land use changes well into the next century.

Many ski areas, for example, are planning major expansions, including grand destination hotels with amusement parks; snow-making, lift, and trail expansions; night skiing; and condo developments. And the same is true of other "traditional" Vermont industries, including agriculture and forestry. Huge confinement feeding "factories" for dairy cattle and poultry, and large-scale, even-aged forestry based on herbicides and clear cuts, coupled with associated processing facilities could have

enormous landscape and community impacts.

The only cows left on the meadows may be those wearing Ben and Jerry advertisement blankets (and the cows may actually be Woody Jackson silhouettes). Who can imagine what major site plans are awaiting implementation in the corporate headquarters of Wal-Mart-scale corporations?

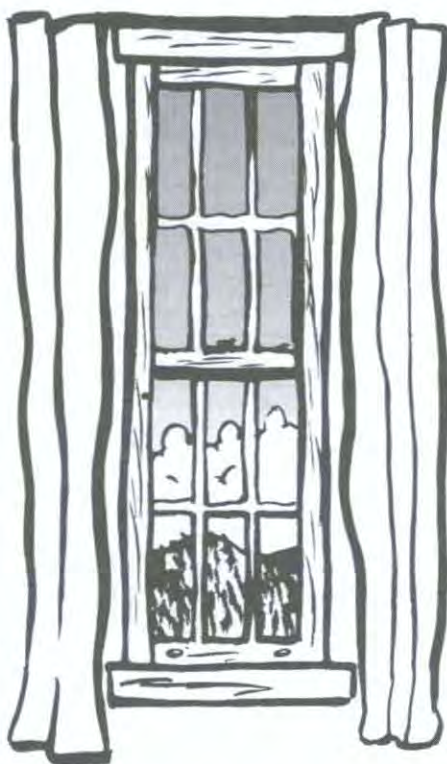
THE SKY IS FALLING; THE SKY IS FALLING

All these disaster scenarios may seem tiresomely similar to what environmentalists have been saying for at least thirty years. In some respects that's true. Land use patterns in Vermont have been undergoing significant change since the 70s, with only a modest slow-down in the leaner economic times of the past decade. And not all that change has been for the worse, environmentally or economically.

We've seen major rejuvenation of urban centers like Burlington and Winooski, significant acquisition of wild lands on the Green Mountain National Forest, and purchase of key lands and development rights through the Housing and Conservation Trust Fund working with the several new land trusts. Hundreds of farmers are diversifying their production, shifting to more economical, management-intensive grazing methods, and installing manure-management systems.

And, clearly, Act 250 has significantly improved the environmental and economic quality of large-scale developments. A number of towns have enacted creative town plans, launched conservation commissions and land trusts, and are working cooperatively with adjoining towns and regional planning commissions. New interest in heritage tourism coupled with the historic preservation efforts of local and statewide organizations like *Barn Again!* may help protect our view of Vermont's built environment.

So what's with all the "sky is falling!" warnings? What's different from a few decades ago? What's going to change in





the future? I agree with the Governor that major changes are coming which could significantly alter the lands and communities of Vermont, and that we are "in danger of being homogenized into a regional economy." As utility, banking, retailing, health care, and similar sectors are controlled increasingly by regional and national corporations, neither the Governor nor General Assembly will be able to manage the change. He warned that...

Over the next ten years, unless we carve out a special Vermont solution to regional challenges, we will fail as a state and we will lose our distinctiveness and our community.

For a governor sometimes criticized as bullish on growth and development at the expense of the environment, this is an important observation. It is recognition that Vermont's special qualities are real economic assets and suggests that Vermont can be "Open for Business" while protecting our environments and communities.

Perhaps. But unless we are realistic about the kinds of changes coming down the pike and the limited capacity of our present laws and programs to manage that growth, our slogan for the next Century may be "Sold Out." And all that our grandchildren are going to have to remember the Vermont we cherish is our collection of old *Vermont Life* magazines.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

The nature of the changes facing Vermont is not clearly understood. The future never is. But some things are very clear. In addition to the obvious impacts of the regionalization of Vermont's economy, technological innovations will revolutionize the way we live and use our landscapes.

On-site waste water treatment and solar energy systems built into modular buildings equipped with satellite-linked communications are now available and will soon make it possible to site a home or information-based business anywhere in Vermont. While such development will be costly, plans to market Vermont's quality-of-life to

ROAD
CONSTRUCTION
500 FT

*It is recognition that
Vermont's special qualities
are real economic assets and
suggests that Vermont can be
"Open for Business" while
protecting our environments
and communities.*

the world will likely create an unprecedented demand for land by those who can afford the premium price.

Large regional development corporations with huge financial and personnel resources will be no match for most towns, and could easily overwhelm the limited powers and meager resources of regional commissions, state agencies, and the Environmental Board. The massacre at Taft Corners and the fast-moving strip developments outside our larger towns and cities are previews of coming attractions.

I am not optimistic that many local and state leaders understand the problem. At the beginning of the 1996 General Assembly, Governor Dean asked the legislators assembled to "look at our long-range future, ...and begin to chart our future together."

In the next three months, those legislators came within a few votes of seriously weakening Act 250, crippling local planning, and giving automatic amnesty to polluters. They defeated bills to update the state's antiquated on-site septic laws, to eliminate the exemption from existing pollution laws for lots over 10 acres, and to require minimal regulation of large-scale forest clear cutting.

Budgets for natural resources, agriculture, and environmental protection agencies and for the Housing and Conservation Trust were reduced, while giving special tax breaks to financial service businesses and allowing out-of-state banks to open branches in Vermont. Property tax reform failed again, with the exception of requiring towns to appraise farms and forest land at "use-value." The cost of this "reform" was dumped on the towns, creating a new incentive for towns to compete for development to rebuild their grand lists.

In sum, the General Assembly ignored the future.

THEREFORE, WHAT?

If Vermont is to enter the 21st Century with her landscapes and communities intact, a lot has to change soon! With environmental quality and community integrity so inexplicably linked to the patterns of land use, veterans of Vermont's environmental community—be they activists, legislators, or scientists—are nearly unanimous that we must strengthen land use planning systems statewide. They may disagree as to the relative role of local, regional, or state governments, but they are unanimous that the market alone will not make wise decisions.

Most also agree that Act 250's limited purview over only large developments (sometimes failing even at that as in the case of the Wal-Mart at Taft Corners) and its lack of authority to deal with cumulative impacts statewide, make it nearly useless for coping with strip development, small-development sprawl, or as a mechanism for



encouraging integrated transportation planning and watershed management. In sum, we must reinvent the missing part of the original Act 250: a statewide land use policy and planning system.

Such an innovation will require a change in the way we organize the planning enterprises of the state. Neither the governor nor General Assembly have an adequate planning and policy analysis capability, with the few planners in government scattered through agencies and regional planning offices. Ironically, the "Live Free or Die" state has an Office of State Planning with over 40 people. Maine has 30.

We need such an institution in Vermont which can work with private sector institutions, such as the VNRC and Business Roundtable. Likewise, we must strengthen the towns' ability to plan. That will require new enabling legislation which allows creative planning and establishment of inter-town districts, adequate funding for staff and information management, and genuine property tax reform that eliminates the need for town-level competition for development.

Finally, we will have to recognize that tough regulation of land uses that degrade the environment is essential, including agriculture and forest management. Vermont is now over eighty percent forested and yet we have no forest practices regulations. While a variety of product certification programs promise to provide market-driven incentives, we must update our antiquated laws controlling on-site sewage disposal, non-point pollution sources, logging, stream-side erosion, and air pollution.

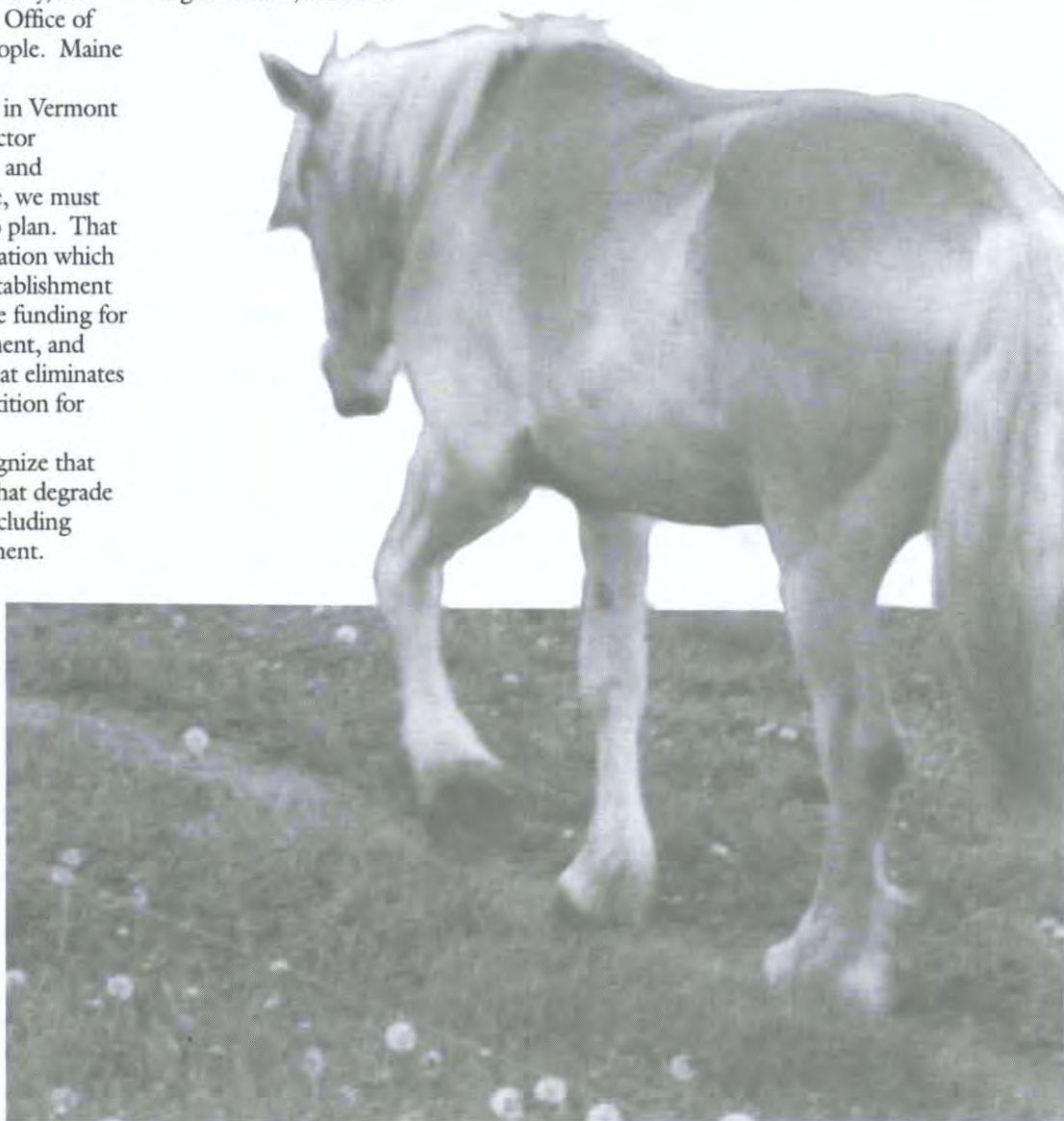
We need specific policies for critical landscapes, such as mountain tops and riparian zones on lakes and rivers, to guide town and regional planning, state land

management, and the many existing permitting programs for extractive industries and water resources. Leaving such critical decisions to site-specific permit processes and Act 250 is unacceptable given the heavy land development pressures on the horizon.

Take another look out the window on your special landscape. Envision what you hope others will see from that window many years hence, and support vigorously the efforts of legislators, conservation organizations, state and

local government, and business leaders who share your vision. It will make all the difference.

Carl Reidel is a member of the Vermont House of Representatives from Addison County and a Professor of Environmental Policy and Natural Resources at UVM. He is codirector with Jean Richardson of the New England Environmental Policy Center, a not-for-profit research and policy analysis organization.





GROWTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND ENERGY: WHAT ARE THE STAKES IN VERMONT?



IS TRANSPORTATION ROLLING ALL OVER THE ENVIRONMENT?

BY RICHARD EWALD

Route 121 between the villages of Saxtons River and Cambridgeport, in the town of Rockingham, Windham County, is narrow, winding, and bumpy. It parallels the curves of the small Saxtons River, glimpsed below through lush greens of early summer.

Seen from behind the wheel of my car at 40 miles an hour, with no other cars in sight, Route 121 is a tree-shaded scenic route that passes along stone walls and between farm pastures.



Viewed beneath the front wheel of my mountain bike at walking speed, the road itself resembles topography with a long, dramatic, and insulting geologic history. Its asphalt surface is deeply fissured, its potholes mounded with successive layers of black cold patch. The frost-heaved road tilts this way and that, and in places buckles down through to a base failed for lack of proper drainage.

FROM WAGON ROADS TO HIGHWAYS

Once the corridor for a foot path, then a dirt wagon road between river settlements, Route 121 today is a Vermont state highway. It's functionally classified as a "major collector," which means it serves traffic across an intercounty region, including tractor trailers, logging trucks, and school buses. Some traffic is strictly local residents, and some is tourists, traveling in cars, or on bicycles between inns in Saxtons River and Grafton.

This three-mile stretch is scenic, but parts are also unsafe. The road is set in Vermont, but its condition is strictly the Bronx. For at least 10 years, local residents have been pleading with the State of Vermont to fix it. But when public hearings were held to discuss improvements, many local residents made it clear that they want the road upgraded but not to the extent that it becomes a high-speed raceway or loses its scenic qualities.

All over Vermont, as reported in the state's newspapers and magazines, communities are having similar discussions. Deferred maintenance has left roads and



bridges in poor repair. Increasing traffic and general driver expectations of speed and convenience challenge roads and bridges scaled to populations, vehicles, and a pace of life from the 1930s, if not the 1880s.

On one hand, some people push for new and wider bridges, linked by straighter roads with broad shoulders and big clear zones, all designed for more and bigger vehicles traveling at higher speeds—in the interest of safety and the economy.

On the other hand, some people argue that improvements should be kept to a much smaller scale in order to preserve historic bridges and the natural and human settings that make Vermont rich in special places—in the interest of safety and the economy.

THE PLAN EMERGES

How to juggle these conflicting desires is just one of the many important questions addressed in "Vermont's Long-Range Transportation Plan." (It's known as the LRTP, but here we'll just call it the Plan.) Developed and released in 1995 by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT), the Plan is 150 pages of policy "wonkery" that belongs in the lap of anyone who cares about Vermont's built and natural landscapes.

Why? Because vehicles, transportation structures, associated land uses, and our habits of travel all have an enormous impact on Vermont's environment, for better or worse.

For those of us usually focused on what's right in front of us, the Plan presents a wide-screen view of Vermont's 14,000 miles of roads and 700 miles of railroad tracks, its 2,750 highway bridges on state and local roads, and its public transit

Some people push for new and wider bridges, linked by straighter roads with broad shoulders and big clear zones.

systems. The Plan discusses trends in fuels, funding, demographics, the economy, commuting, regional transportation, and ways of linking different modes of transportation.

It enumerates and examines all the spinning components of the juggling act involving interstates, sidewalks, trucks, bikes, wheelchairs, trains, planes, and ferries (although, because the text is mostly about things, we need to remind ourselves that all these modes are used by *people*).

The Plan is also something of a surprise because it paints more of a balanced picture than what AOT generally has been putting on the ground for the past several decades.

If you've ever believed that an AOT road or bridge project was too big for its setting, needlessly destructive of scenic or historic resources, or unrelated to what was just down the road—if you think the Agency has been consistently unresponsive to community concerns, the Plan says: That's all behind us.

But while it announces a sea change, the

tides have yet to shift. As a planning document, it represents where the AOT would like to be, not where it is now. It expresses a balance that may be difficult to achieve. Within the Agency itself, there remains considerable resis-

tance to the new approach, which may undermine its application. Projects already in the pipeline, possibly inappropriate under the Plan, will still be built in the next couple of years.

All this may lead to a conclusion that the Plan pays nothing but lip service toward a new way of doing business.

After all, the Plan acknowledges—are you sitting down?—that transportation and land use planning in Vermont ought to be more closely linked. More frequently and emphatically than you might expect, it declares the importance and value of Vermont's natural environment.

So, for environmental activists, Vermont's Long Range Transportation Plan is a lever with which to help move a large, immobile state agency in a direction it says it wants to go. And it definitely needs that help. It took an enormous push just to get it moving this far.

NATIONAL ACT SHAPES STATE

That shove came from the 1991 federal legislation known as ISTEA (pronounced "ice tea" by many)—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act—which required states to conduct the long-range planning that Vermont waited until the last moment to carry out.

ISTEA also mandated that states use at least ten percent of their federal STP (short for Surface Transportation Program) funds for ten kinds of transportation "enhancements." One of the purposes of the enhancement requirement is to lead states



away from highways-only thinking and toward intermodal planning. For several years, Vermont limited its enhancement program to just bicycle paths before finally opening it up to the nine other eligible activities as well.

But while it declared the 40-year era of interstate-building to be over, ISTEA also established a new designation—the National Highway System (NHS)—encompassing the interstates and the next level of highways below them. It directed that new capacity-building should occur on the non-interstate portion of the NHS.

In Vermont, NHS roads include Routes 9, 7, 103, 4, 78, and 2 east of Montpelier. As it happens, Vermont's new Plan calls for "strategic investment" in such major corridors as these, and communities there already are considering tough questions:

- Should these Main Street highways be widened through historic villages and downtowns?
- Should bypasses be constructed through less populated and perhaps scenic or agricultural areas?
- What would prevent sprawl growth from occurring along bypasses and at interchanges?

Vermont has asserted its right to set its own standards for these NHS roads or their bypasses, but that right has yet to be tested head-to-head against the Federal Highway Administration. Vermont's highway standards are themselves being re-evaluated and changed.

DESIGNING ROADS FOR VERMONT

As part of the long-range planning effort, AOT convened a Design Standards Committee, composed of representatives from the most diverse constituencies imaginable, to develop new state standards. While the Committee continued to meet, the Plan emerged, including the statement that AOT "will work with the Design Standards Committee to develop a set of Vermont standards which are performance oriented, establishing goals and objectives in lieu of more restrictive, prescriptive physical requirements."

However, the Committee's final report

was not released for public comment when it was completed, in February 1996. The report reflected a deep division within the Committee. A majority consensus to disconnect Vermont from rigid AASHTO (short for American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) geometric standards was opposed by a minority consisting of AOT engineers who argued in favor of keeping the kind of "restrictive, prescriptive physical requirements" the Plan appeared to reject.

AASHTO is an organization that goes back to 1914, when auto and tire manufacturers, oil and construction companies, economic development interests, and civil engineers all came together to promote automobiles and obtain public funds to build roads for them.

And just as market forces shape technical standards in every new technology—from radios to telephones to televisions to computers and Internet connections—the organization that later became AASHTO developed geometric standards to which all roads should conform, be they in New York, North Dakota, Maine, or Nevada. While these were proposed as guidelines, they have been interpreted as rigid minimums in virtually every state.

In the 80 years since, as automobiles became more numerous and their speeds climbed, the minimum standards grew—producing straighter roads, more and wider lanes, wider shoulders, and wider clear zones without obstacles on each side of the road.

As the Gross National Product rose during a period of unprecedented prosperity, Americans chose to believe that the post-war boom and cheap oil would continue forever, and that faster and bigger would always be better. Each stage of automobile congestion was answered by building more capacity, until it finally became clear that this only produced more traffic and greater congestion.

ROADS ARE FOR PEOPLE

This realization is part of what led Congress in 1991, through ISTEA, to attempt to turn the nation's vast engine of highway building in a different direction: toward envisioning and constructing a

READ MORE ON TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Vermont's Long Range Transportation Plan (1995); contact: Bruce Bender, Planning Division, Vermont Agency of Transportation, 133 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05633, (802) 828-3960

"A State Highway Project in Your Town? Your Role and Rights: A Primer for Citizens and Public Officials," by Jim Wick (1994); Preservation Trust of Vermont, P.O. Box 1777, Windsor, VT 05089-0021, (802) 658-6647

"Progress," newsletter of the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), 1400 Sixteenth Street, NW Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 939-3470

"Take Back Your Streets: How to Protect Communities from Asphalt and Traffic" (1995); Conservation Law Foundation (Boston, MA; Rockland, ME; and Montpelier, VT), (617) 350-0990

"Getting There: The Epic Struggle Between Road and Rail in the American Century," by Stephen B. Goddard (1994)

"The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscape," by James Howard Kunstler (1993)

system that integrates a variety of transportation modes in the name of serving people, not just cars.

ISTEA is up for reauthorization. Powerful interests are lobbying against it. Those who support it and its philosophy should contact Vermont's Congressional delegation, urging continuation of ISTEA



and Vermont's right to set its own standards for NHS roads.

Is there any good news in all this? Certainly.

- There is the Long Range Transportation Plan itself. It's the first time Vermont's AOT has looked at everything this systematically, and its conclusions are more enlightened than most of us could have expected, given the Agency's history. But the Plan needs vast political support to be implemented. Get a copy, read it, and speak up for it.

- There is a greater sense of realism at AOT. "Pruning" an enormous backlog of proposed projects has reduced public expectations at a time when money is very tight.

- There's new leadership at AOT—people who have a lot invested in developing the Plan and now making it work. Help them. They inherit not only resistance within their own Agency but also a lot of negative public opinion from previous practices. They salvaged Amtrak and are developing a western spur, along with light rail in the heavily populated Route 7 corridor south of Burlington.

- New design standards for Vermont roads will be more flexible than in the past. But despite what the Plan says, they probably will establish minimum "restrictive, prescriptive physical requirements." My personal feeling is that these minimums will be too big for the document to provide the right kind of guidance for AOT engineers to design, on the ground, the kind of roads which both the long-range Plan and the Design Standards itself declare should achieve a proper balance of conflicting needs and requirements.



*It's the first time
Vermont's AOT has
looked at everything
this systematically, and its
conclusions are more
enlightened than most of us
could have expected...*

- Vermont's enhancements program, while hampered by a late start and complex federal requirements, has begun to celebrate some successes. Under a new ISTEA, it may be a voluntary option for states rather than a requirement. AOT and your federal and state representatives need to hear support for this program from you in order to back it themselves.
- ISTEA opened a door to public participation that will not be closed easily. In Vermont, a number of state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and individuals have had an enormously positive influence on AOT policy and practices. Regional planning commissions (RPCs) will have an ever greater

role now in looking at problems and proposing and developing projects in their areas. Get involved in your RPC. You don't have to be a member to attend your RPC's Transportation Committee meetings and learn the arcana of transportation planning.

Like AOT hearings for proposed projects,

such RPC meetings are educational and motivational. It was one such meeting, in fact, that motivated me onto my bike on Route 121 that day, to breathe the fresh air of the very place we'd considered on blueprints spread out on a conference room table.

As I pedaled along, I remembered the choice that Vermonters made back in the 1930s when they overwhelmingly rejected a proposed skyline drive along the spine of the Green Mountains. I remembered that a couple of years ago, residents rose up and forced AOT to remove shiny new guard rails on a road that goes past Robert Frost's old place in Ripton.

In the first case, Vermonters said No Thanks to a road never built. In the second, they honored the need for a Road Not Taken. In the third case—represented by all the choices to be made to seize this new day—I'm confident our communities will recognize the roads that will or will not take us to the special scenic and settled places that make Vermont what it is and what we hope it to be.

Richard Ewald is a writer and architectural historian who lives in Westminster West. He is a member of the Transportation Committee of the Windham Regional Commission, and sits on the Vermont Agency of Transportation's Design Standards Committee and the Transportation Enhancements Advisory Committee.



GROWTH, TRANSPORTATION, AND ENERGY: WHAT ARE THE STAKES IN VERMONT?



Vermont's Environment May Pay the Price for Free Market Competition in

ELECTRIC POWER

BY STEVEN HEIM

Competition is coming to the electric utility industry and Vermont's environmental quality may suffer. Or it may get better. No one knows for sure. Vermont faces both national and state challenges to its environmental quality coming from rapid changes in this industry. Their effect on Vermont will depend on how well new public policies deal with these changes and protect the environment.

Vermont can control some areas, such as policies to support renewable energy development, even if the market does not fully control it yet. "Causes for Vermont's environmental quality relate to things far

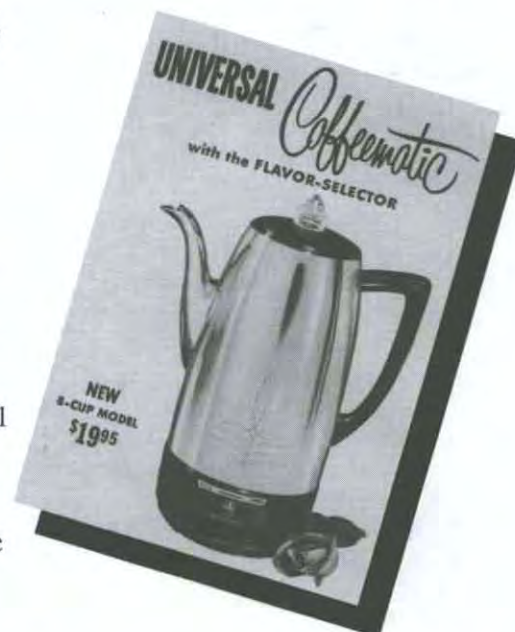
outside our border," says Richard Sedano, Vermont's Commissioner of Public Service. Vermont may get stuck with more air pollution from dirty Midwest power plants. Or "controlling these pollutants could make Vermont's environment better," says Sedano. He adds, "Customer preferences like environmental generating quality, over time, will become important."

VERMONT WRESTLES WITH DIVIDING ITS ELECTRIC UTILITY PIE

Vermont and 37 other states are weighing proposals to reorganize their regulated electric utility monopolies to permit some competition. They aim to lower costs, bring greater efficiency, and give customers choices. This high-stakes process is called "restructuring." What will be restructured are the ownership, regulations, and responsibilities for the various pieces of the electric power system.

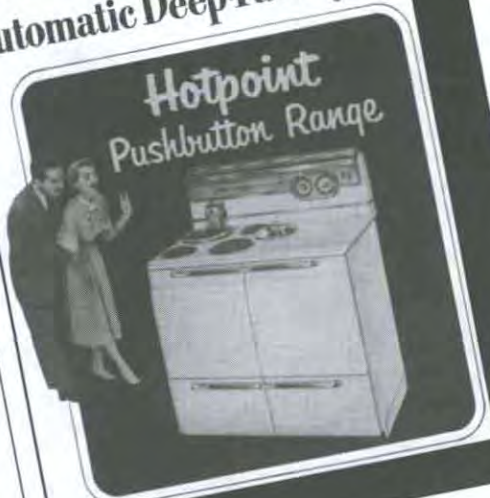
Electric utility restructuring will reshape the way electric power is generated, transmitted, and sold. State and federal

governments will still regulate parts of the electric power system: the "poles and wires" part—the local distribution grid—in order to allow ready access by resellers and avoid duplication; and the transmission—





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the part that carries bulk power to local distribution grids. The other half may be thrown to market competition, with little regulation—the generation of electric power and direct retail sales to customers.

Vermont is a leader in restructuring. Governor Howard Dean has called for restructuring to be started in Vermont by 1998, but that may be optimistic given the huge issues to be resolved. The State Public Service Board is reviewing various restructuring proposals and will issue a report to the Legislature later this year. Restructuring will require new enabling law and will be on the agenda for the 1997 legislative session.

WHAT THE MARKET WON'T BEAR: ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS AND UNCOMPETITIVE POWER PLANTS

Everyone will want the customers, but also up for grabs in electric utility restructuring are big hot potatoes. Existing electric utilities face liabilities, such as uncompetitive power plants shackled with debt, expensive power deals such as Hydro Quebec, or safe disposal of spent nuclear fuel. Also left dangling will be social benefits and responsibilities such as renewable energy and efficiency programs, affordable service for low income customers, and the decommissioning of old hydroelectric dams or nuclear power plants,

such as Vermont Yankee.

These costs and benefits, not picked up by the market, are called “stranded” or “strandable” costs and benefits. “Who will pay for these and how is the billion dollar question in Vermont,” says Leigh Seddon. Seddon, president of Solar Works, Inc., is VNRC’s consultant for restructuring and a former VNRC Board member. Central Vermont Public Service Co.’s stranded costs alone may be over \$400 million dollars, according to Moody’s Investors Service.

BIG CUSTOMERS AND CHEAP NEW POWER PUSH RESTRUCTURING

Vermont already enjoys the lowest average electric rates in New England for residential and industrial customers. So why the big push for competition in Vermont? One reason Governor Dean has advocated restructuring is that Vermont’s electric rates put it at a disadvantage compared to other states with lower rates, explains Sedano.

Restructuring “could spur innovation in custom services, technology, and pricing, and possibly lower prices,” says William Steinhurst, Director for Regulated Utility Planning, the Vermont Department of Public Service. “If our neighbors start restructuring and we don’t, it can be chaotic” for Vermont, adds Steinhurst.

Big industrial electric customers across the U.S. are clamoring for lower rates or for the opportunity to shop around. Right now, state governments give electric utilities exclusive monopolies to sell power in their service area. Industrial customers have demanded special deals. They threaten to move to another state or to build their own onsite power plants. This would shift overhead costs to smaller customers.

New power technology “allows consumers to generate their own power more cost effectively at smaller sizes, not

just IBM but supermarkets and in between,” says Sedano. This is true particularly in areas with natural gas service. Natural gas prices are low now.

The actual cost of electricity is more than the generation cost. Spot market prices for power are currently about 3 cents per kilowatt-hour, while industrial customers in Vermont may pay 6 cents per kilowatt-hour when transmission and distribution are added. Industry “totally underestimated the costs and value of transmission and distribution,” says Seddon. Public policy in Vermont now requires environmental and social costs and the public interest to be addressed in electric rates. How this is accomplished and who pays is a central issue in restructuring in Vermont.

VERMONT’S RESTRUCTURING PLAYERS AGREE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY—BUT DISAGREE ON HOW

The participants in Vermont’s restructuring debates agree that Vermont’s environmental quality must be maintained, but how to do it fairly and efficiently is still uncertain. The main players in Vermont’s restructuring process include Vermont’s electric utilities, the State Public Service Board and Department of Public Service, the Governor, the





State Legislature, industrial and business customers such as IBM and the ski resorts, environmentalists, and low income advocates. They disagree on how to pay for environmental benefits and stranglehold costs in restructuring.

Restructuring may threaten Vermont's energy efficiency programs, won by environmentalists after years of struggle with utilities and state regulators. If in a competitive marketplace retail power companies make money by selling power, why help customers save electricity? Reducing demand for electric power or shifting the demand to off peak times helps Vermont in many ways. It frees up capital otherwise wasted on new power plants, cuts emissions from power plants, and can provide jobs.

VNRC raised concerns about the effects on water quality from hydroelectric power dams. Many dams are old and may be costly to repair to improve water quality in streams. If repairs make them more expensive to run than other competing power sources, their owners may abandon them. VNRC has asked that their decommissioning costs be accounted for in restructuring plans or relicensing.

"The bottom line for us is that any facility generating hydropower in the future needs to meet the federal Clean Water Act and the Vermont Water Quality Standards," says Stephen J. Holmes, VNRC's Deputy Director for Policy.

Instate renewable energy sources now provide Vermont about 20 percent of its electric power. This is mainly from hydroelectric power and wood-fired power

plants. With restructuring, existing programs and future utility investments are at risk. The market price of power from renewable energy sources may be higher than competing fossil fuel or nuclear power.

Continued investment and development in renewable energy are important to Vermont's environment and economy. Stephen Connors, Director of the Electric Utility Program for the MIT Energy Lab,

says renewable power such as wind power and solar photovoltaic electricity offer double benefits: they cut all varieties of pollution and protect against price fluctuations from fossil fuel power.

Connors fears a "dumbing down" of the electric power system if electricity is sold as a commodity, like natural gas, where only price matters. A "dumbing down" would not recognize the environmental component or fuel risk mitigation" from energy efficiency or renewables, says Connors. Instead he and others advocate a sophisticated market, such as that found in telecommunications. Renewable energy and efficiency services could be part of a bundle of retail services giving extra benefits, more than just low price.

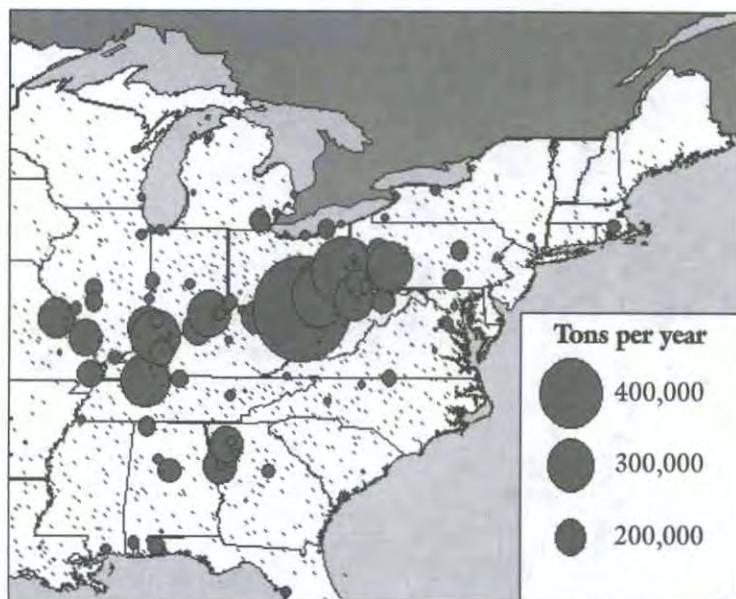
AN ILL WIND BLOWS TO VERMONT

State officials expect Vermont's air quality may suffer from the national unleashing of competition among electric utilities. Vermont enjoys some of the best air quality in the U.S. when good winds blow from Canada. We are one of the few states to

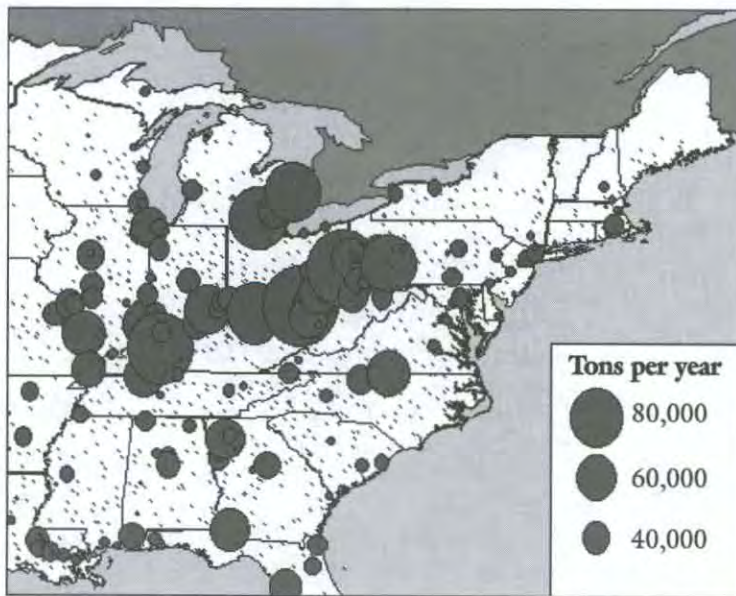
currently meet federal ambient air quality standards.

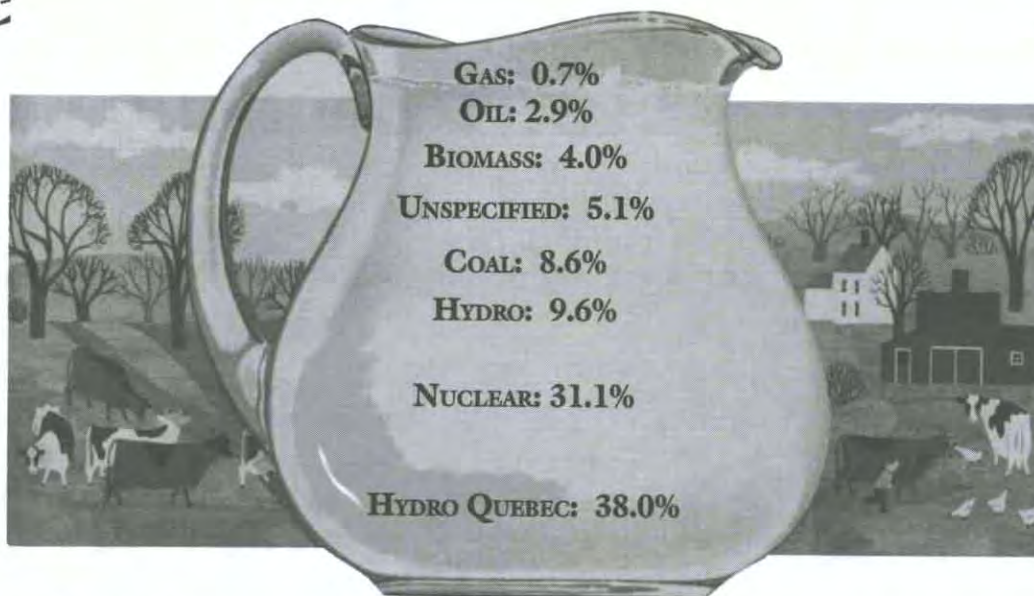
Vermont — at times — is downwind from dirty coal-fired power plants in the Midwest. These power plants may get a boost from new federal proposals to free up wholesale power sales. They escaped expensive air pollution standards started in the 1970s and are cheaper to operate.

Dirty Midwest power plants may run



Where does our air come from? The first map (top) depicts 1990 point source sulphur dioxide emissions by county; the second map (bottom) shows point source nitrogen oxide emissions for the same time period.





1995 ELECTRIC ENERGY SUPPLY USED IN VERMONT

Do you know where yours comes from?

more to meet new demand while Vermont gets extra air pollution. With new wholesale competition, low-cost power generators will gain new, distant customers. Winds may carry to Vermont extra air pollution, such as sulfur and nitrous oxides, particulates, ozone, and heavy metals, such as mercury.

New England states have asked federal regulators to require the Midwest's dirtier power plants, along with New England's

existing plants, to come up to the new source emissions standards in the Clean Air Act. As an alternative to upgrading, power generators would have to offset their pollution elsewhere, change fuels, or retire the power plant.

Big environmental gains could come to Vermont and elsewhere if New England's plan is used nationally. Power generators would retire the dirtiest power plants and low- and no-emission power supplies could

compete on a level playing field. Says Sedano, regulators allow "mediocrity with generation because if it's prudent, it's OK. It doesn't have to be the best."

RESTRUCTURING: A BIG, COMPLICATED MESS?

With the high stakes for Vermont's environment and consumers, public input in electric utility restructuring is vital.



A panoramic view of Mt. Mansfield on: (1) a low sulphate day (photograph on left); and (2) on a high sulphate day, Vermont's highest peak is obscured (on right).

"When public opinion is best brought to bear is a complex question," says Sam Press, a consultant for the Vermont Department of Public Service.

"Most politicians think restructuring is a big, complicated, boring mess," says Press. "In Vermont, at least, people care very much about environmental responsibility. It's important they see the link between electricity generation and emissions."

Fortunately the major players in Vermont's restructuring agree that Vermont's environment is important. They have agreed in principle that "Environmental protection is a priority: Any restructured industry system must ensure a high level of environmental quality and reduced environmental cost." Now the devil is in the details. "It will be important for VNRC members to become involved in this issue when the legislature takes it up next year," urges Seddon.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Vermont Department of Public Service, 112 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2601, (802) 828-2811, TTY/TDD (VT): (800) 734-8390, Internet E-mail: vt dps@psd.state.vt.us (or try their restructuring web page <http://www.state.vt.us/psd/restr.htm>)

Steven Heim is a freelance writer and consultant. Since 1988 he has served on VPIRG's board of trustees. In California he worked as an energy planner and consultant for federal and local government agencies. He is finishing up degrees from MIT and lives in Montpelier.

VNRC TO STUDY ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS

Historically, virtually every technological breakthrough has come with its own set of environmental complications—which we perceive only after we've come to depend upon the conveniences and advantages they offer.

This scenario now applies to electromagnetic radiation. Increasingly in Vermont, transmitting towers are being erected at

high-elevation locations for use by FM radio stations, cellular telephone companies, and others—including local fire and rescue services.

But here's the rub: Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) have long been suspected of being public health hazards, though studies have produced conflicting results. The evidence is clearer, however, that radio

USEFUL READING

Electromagnetic Fields: A Consumer's Guide to the Issues and How to Protect Ourselves is an excellent source of additional information. Written by B. Blake Levitt, an award-winning journalist who has specialized in medical and science writing for more than a decade, the book was published in 1995 by Harcourt Brace & Company. VNRC has a loan copy available; please contact Steve Holmes.

TOWERS CONFERENCE ON JULY 26TH

The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) is sponsoring a Telecommunications Towers Conference on Friday, July 26, 1996, on top of Mt. Equinox in Manchester, Vermont. This day-long workshop will expose planners, municipal officials, and concerned citizens to the many technical, policy, and legal issues associated with the siting and operation of telecommunication towers and dishes.

Because of space limitations pre-registration will be required, together with a \$10 registration fee (free to current VPA members). Lunch will be available on the mountain. For additional information, call Amy Bell at (802) 674-9201.

JULY 31ST PUBLIC HEARING

The Environmental Board is preparing a "protocol" for reviewing telecommunication towers under

Act 250. Comments on the protocol needed to be sent to the Board before July 11. On July 31, the Board will hold a public meeting to consider the issue. The new Environmental Board address is: National Life Records Center Building, Drawer 20, Montpelier, VT 05620-3201, (802) 828-3309.

MAJOR CONFERENCE THIS FALL

Amidst the growing debate, have you wondered about the safety of wireless communication systems and towers? Experts are in disagreement about the potential human health effects of such technology. In an effort to sort through the conflicting claims, the Environmental Law Center of Vermont Law School is convening a two day, region-wide Fall conference on the possible human health effects of radio frequency/microwave radiation.

On day one, a panel of distinguished experts from around the world will present and debate (in a layperson-friendly environment) the most up-to-date scientific and legal information on both sides of the matter. The second day will offer a variety of different, hands-on workshops including one addressing citizen involvement in the determination of whether (and/or where and how) the burgeoning number of proposed systems will be placed in their communities. For more information or to ensure an invitation, contact Clare Kelsey, JD, MSL at Public Interest Law Cooperative, P.O. Box One, Strafford, VT 05072, (802) 765-4409, E-mail cckelsey@sover.net.

frequency radiation from transmitting towers interferes seriously with private electronic devices, from toasters and answering machines to computers and life-sustaining medical equipment. In Charlotte, a winter survey turned up more than 100 complaints of interference that residents blamed on radio waves from a WIZN-FM transmission tower. The tower also holds cellular relay equipment owned by NYNEX, as well as town emergency-service communication equipment.

Because of public health and interference concerns, and because of controversy in Vermont over whether transmitting towers should come under Act 250 jurisdiction as a form of air pollution, significant land use questions have arisen

concerning the siting of the towers.

To help clarify those issues, and to facilitate decision making and information-sharing processes, VNRC will undertake a research project on EMFs this summer. Support comes from a grant from the Vermont Community Foundation. The product will be a comprehensive report on EMF research, addressing also the legal, environmental, public health, and land use questions arising from the issue.

In the interest of developing informed public awareness, VNRC will also pursue the subject of EMFs in its autumn *Vermont Environmental Report* and hold living room meetings throughout the state to disseminate information face-to-face with members and other interested citizens.

"We'll try to assemble the best research available, in as unbiased and objective a way as we can," said Stephen Holmes, VNRC's Deputy Director for Policy. While it is unlikely VNRC's study will resolve conflicting scientific claims, Holmes sees an important role for the organization as Vermont wrestles with the social, environmental, and commercial fallout of the EMF debate. (Vermont communities could face upwards of 200 proposals in the next few years for siting just cellular communications facilities.)

"We hope to provide the state and municipalities with a blueprint for developing sound siting policies that consider risks to the public health and to the environment," said Holmes.

1996 Farm Bill: CONSERVATION WITH A BIPARTISAN FACE

While many people in the environmental community were looking elsewhere—for example, at assaults stated in Congress upon the Clean Water and Endangered Species acts—the environment was scoring a major victory in

another arena: the Federal Agricultural and Reform Act of 1996 (otherwise known as the 1996 Farm Bill, or FAIR).

"This is the only pro-environmental legislation passed by this Congress," said Jim Cubie, a staffer at the Senate Agricul-

tural Committee, who called passage of the bill in its final form an "incredible accomplishment" for Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., ranking minority member of the Senate committee. Agriculture-related environmental issues are one of the country's



biggest challenges because of the effects of agricultural runoff and chemical agents on surface and ground water.

"There are two primary goals in the farm bill related to the environment," said Jim Shallow, VNRC's Forest and Outreach Programs Director. "It provides a stable money source for conservation efforts for farmers—a non-discretionary fund that doesn't require reauthorization by Congress on a year-to-year basis—and it streamlines programs and makes them more accessible."

Conservation components of the bill include:

- Expansion of the Conservation Reserve Program, which compensates farmers for removing from production land that is vulnerable to erosion. For example, farmers might refrain from planting or using for pasture strips of land bordering rivers or streams, creating a buffer to protect up to 36.4 million acres and costing more than \$1.5 billion;
- The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP), a new program offering technical and educational assistance to farmers facing problems related to soil conservation and water quality; and
- Reauthorization of the Wetlands Reserve Program, which pays farmers to restore wetlands damaged by farming activities.

Other components of the bill include incentives for habitat protection, a program to entice farmers to withdraw from acreage located in flood plains, and a first-ever, \$35-million Farmland Protection Fund to finance state and local conservation programs. The bill also creates block grants to make the Forest Legacy program more flexible for protecting forest lands from development, and \$200 million to purchase and protect land in Florida's endangered Everglades.

Ultimately, the success of the Farm Bill will depend on its implementation. Within two weeks of its signing, Leahy, Committee

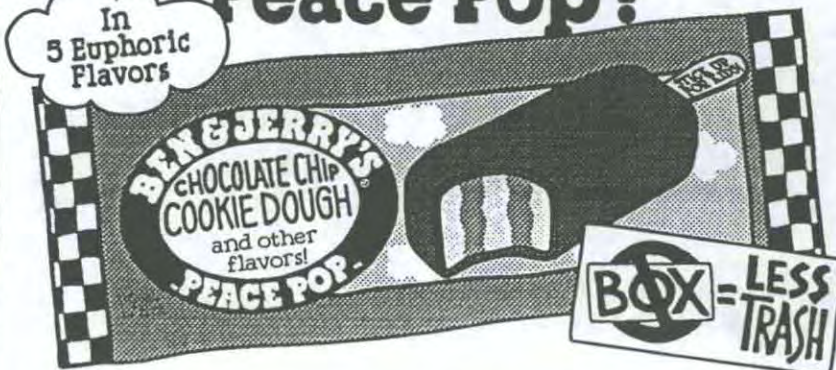
Chairman Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), and others wrote to the Secretary of Agriculture to encourage him to be flexible in interpreting the programs and to reach out to farmers so they will participate.

Yet the best news was that the bill

provided an opportunity for Republican moderates to break publicly with anti-environmental elements in their own party, making its passage a bipartisan success story—and, one might hope, a harbinger of better things to come.

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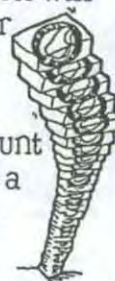


against the industry norm and to package our Peace Pops in bags.

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WATERSHED EVENT IN THE CLYDE

*FERC Calls for
'Disappearing' No. 11*

The Clyde River in Orleans County will truly win the fight for its restoration when the damaged Newport No. 11 hydroelectric dam and the powerhouse just downstream are actually dismantled and the salmon that once ventured up the river from Lake Memphramagog can return to their old spawning grounds. But an extraordinary step was taken toward that goal in June when the Federal Environmental Regulatory Commission (FERC) issued its final Environmental Impact Statement, recommending that the dam be removed from the Clyde and the powerhouse not be put back on line.

Since FERC is also the agency that issues such licenses, the EIS is a pivotal document.

"The river won," cheered Chris Kilian, VNRC's Water Program Director and Staff Attorney, who has been engaged in the fight to restore the lower reaches of the river for more than two years.

It is no small victory.

"This is the first time in the history of the Federal Power Act, dating back to the 1920s, that FERC or its predecessor, the Federal Power Commission, have required that a dam be taken off line for environmental and economic reasons," said Kilian.

*"The river won," cheered
Chris Kilian, VNRC's
Water Program Director
and Staff Attorney.*

"This is a major national precedent."

Newport No. 11 was built in 1957, and thwarted the legendary run of salmon that had made Newport an anglers' Mecca for generations. Renewal for Citizens Utilities' federal license for its Clyde River power project (which also includes four more dams) was under consideration when the river breached the dam in May, 1994.

During the past two years the utility has been locked in a struggle over the remains of the dam with VNRC, Trout Unlimited, Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources, and other citizen and government groups. The company has sought permission to rebuild the dam or, alternatively, to reroute water to its powerhouse; environmental advocates and state and local officials have fought to have the fractured dam and the powerhouse removed entirely.

The final EIS makes that outcome far more certain.

"The EIS is the most factually significant document in the relicensing process, from an environmental perspective," Kilian explained. "It's a crucial step in guiding a licensing decision one way or the other."

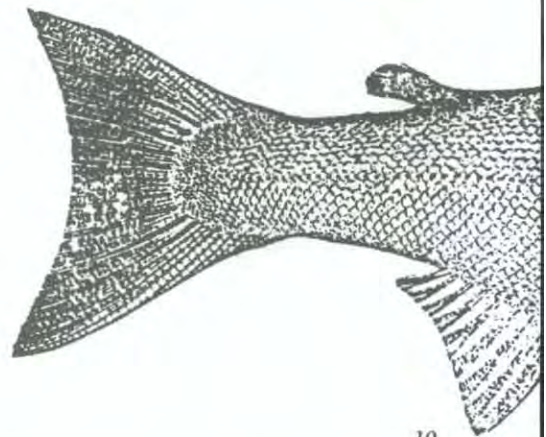
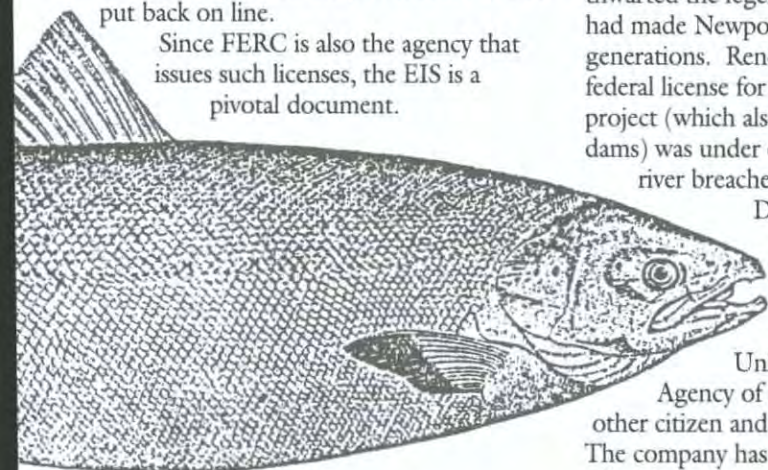
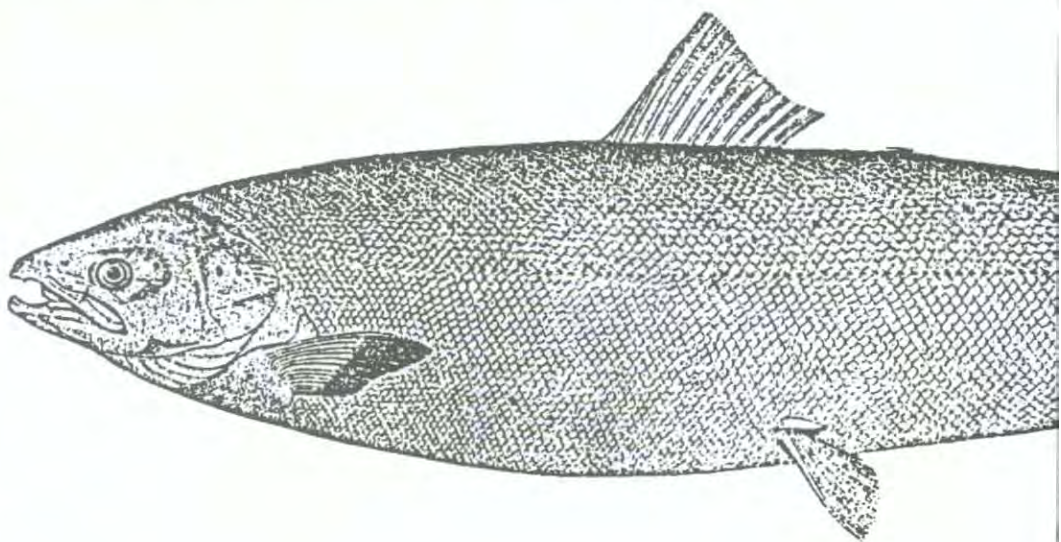
The struggle over the dam has a second

arena, as well. The Agency of Natural Resources denied Citizens a water quality certificate so long as Newport No. 11 is part of the company's project. Citizens appealed that ruling in 1995 to the Water Resources Board; a status conference was scheduled for July 1. FERC cannot license a project that does not have such approval from the state.

Kilian expects further resistance, but believes the cards are stacked against the company.

"Our position is that Citizens should act as a good corporate citizen and do what agencies and FERC and the citizens of the area have all requested," he said. "The company should simply agree to remove the dam and the powerhouse."

"So long as they propose to repower Newport No. 11, the project should be opposed outright, and that's what we'll do."





CONSERVATION CRUSADER RETIRES

But Lucky for Vermont, Bren's a "Lifer"

Bren's personal biography, kept in an innocuous, institutional beige filing drawer at the VNRC offices, breezes through a career of conservation achievements on a single page.

It lights on some details—big details—like his work to develop the first statewide energy conservation plan. He chaired a bi-national task force through the National Governor's Association, which presented to U.S. and Canadian leaders the first international position on the harmful effects of pollutants like acid rain. And his biography dutifully reports on immense periods of environmental strife with generalized passages such as, "Lived through Rita Lavelle and Ann Gorsuch."

Bren lives the life of the conservation crusader. He is a forester; he was Director of Vermont's State Energy Office from 1977 to 1978; he was Secretary of the Agency of Environmental Conservation from 1978 to 1985 during Governor Snelling's tenure; he was selected by Governor Snelling, and continued under Governor Dean to be a member of the Northern Forest Lands Council from 1988 to 1994; he is the pastor of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Groveton; he is a Selectman for Brunswick, Vermont. Bren is a lifetime conservationist. His achievements are expansive.

BREN IS SOMEONE SPECIAL TO MANY

I have known Bren Whittaker since he served as Environmental Commissioner in Vermont when I was Environmental Director in Rhode Island in the 1980s. Later we worked together as members of the Northern Forest Lands Council.

Bren is an exceptional person, a unique combination of conservation know-how and compassion for the needs and concerns of ordinary people. He reminds me of a warm Vermont farmhouse on a cold, gray December day. He is anchored in part of the landscape, sited long ago where he belongs. He has brought people of many perspectives together in front of his hearth to talk rationally about the future, to find the common ground on which they can take conservation action. He has stood with steadfast dignity against the storm, saying and doing what he believes to be right in ways that still respect his opponents.

In his work to save Vermont's natural resources and in his work as a minister he has cared for the intertwined spirit of land and people that is New England. I am grateful for all that he has done for places I care so much about, but I must admit that I am at least as thankful for his reaching out

and helping me through times of personal uncertainty and hardship. He was, then, like the light in the farmhouse window as I walked uphill, the snow falling in the gathering darkness. I've made it through those difficult times, and I hope and pray, with Bren's help, so will New England's natural areas.

Bob Bendick, Director, Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy

Forester, preacher, public official, environmental missionary, assistant gardener: Bren has served man and nature with distinction in many and varied pursuits.

Our paths have been crossing since the early Act 250 turmoils, and, most memorably, in the traumas of the Snelling Administration. When (as often happened) the Governor questioned us on some obscure statistic in a 100-page briefing book on acid rain, we suffered mutual humiliation. We shared consternation as the Governor, our pilot, contested his runway assignment with the control tower while on final approach to the congested National Airport.

But we both look back with nostalgia and pride to those years of soldiering in the Vermont and national environmental wars under an inspiring leader. Bren met the challenges with competence, humor, and

humility. He personifies the Vermont public service ideal: scrupulously honest, totally dedicated, and deeply compassionate.

Leonard Wilson, former Chairman of the Environmental Board and successor to Brendan as Secretary of Environmental Conservation

Some of the Vermont farm community have always been leery of environmentalists, and of what "they" are doing or are about to do.

But how can anyone be leery of Brendan Whittaker? Always friendly and nonconfrontational, Brendan is able to speak anywhere, anytime about the issues at hand, balancing the needs and interests of all concerned, without ruffling anyone's feathers.

Back in the early '80s, Brendan served as Environmental Commissioner on Governor Snelling's cabinet, and I as Commissioner of Agriculture.

His quiet competence, his respect for the Vermont farmer, and his deep concern for the quality of life and the environment of our state shone through all his actions, and facilitated a breakthrough in cooperation between Environmental and Agricultural interests.

Genuine friendship, along with respect, do not always come easily in government. But Brendan and I have this good thing going, and it continues today. Though we

live at opposite ends of the state, we and our wives still manage occasional get-togethers, to catch up on our respective doings and on family developments.

We count Brendan and Dorothy Whittaker among our close friends, and wish them continued success and happiness.

William H. Darrow, former Commissioner of Agriculture

Bren and I both graduated from forestry school at the University of Massachusetts. We were a generation apart; by the time I finished school, Bren was already a "dominant" in the canopy of the New England forestry scene. I admired him from afar with the eyes of a neophyte. I could not know then that twenty years later I would work as a

colleague with Bren on northern forest issues.

During his tenure at VNRC, Bren has almost single-handedly brought together citizens of the Northeast Kingdom to support forest conservation. As a trusted neighbor, he is able to hear their concerns and translate them into action for the benefit of the forest and the communities. A member of the Northern Forest Lands Council, he influenced that body to include forest practices and other citizen concerns in their recommendations. As a respected advisor to the Forest Resources Advisory Council (FRAC), he has pushed for sustainable forest management for Vermont.

Intuitively, I have always understood the forestry/ministry connection. In one arena he celebrates human relationships to the natural world; in the other he celebrates the people's connections to each other, to their highest selves and to their communities. Bren puts each to work in service of the other.

For VNRC Bren is more than an employee, more than a colleague. Bren is our friend, our mentor; he inspires us and he nurtures our humanity. He urges us to be bold, outspoken; he sets an example of integrity and fairness. He is our confessor and our advisor. He shares his knowledge freely and respects what we know.

Jane A. Difley, VNRC Executive Director

Bren has shared his love of the environment with his wife, Dorothy, with whom he celebrated a 40th anniversary recently (and to whom he serves as assistant gardener). And he shares his love of the outdoors and convictions with numerous friends, colleagues, volunteers, and community members.

According to the VNRC staff...

Bren's incredible.

He's saint-like, no, ethereal.

Herculean.

Sage.

Persistent.

Magnificent.

He's definitely not a conifer—He's a yellow birch.



PAT PARENTEAU AND THE VERMONT ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

Patrick Parenteau published last Fall what can be described as a writing tour de force, a scholarly article on Vermont's endangered species legislation. It reads like a legislative environmental horror story and still rings with an almost poetic effect. "A Bum Rap for Vermont's Endangered Species Act" was written by Parenteau for *The Vermont Bar Journal and Law Digest* (Volume 21, No. 5, October 1995). It subsequently was reprinted in the December, 1995, *Vermont Business Magazine*, a statewide news journal read by many in business and government.

Parenteau, former Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation in the Agency of Natural Resources, is Director of the Environmental Law Center at the Vermont Law School. He described the bitter attack, full of falsehoods, unleashed on "TESA" (the Vermont Threatened and Endangered Species Act) by the 1995 legislature's bill S.168. He then relates the reason why ten Vermont senators unrolled that backlash: It all had to do with a proposed development in one of Vermont's most threatened natural environments, Chittenden County's "Sandplains Natural Community." This is where the poetry comes in, along with Parenteau's solid legal research. One example, to quote: "it (the Sandplains) is a climax zone where northern and southern ecosystems mix and mingle in the endless dance of evolution, where we can enjoy a rich diversity of life right outside our (Vermont) doors." You will want to read this in its entirety for Pat's article gives excellent reasons as to why we find the battles for the environment worth fighting.

Editor's Note: S.168 was not taken up during the 1996 Legislative Session.

If you would like to receive a copy of Pat Parenteau's article, call Stacie McNary at (802) 223-2328.

GET TO KNOW VERMONT'S ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY BETTER

Our 1996 *Vermont Environmental Directory* will be available this summer! The newly updated *Vermont Environmental Directory* gives you access to Vermont's most dedicated and knowledgeable people who are the core of our environmental community.

Order your copy today and meet others in Vermont who share your commitment to a healthy earth.

To obtain a copy, call or write Stacie McNary at VNRC. Directories cost \$10.00 each, including postage. Please call or mail your payment.

The *Vermont Environmental Directory* was printed with assistance from Environmental Programs in Communities (EPIC), a project of the University of Vermont Environmental Program, funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Michigan.



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☐ Transportation

☐ Water Resources

☐ Act 250/Project Regulation

☐ Wildlife

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☐ Land Use Planning

☐ Other _____

Please return this form to:

The Conservation Network, VNRC, 9 Bailey Avenue, Montpelier, VT 05602.

For more information, call Brigid Dunne at (802) 223-2328.

E-mail: VNRC@together.org

1996

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

Not Great, But Better Than '95

For natural resources and environmental protection, 1996 proved to be the better year of the recently ended biennium. "It wasn't a great year, but it was a lot better than 1995," noted Stephen Holmes, VNRC's Deputy Director for Policy. "Last year the ski area water withdrawal for snowmaking bill set a bad precedent for Vermont's environmental protection effort," Holmes said. "This year, although a lot of it was spent playing defense again, we were able to stop passage of damaging bills, and a few good initiatives made it through."

Most of the really bad ideas introduced in 1995 never got as much as a second glance this year. "Pay me not to pollute" takings bills, endangered species act roll-backs, and Act 250 exemptions for granite quarries were not taken up again. "There was a more moderate tone to this year's legislature," noted Holmes. "I think a combination of concerted citizen opposition to last year's changes, a recognition that the Contract with America's assault on the environment has backfired in the public's view, and the simple fact that an election is coming up in November tempered the state house environmental debate."

ACT 250

Citizen Appeals Attacked

After nearly a year of debate on the Environmental Board's complete overhaul of the Act 250 rules and approval by the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, one might have thought the 1996 session would be a quiet one for the law. Unfortunately, we have grown to expect an annual assault on Act 250, and this year was no exception.

Development interests, disappointed that the Environmental Board refused to strip away appeal rights for neighbors of a project, community groups, and nonprofits like VNRC, waged yet another attack on party status and appeal rights in the legislature. Led by the Vermont Ski Areas Association, the Northern Vermont Home builders, and others, a group of House Republicans almost succeeded in: (1) making it very difficult for citizens to even participate in Act 250 through imposition of a more formal, courtroom-like process; and (2) prohibiting them from appealing district commission decisions. Although they were successful in voting the bill out of House Natural Resources Committee (6-5), they were thwarted by the full House in their attempts to pull the bill out of the House Ways and Means Committee where it finally died.

ACT 200

Close Call for Planning

Act 200, Vermont's growth management law, survived another weakening attempt this year. While a thousand Vermonters celebrated Earth Day on the state house Lawn, the Vermont Senate was voting to further delay implementation of local and regional planning under the law and to cut regional planning funds almost in half. These were but two of many role

call votes that day on the big appropriations bill, but each ended in a 14-14 tie with Senator Webster, who was presiding over the Senate, each time breaking the tie against local and regional planning.

When the bill was put before the House-Senate Appropriations Conference Committee, however, both of these actions were deleted. Had it passed, the first Senate vote would have extended conditional approvals of municipal plans out another five years from the January 1, 1996 cut-off date. By deleting it, the approval process for municipal plans will be given more weight since conditional approvals no longer count as full approvals. (For example, a community with a fully-approved plan can use this plan to effect the siting of a new highway by the state. This is not the case for conditionally-approved plans as of January 1, 1996.)

Deleting the second action means that regional planning commission funding will be restored to nearly last year's level. However, it is important to put funding for local and regional planning in perspective. Regions and municipalities had combined funding totaling \$3 million in 1989. This year regions will receive \$970,000, while municipalities get no money from the state for the second year in a row.

HOUSING AND CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

Funding Reduced - Again

The Housing and Conservation Trust Fund (H&CTF) had some rough sledding this winter and, as in 1995, saw its resources melt further. The H&CTF gets its funding from two sources: the Capital Construction Bill and a portion of the property transfer tax set aside for it. The Capital Bill funds the actual projects

preserving farms and affordable housing, while the transfer tax helps with operating expenses.

This year the Fund received \$6 million in the Capital Bill, down from \$7 million in 1995. And the Senate tried to cut \$1 million in property transfer tax funds, roughly 70% of the Fund's operating budget. But after hard fought battles on the floor of the Senate and in Conference Committee, all but \$150,000 was restored, still remaining a big cut in one year.

ON-SITE SEWAGE DISPOSAL

Solution Still Needed

A bill that would have taken a big step toward cleaning up Vermont's failing, patchwork on-site sewage disposal policies died in the Senate during the final days of the session. Among other things, H.444 would have helped correct the problems with failed septic systems, allowed certain new alternative systems, and closed the ten-acre loophole in state subdivision regulations. Currently, on lots of ten acres or larger, septic systems can be installed without review.

VNRC had cautiously supported the bill, endorsed by a broad but fragile coalition made up of home builders, realtors, the farm bureau, and others, primarily because of the elimination of the ten-acre loophole. VNRC did not wholeheartedly support some parts of the bill, in part because long-term impacts on land use patterns had not been addressed. When it became apparent that the bill would not pass the Senate as approved by the House, some of the players sought to attach pieces of the bill to other bills that would pass. VNRC helped in making sure that none of the stray pieces passed alone. Had they passed without the full package, it would have taken some of the pressure off the effort to fix the problem in a comprehensive way next year.

FOREST RESOURCES

FRAC Jumpstarts Review

Last year, the Legislature reactivated the dormant Forest Resources Advisory Council (FRAC) to address forest harvest-

ing practices in Vermont. This year, in response to continued concerns about large-scale timber clear cuts and a summer showdown over potential aerial spraying of herbicides in the Northeast Kingdom, legislators instructed FRAC to make specific recommendations by next January on these two practices.

CURRENT USE Program Goes Local

This biennium started with a public outcry over forest liquidation. Large clear cuts in Essex county and the liquidation of 9,000 acres in the Mad River Valley focused attention on the threats to Vermont's forests. As the legislature debated how to stem forest mining operations, almost everyone agreed that underfunding the current use program was at the root of the problem.

Underfunding created an atmosphere that compelled landowners to overcut and invited timber liquidators to outbid other legitimate timberland buyers. However, the problems in the woods were just one

more example of a broken property tax system that needed fixing through comprehensive property tax reform. In the end, all attempts at property tax reform failed and the legislature opted to address the underfunding of the Current Use program in the budget bill by eliminating the reimbursement fund and returning participants to a use value taxation. The legislature also combined the three agricultural programs into one agriculture program.

This budget act requires towns to list participating lands at their use value as opposed to their potential development value. This readjustment of the grand list will result in higher taxes on other properties in town. In towns with many acres enrolled in the program, this tax shift would be significant. Consequently, a "hold harmless" fund of \$4.7 million was created and distributed to towns with a shift in the tax rate greater than 1.8%. However, the "hold harmless" funds would not go to "gold towns" that do not receive state aid for education funds because of their relative property wealth.

CONSERVATION LICENSE PLATES

Gains for Wildlife Protection

This year Vermonters will be able to support nongame wildlife and watershed protection programs by putting new conservation license plates on their cars and trucks. One of the last bills to pass, part of a "Christmas tree" of environmental bills, it authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to begin issuing the plates displaying a peregrine falcon and the Green Mountains no later than January 1, 1997.

Motorists can pay a fee of \$20 to get the plates immediately, or wait until their annual renewal is due and pay the \$20 at that time. Each annual renewal will cost \$20 in addition to the regular \$43 renewal fee.

For the original plate, the \$20 will be

spent as follows: \$5 to the DMV for administrative expenses; \$5 to the DMV license plate revolving fund for costs associated with making the plates; \$5 to nongame wildlife protection; \$5 to watershed management and protection.

On the annual renewal: \$9 will go to nongame wildlife; \$9 to watersheds; and \$2 to the Agency of

Transportation.

The Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife may use the money to make grants to governmental entities and nonprofit or citizen groups for projects that support fish and wildlife habitat protection, and for improvement of water quality and shoreline protection, and a variety of watershed protection and management activities.



While falling far short of property tax reform, the current use changes are arguably the most environmentally friendly action taken by this legislature. Primarily, this change restores tax equity to Vermont's farm and forest land, thereby reducing the need to overcut and/or develop these productive lands. Additionally, the changes restore the land use change tax levied on land removed from the program and subsequently developed. This penalty returns accountability to the participants in the program and re-establishes one of the central objectives of the program, which is to discourage the development of our working landscape. The revenues from the tax will go to the local community.

The changes to the program will cost the average home owner an additional \$20 in property tax. However, the legislature also expanded the property tax rebate program, mitigating the impact of this shift on low to moderate income Vermonters. The changes will sunset next year, setting the stage for renewed debate over funding this program and property tax reform.

TELECOMMUNICATION TOWERS

Siting Issues to Be Examined

The communications industry was pushing for three bills that would make it easier to site radio and telecommunication towers and facilities in Vermont. VNRC and others raised concerns and questions about wildlife habitat disruption, aesthetic impacts, and public health and safety related to the long-term exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Two of the bills did not pass. One would have exempted radio waves from consideration by Act 250 as air pollution. The other would have limited the ability of municipalities to regulate the siting of cellular facilities.

The bill that did pass gives authority to the Secretary of Administration to make available state property and buildings for cellular communications facilities. VNRC was concerned because it did not seem wise to go forward with opening up state property for cellular facilities in the absence of a comprehensive plan and siting policy for the state.

Two elements that VNRC supported, however, were finally included in the bill. A study of the public health risks of nonionizing electromagnetic radiation will be conducted by the Commissioner of Public Service. And if state land is proposed for siting a cellular facility, the Agency of Natural Resources must determine that the siting is consistent with the state management plan for the land.

TRANSPORTATION

All Aboard!

Several worthy rail projects including Amtrak's Vermonter, the Burlington-Charlotte commuter line, and various rail line improvements received funding.

The "footprint replacement" bridge program, which allows more flexibility in the design of reconstructed bridges to fit better with the site and the community, also passed.

"Transit passes" and other evidence of reduced private automobile usage by employees can be used by employers to offset local zoning requirements for parking places under another bill that VNRC supported. Its intent is to provide incentives to businesses to promote alternative modes of transportation to work and reduce the amount of blacktop covering the landscape.

WATER USE FEES

No action was taken on a proposal to levy a fee on the use of public waters by private entities such as hydroelectric facilities and ski areas although the Agency of Natural Resources produced a report recommending the use of such fees which provides a good foundation for the future.

LANDOWNER LIABILITY

A bill that would have clarified the liability of landowners regarding lawsuits from recreational users or trespassers died in the final hours of the session.

SOME BAD BILLS THAT WERE STOPPED

VNRC was able to play a role in heading off several bills which would have been bad for the environment:

Air Quality—The Legislature came close to passing a bill which would have prevented the state from taking steps to improve air quality through vapor recovery at large gas stations, a vehicle inspection and maintenance program, and introduction of low-emission and zero-emission vehicle standards. This means the Agency of Natural Resources can proceed with rules to implement these programs.

Sewage into Snow—Ski areas wanted another special deal this year to allow them to make snow from treated sewage and spray it in Class A upland watersheds. They actually proposed to redefine "waste" so as to not include treated effluent for snowmaking, as well as other changes gutting our water quality laws. The state plans to further study the use of treated effluent for snowmaking this year.

Hydropower—The electric utilities attempted to weaken our water quality laws by allowing hydro project economics to be balanced against protection of the environment and to transfer jurisdiction over hydro from the Water Resources Board to the Public Service Board, a forum less well-versed in water issues.

Environmental Audits—Business and industry groups took a good idea—voluntary self-audits for environmental compliance—and tried to get immunity from any penalties or liability for violations, as well as disclosure of the records of the audit. The concept will probably be debated next year.

General Permits—The Agency of Natural Resources wanted this bill to reduce workload in some areas because of overall budget cuts. The problem was that it allowed the granting of permits to whole classes of activities (e.g., certain solid waste facilities like transfer stations) without proper public notice and site review for individual locations.

Written by Steve Holmes, VNRC's Deputy Director for Policy, and Jim Shallow, VNRC's Forest & Outreach Programs Director.

SOUTHERN VERMONT'S NEW VNRC FACE

VNRC welcomes Julie Sperling as our new half-time Southern Vermont Outreach Coordinator. Julie brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the VNRC staff. Before joining VNRC, she served as a graduate fellow in the New York State Assembly as a policy analyst. Julie has a film-making background and holds a masters in environmental science from Antioch New England Graduate School. Julie will be a full-time environmentalist since she will continue to be the half-time director of the Equinox Preservation Trust in Manchester, Vermont.

TRAILHEAD PROJECT NEEDS YOUR HELP

The Northern Forest Alliance is inviting you to join in our campaign to protect the Northern Forest by participating in the Trailhead Project. Volunteers will be positioned at popular trailheads, put-ins, climbing areas, mountain bike races, fishing holes, boat launches, and camping areas to distribute the Alliance brochure and ask recreationists to sign postcards addressed to decision makers that advocate support for the protection of wild lands through the Northern Forest Stewardship Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the Forest Legacy Project.

These events are on July 27-28, and August 24-25. For information, contact Brigid Dunne, VNRC, at (802) 223-2328, or Kelly Ault, Northern Forest Alliance, at (802) 223-5256 (E-mail: nfa@igc.apc.org).

EARTH DAY FUN

Earth Day means something different to everyone. And when everyone attends — children, seniors, teens, and families — you have an event that is filled with rich spontaneity. VNRC sponsored an Earth Day Celebration on April 19th with the National Wildlife Federation, the Montpelier Conservation Commission, the Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences, the Central Vermont Transportation Authority, and WNCS. The event combined fun, learning,

THANK YOU FOR MAKING EARTH DAY A SUCCESS!

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The Drawing Board
The Pork Schop of Vermont
Vermont Butter & Cheese Co.
Village Pizza



VNRC's Stacie McNary welcomes friends at the Earth Day festivities.

and action and re-energized conservation ethics for all who attended.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who helped make this event possible!

NEW SMALL GRANTS FUND ESTABLISHED

A fund designed to foster New England community conservation and environmental initiatives has been established by four regional philanthropic organizations. This Grassroots Environment Fund will make grants ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 to support citizen's groups in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts that are dedicated to maintaining or enhancing the quality of the natural environment. The Fund will support a range of activities, including communications, computer networking, institutional support, advocacy campaigns, public education, conferences, and enhancing partnerships in the region.

Cheryl King Fischer is the Fund's Coordinator. For more information or to have your organization's name added to the Fund's mailing list, write to NEGEF at



Children take a wildlife trek (or track?) during Earth Day with Angella Gibbons of Lotus Lake Discovery Center.



VNRC's Brigid Dunne (center) orchestrates the unveiling of the Earth Day Quilt, which was created by 800 Washington County children.

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05602 or call at (802) 223-4622.

CALL THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HOT LINE

Where can you learn about the health effects of lead, radon, household chemicals, Lyme disease, EMF, and much more? Call ENVIROHEALTH at (800) 643-4794 for free information on current research, school materials, and technical specialists who provide helpful tips over the telephone. (E-mail: Envirohealth@niehs.nih.gov)

ENVIROHEALTH is the environmental health effects clearinghouse of the National Institute of Health's award-winning National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). Located in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, NIEHS performs basic research on how the environment affects people's health, how people differ in their susceptibility to these effects, and how their susceptibility changes with age.

SURF OVER TO THE ELECTRONIC LIBRARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

A new Internet resource exists for activists, decision makers, resource managers, and the media—an electronic National Library for the Environment. Established by the Committee for the National

Institute for the Environment, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the scientific basis for making decisions on environmental issues, the library includes more than 200 reports produced by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. You can obtain information on forestry, agriculture, marine resources, mining, biodiversity, pollution, water, energy, and other issues via the World Wide Web: <http://www.cnie.org/nle> or for more information call (202) 628-4303.

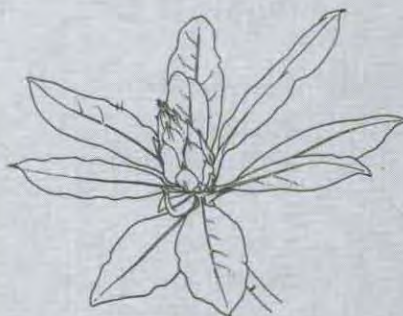
LAW CONFERENCE MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE

The 16th Annual Environmental Law Conference, cosponsored by the Vermont Law School's Environmental Law Center and VNRC on November 30, 1995, spurred on discussions around the state about the Contract With America. Now you can obtain copies of speeches and

presentations, as well as related articles and reports covered by the speakers. In addition, a videotape of the entire conference is available on loan from VNRC. Call Steve Holmes at (802) 223-2328 if you are interested in learning more about the conference.

MONTPELIER RIVERS REPORT AVAILABLE

The Montpelier Rivers Report is an effort to make the river environment understandable and to provide a tool for planning. It includes a history of development and uses along the rivers, a description of natural communities, and drawings of plants, animals, and river scenes. This very accessible report was written and illustrated by Hans Estrin for the Montpelier Conservation Commission and is available for \$10.00 at Rivendell Books, (802) 223-3928, and Bear Pond Books Store, (802) 223-8236, in Montpelier.



WE WILL REMEMBER JULIANNE WILLIAMS

Julianne Williams, 24, died recently while on a hike in the Shenandoah National Park. Her dedication to environmental protection and other social values was greatly appreciated by all of us at VNRC, where she served as a volunteer.

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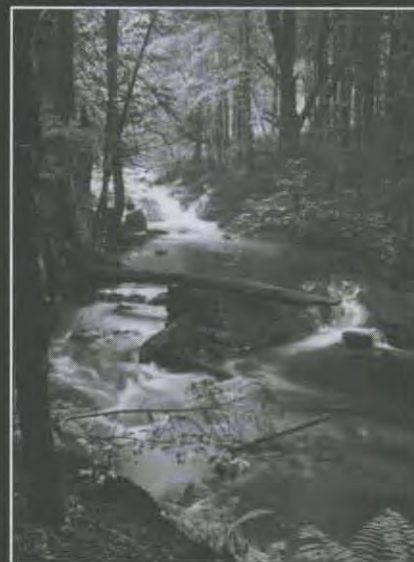
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CREATE A LESS TOXIC HOME

This year, why not use summer and fall cleaning to rid your home of unneeded chemical hazards? Many common household products contain ingredients that may pose a threat to your health or the environment. Fortunately, there are less toxic alternatives.

Be alert for the signal words: POISON, DANGER, WARNING, and CAUTION, on product labels. Listed above in order of decreasing risk, these words can help you find safer alternatives. For more information, call the Vermont Recycling Hotline at (800) 932-7100.



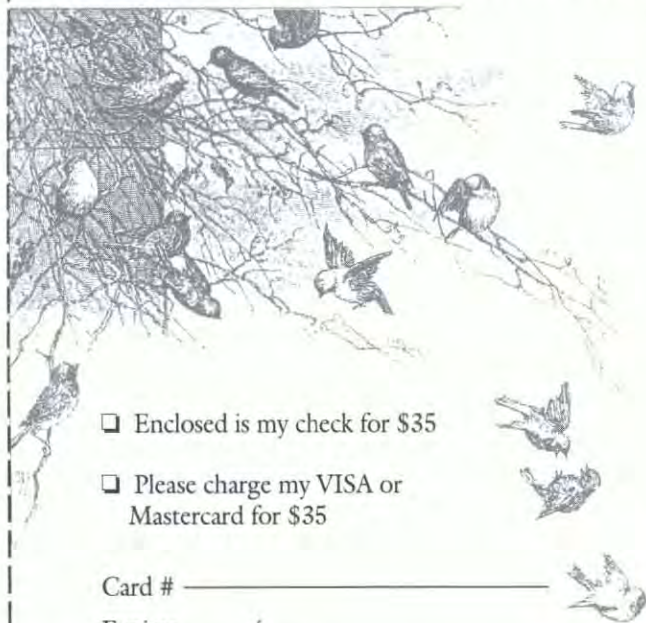
BUILDING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES THROUGH TRANSPORTATION

A New England regional workshop for municipal officials, citizen activists, and transportation professionals will be held in Boston on October 4, 1996. The conference, sponsored by the Conservation Law Foundation in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Town of Manchester, the Town of Underhill, and others, will focus on the role of transportation in revitalizing neighborhoods and commercial centers, improving mobility within communities, and contributing to

the livable qualities of communities. The workshop will include case studies from New England and beyond, and will help arrange future communication and cooperation among participants. Call Alison Conant at (617) 350-0990, ext. 145, for more information.



VNRC IS A VOICE FOR VERMONT'S FUTURE



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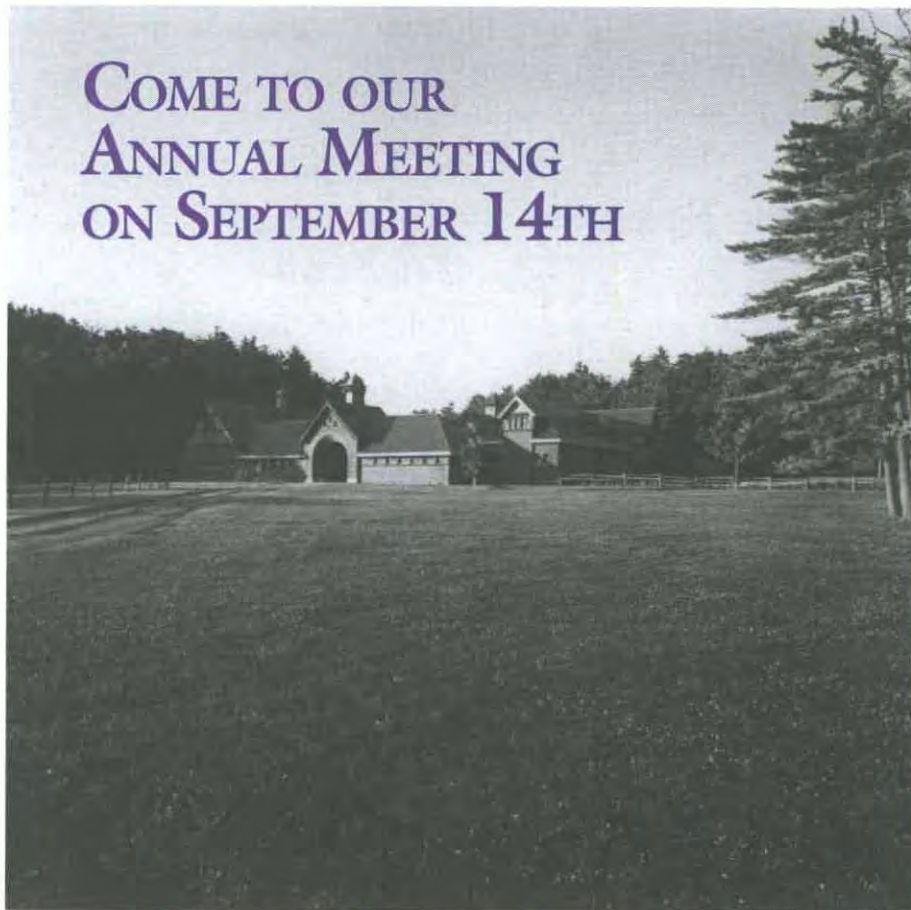
Send to: VNRC, 9 Bailey Avenue, Montpelier, VT 05602

VNRC's annual meeting will be held at the Coach Barn of Shelburne Farms this year—mark your calendar for September 14th and more information on local field trips for adults and children, outdoor skill activities, and talks will follow soon.

Our annual meeting coordinator is Jennifer Gilson. Please call Jennifer at (802) 223-2328 to find out more.

We hope to see you, your family, and friends there!

COME TO OUR ANNUAL MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 14TH



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