



VERMONT ALLIANCE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL
PLATFORM

2008 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Addressing climate change in Vermont will help grow our economy, protect the viability of our farm and forest industries, support new clean energy technologies, and save Vermonters money through lower electric and heating bills. Early passage of S. 209 will allow for the consideration, during the 2008 session, of additional measures that are needed to support the increased use of renewable energy in Vermont.

- **By the end of February the Legislature should pass S. 209, *The Vermont Energy Efficiency and Affordability Act*, with funding adequate to enable the state to help Vermonters invest in measures to lower their heating bills.**

SMART GROWTH AND CONSERVATION

Our communities and the engines of our economy are made stronger through public investment that builds permanently affordable homes, revitalizes community spaces, saves working farms and forests, and protects natural areas.

- **The Legislature should comply with the statutory funding allocation of 50% of Property Transfer Tax receipts to local communities through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.**
- **The Legislature should pass improvements to the Current Use Program that would increase landowner participation in the program; encourage long-term enrollment; and expand opportunities for the enrollment of wetlands, buffer areas near waterways, critical wildlife habitat, and other important ecological areas.**
- **The Legislature should pass a balanced smart growth update to Act 250 that would ease the scrutiny of some downtown, village and growth center housing projects; and amend Criterion 9L to ensure that bigger subdivisions in rural areas respect the character of nearby town centers and don't undermine their vitality.**

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION

Vermont lags woefully behind other states in the Northeast in developing a groundwater protection program to legally safeguard the aquifers that feed our wells and provide drinking water for the majority of Vermonters. By protecting our groundwater we will safeguard fragile riparian zones and wetlands, prevent pollution from poisoning drinking water supplies, and stop the depletion of our aquifers.

- **The Legislature should pass a comprehensive groundwater protection bill that declares groundwater a "public trust" resource, provides long-term funding for groundwater mapping, requires reporting on all large withdrawals, and outlines a comprehensive regulatory program to protect sources and prevent over-withdrawals.**

FISH AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT FUNDING

Fundamental protections of Vermont's fish and wildlife habitats have gone unaddressed for years due to a lack of stable and adequate funding for the Fish and Wildlife Department. Conservation professionals in the Department are behind on a number of critical programs, ranging from identifying and expanding bear corridors to performing Act 250 reviews. In opinion surveys the public overwhelmingly supports increased and stable investment in protecting Vermont's fish and wildlife resources and preserving our outdoor traditions.

- **The Legislature should permanently dedicate one-eighth of one percent of general sales tax revenues to fund the programs of the Fish and Wildlife Department.**

ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

Slap-on-the-wrist penalties for environmental violations are undermining the impact that enforcement action should have in preventing future pollution. By giving the public a greater role in enforcement we can ensure that compensation paid by polluters is equal to the seriousness of the offense and sufficient to repair the damage done. Moreover, the resulting stigma and stiffer penalties will create greater incentives for more proactive and rigorous compliance by regulated entities.

- **The Legislature should pass H. 259, *An Act Relating to Enhancing Public Awareness and Participation in Enforcement of Environmental Laws*, as introduced along with such amendments as may be proposed increasing penalties for permit violations and/or adding a "bad actor" provision disqualifying serial violators from eligibility for coverage under general permits.**

The following organizations have endorsed this Conservation and Environmental Legislative Platform:

Audubon Vermont ♦ Forest Watch ♦ Green Mountain Club ♦ Lake Champlain Committee ♦ National Wildlife Federation ♦ Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont ♦ Northern Forest Alliance ♦ Preservation Trust of Vermont ♦ REP America ♦ Smart Growth Vermont ♦ Sustainable Energy Resource Group ♦ Toxics Action Center Campaigns ♦ Vermont Alliance of Conservation Voters ♦ Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility ♦ Vermont Natural Resources Council ♦ Vermont Public Interest Research Group ♦ Vermont Sierra Club ♦ Vermonters for a Clean Environment ♦ Water 1st!



VERMONT ALLIANCE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

For more information contact VACV at 802-224-9090 or tbailey@vacv.org

The nonprofit Vermont Alliance of Conservation Voters (VACV) is the independent political voice for Vermont's environment. VACV's mission is to advocate for sound environmental policies and to elect pro-environmental candidates who will adopt and implement such policies.