

Granite State Conservation Voters Alliance

The Political Voice of the New Hampshire Conservation Community

PO Box 89 Exeter, NH 03833 (603) 772-7784 www.voteconservation.org

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Benson Earns C's and D's on Environmental Protection -- Areas of Concern Outweigh Accomplishments

Notes to Editors: FULL REPORT AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE OR BY REQUEST AND IMAGE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

PLEASE e-mail: r-stephenson@comcast.net or visit www.voteconservation.org Report card IMAGE follows text.

June 28, 2004-- The Granite State Conservation Voters Alliance released a report card on Governor Craig Benson today, giving the Governor an overall C- for protecting New Hampshire's environment.

"We assessed Governor Benson's leadership on eight issues, and he earned C's and D's across the board," explained Rick Russman, chairman of the bi-partisan group. "Unfortunately, conservation leadership that once existed in Concord does not exist today." The group's report refers to important land protection, water and air pollution laws initiated or sponsored by previous governors of both political parties.

The bi-partisan Granite State Conservation Voters Alliance includes former Republican and Democratic legislators on its board. Formed in 2003 with encouragement from conservationists across the state, GSCVA produced a 14-page report after meeting with and gathering information from conservation advocates, policy specialists outside the conservation community, representatives of state agencies and reporters. **The report includes accomplishments and areas of concern.**

"In April we wrote to commissioners of those state agencies that are directly responsible for protecting our natural resources, asking them for examples of state initiatives and accomplishments on the environment. We did not hear back from Commissioners Nolin (NHDES), O'Kane (DRED) or Director Manoogian (Office of Energy and Planning)", explained Roger Stephenson, a GSCVA board member.

The eight issues assessed are: land protection; safe drinking water; lakes, rivers and wetlands; wildlife protection; transportation; energy and clean air; smart growth; and global warming.

MORE

The full report is available at the group's website, www.voteconservation.org. GSCVA released the following assessments based upon the full report:

Land Protection (D)

Governor Benson never defended his budget proposals for the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program or the Water Supply Land Protection Program against draconian cuts in the legislature.

Safe Drinking Water (C-)

Governor Benson did not sign the new law banning the use of MtBE in New Hampshire.

Lakes Rivers and Wetlands (C-)

Wetlands rules drafted under Governor Benson's watch are considerably weaker and the Benson Administration is not enforcing the Shoreland Protection Act.

Wildlife Protection (C)

The Governor stalled endangered species protection actions by repeatedly refusing to accept readily-available federal funds for habitat protection.

Transportation (D)

The Governor wants Interstate 93 widened from 4 to 8 lanes as quickly as possible and intervened by calling the US EPA Administrator. The Governor refused to acquire a critical link of railroad right-of-way despite the urgings of the Department of Transportation.

Energy and Clean Air (C-)

Governor Benson has no energy efficiency or renewable energy policies and reduced the staff of the former Energy Office.

Smart Growth (C-)

The Governor opposed funding to help towns grappling with the pressures of growth and impacts of sprawl. State agencies are not factoring sprawl into spending and policy decisions despite existing requirements.

Global Warming (D)

Under Governor Benson the state has stalled on global warming actions. New Hampshire lags behind other New England states where governors actively support specific greenhouse gas reductions and targets.

The Alliance cited accomplishments in the Benson Administration:

- The Attorney General filed a lawsuit against companies to recover damages from the gasoline additive MtBE that has contaminated at least 40,000 private wells in the state.

MORE

- Governor Benson appointed Sean O’Kane to lead the Department of Resources and Economic Development; GSCVA considers O’Kane a promising advocate for conservation.
- The Governor appointed Lee Perry as Director of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. Perry is considered highly qualified and experienced.
- Governor Benson signed SB 487 banning the sale of lead sinkers, to protect waterfowl.
- The New Hampshire Attorney General sued to prevent EPA from adopting weaker clean air rules.

About the Granite State Conservation Voters Alliance

GSCVA is a non-partisan, statewide non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Hampshire's environment by making it a priority for our elected representatives. GSCVA was established with the advice and encouragement of many of New Hampshire’s conservation leaders to perform a critical role in protecting the State’s environment -- holding elected officials accountable for their performance in protecting the environment.

Rick Russman (Kingston) is the chairman. Amanda Merrill (Durham) is the Vice-chair. The board also includes Jim Bassett (Canterbury), Sarah Bonneau (Westmoreland) Tom Masland (New Hampton), Merle Schotanus (Grantham); John Schott (Fitzwilliam) and Roger Stephenson (Stratham).
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IMAGE FOLLOWS -- THE FOLLOWING IMAGE IS AVAILABLE AS A JPEG BY REQUEST:

NEW HAMPSHIRE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT CARD

for

GOVERNOR CRAIG BENSON

First Term

SUBJECT	GRADE
LAND PROTECTION	D
SAFE DRINKING WATER	C-
LAKES, RIVERS & WETLANDS	C-
WILDLIFE PROTECTION	C
TRANSPORTATION	D
ENERGY AND CLEAN AIR	C-
SMART GROWTH	C-
GLOBAL WARMING	D
OVERALL GRADE	C-



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