

# Concord Monitor <sup>online</sup>

## Disputed grade

**Benson's environmental record deserves poor marks.**

**July 18, 2004**

Gov. Craig Benson doesn't think the C- he received on his report card from the bipartisan Granite State Conservation Voters Alliance is a fair measure of his environmental record. In fact, he objects to the grade so strenuously that he put his response to it on the state's official Web site.

"Report is Inaccurate and Misleading" reads the headline of Benson's rebuttal. What is inaccurate and misleading, however, is the governor's attempt to cast a green light on his mediocre and spotty record on environmental issues.

The terms of Republican governors John Sununu and Judd Gregg saw the conservation of more than 100,000 acres of the state's most ecologically sensitive lands. Under Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, New Hampshire became a national leader in the fight to reduce global warming and acid rain and to remove toxic metals from the environment.

All the while, the effort to conserve threatened land in New England's fastest growing state continued - until, that is, Benson became governor. Now, thanks to his monomaniacal focus on budget cutting, the land conservation effort is moribund. Action on global warming has cooled. Efforts to plan for the impact of continued growth and sprawl have slowed. The mood at agencies charged with protecting the state's environment and natural resources is sour.

A governor leads by example. And though the conservation group was kind enough not to note it, the example Benson sets by driving a Hummer and violating wetlands rules on his own property is a poor one. To us, his C- was yet another case of grade inflation.

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