



U.S. Representative

Bernie Sanders

A Special Focus on Environmental Issues



Spring 2000

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Fellow Vermonter,

I wanted to take this opportunity to inform you about some of the important environmental issues still pending in the 106th Congress. As one of the members of Congress who was recently awarded a 100% pro-environment voting record, I look forward to working with you to make sure that we leave this planet in better condition than we found it.

Maintaining the health of our natural environment is one of the most important responsibilities we have. Our air, water, land and wildlife are irreplaceable and, as part of the planet's ecosystem ourselves, our own health and well being are inextricably bound to the natural world.

Unfortunately, protecting our environment has not been a priority in Washington, D.C., over the past several years. In fact, the first session of the 106th Congress yielded **one of the most unproductive environmental records in decades**. Even so, there are a few bright spots that deserve mention.

One positive development is the increased debate around the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). The heightened scrutiny of GMOs is a direct response to pressure from the grassroots and the concerns raised by foreign governments who have taken a more prudent stand toward the proliferation of GMOs.

For the first time, legislation has been introduced which deals with the long-term health and environmental safety issues that GMOs may pose. With very little conclusive scientific research about how GMOs will affect our planet in the long term, some of us on Capitol Hill believe that we need to err on the side of caution rather than risk the consequences of an unforeseen problem.

In other good news, the House Resources Committee approved a bill that would provide **full funding** of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (IWCF). While this legislation still has to be approved by the full House and Senate, we are making substantial progress in fulfilling an unkept promise of more than 25 years – that we would dedicate a major portion of the revenues generated by resource development to protect our natural resources for future generations.

Clearly, protecting the environment is not only a national issue, but an international concern as well. The rapidly developing global economy poses significant dangers to the world's environment. Huge multinational corporations are continually pushing for the relaxation or elimination of environmental protections around the world. Internationally, the United States must support responsible, sustainable economic development that emphasizes environmental protection, not policies which force poor countries to destroy their natural resources.

Inside this newsletter, you will find more information on these and other important environmental issues. If you have any questions about an environmental issue, or any other concern, please do not hesitate to contact my Burlington office at **1 Church Street, 2nd Floor, Burlington, VT 05401, (800) 339-9834**, or my Washington office at **2202 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515, (202) 225-4115**. You can also contact me through e-mail at bernie@mail.house.gov. Also, please utilize my home page at <http://bernie.house.gov>. You'll find a wealth of information there.

Sincerely yours,

Bernie
Bernard Sanders
U.S. Congressman

Land and Water Conservation Fund

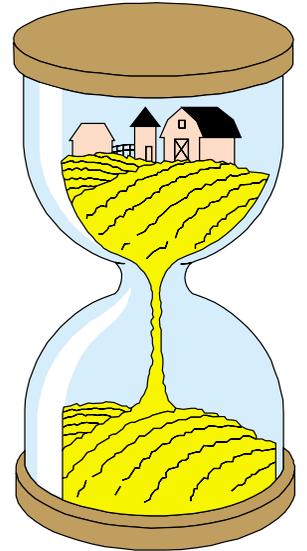
From parks to playgrounds, wilderness to wetlands, open trails to open spaces, the LWCF has been an American success story at the national, state and local levels. In its 35-year history, LWCF has been responsible for the creation of nearly seven million acres of parkland and refuges, as well as open spaces, and the creation of more than 37,000



state parks and recreation projects. Since 1968, Vermont has received more than \$27 million in LWCF funds, which have benefited virtually every town in the state. Examples of LWCF projects include state treasures such as Camel's Hump State Park and the Mount Hunger hiking trail. Many other LWCF projects are far less high-profile, but make a significant contribution to local communities. From the repair of a sewage system in a town park, to the creation of a school sports field, hundreds of these projects have enriched Vermonters' lives at the local level.

Despite the success of the LWCF, the Congress has failed to fully fund it for the past quarter of a century. This past year, however, the House Re-

sources Committee approved, for the first time in 25 years, permanent annual funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$2.8 billion. This would enable communities all across the country to expand parks and recreation, preserve open farmland, protect wildlife and endangered species, and preserve historic buildings.



We Need to Protect Our Lakes, Rivers and Streams from Mercury Pollution

Nearly every state in the nation, including Vermont, confronts the health risks posed by mercury pollution. In fact, 40 states have issued health advisories warning the public about consuming fish contaminated with mercury. In Vermont, nearly every single lake, river and stream is under a mercury advisory.

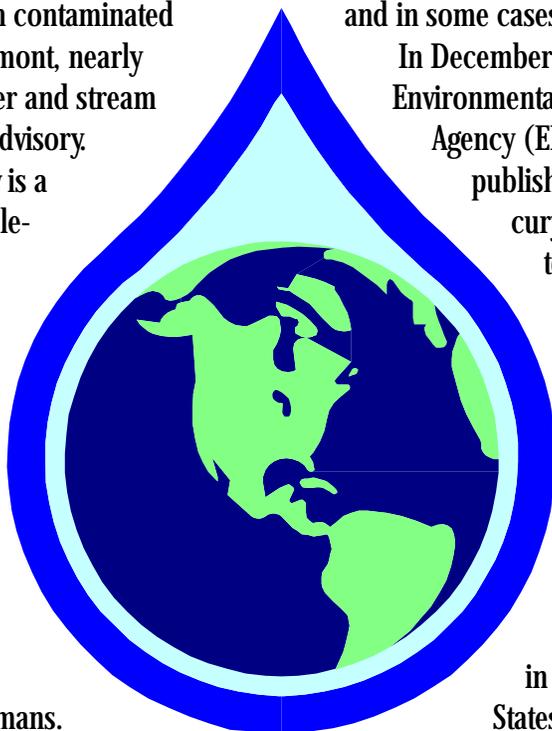
Although mercury is a naturally occurring element, over recent years it has built up to dangerous levels in many places. Mercury pollution impairs the reproductive and nervous system of fish and wildlife, and can be extremely harmful when ingested by humans.

Ingesting mercury can severely damage the central nervous system, causing numbness in the extremities, impaired vision, mental and sensory disturbances, kidney disease, paralysis, and in some cases, even death.

In December of 1997, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally published its "Mercury Study Report to Congress," as required by the 1990 Clean Air Act amendments. The report concluded that mercury pollution in the United States comes

primarily from the emissions of coal-fired utilities, waste combustors, commercial and industrial boilers, chlor-alkali plants, and cement plants.

In order to combat mercury pollution, I am an original co-sponsor of the "Omnibus Mercury Emissions Reduction Act of 1999." This legislation would, for the first time, set emission standards for the largest mercury polluters, calling for a 95 percent reduction in mercury emissions nationwide. It would also expand research into the health effects of mercury, require more consistent state-by-state information on fish consumption advisories, and ensure that municipalities work with incinerators to keep products containing mercury out of waste streams.



Putting Consumers and the Environment Ahead of GMO Profits

The Need for Labeling and More Research

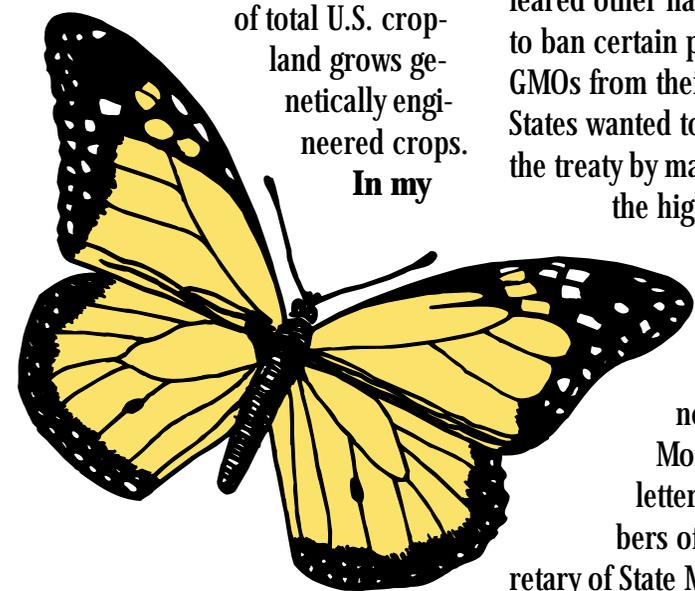
The next time you buy something from the supermarket, take a look at the product's FDA ingredient label. On it, you will find what seems to be a wealth of information about the product, including a detailed analysis of the fat content, and the amount of carbohydrates and protein. **However, you will find nothing about whether the product contains genetically modified (GMO) material.**

Unfortunately, this is not a mere oversight. The FDA has ruled that GMO foods do not need to be labeled, despite recent scientific research that raises serious health and environmental concerns about these products. In one recent experiment, a soybean that was genetically altered to include a gene from a nut was found to cause an allergic reaction in those allergic to nuts. In another study published in the scientific journal "Nature," monarch butterflies were shown to suffer from retarded growth and increased mortality after eating leaves dusted with pollen from a widely grown variety of genetically engineered corn.

We must all understand that GMO foods are not uncommon. More than 50% of U.S.-produced soybeans are genetically engineered, more than 30% of U.S.-produced corn is grown from genetically engineered seeds, and overall more than 25%

of total U.S. cropland grows genetically engineered crops.

In my



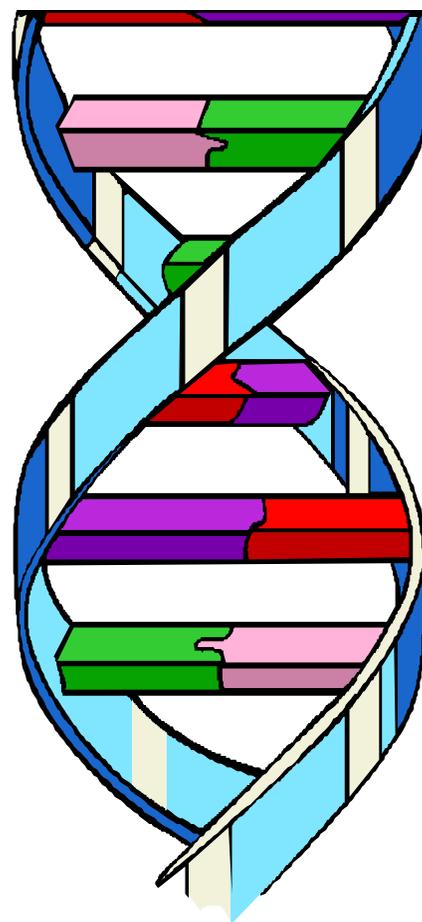
view, the American people have a right to know whether the food they and their children are eating contains genetically modified materials. And that is why I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of the Genetically Modified Food Right to Know Act, which requires proper labeling for all GMO foods. I also sponsored the Genetically Modified Food Safety Act, which strengthens the FDA's ability to make sure our food supply is safe.

In the coming months, I will be exploring ways that we can better insure that our food supply is healthy and that our crops are environmentally safe. Nonetheless, as the scientific debate about GMO foods continues, one thing remains clear: consumers have the right to know what is in their food so they can make the most informed choices about what they and their families are eating.

International Biosafety Protocol Signed

Earlier this year, more than 174 countries signed the Biosafety Protocol – an international treaty that establishes guidelines for the transfer of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). For six years, the United States worked to prevent a treaty from being signed, as major U.S. agribusiness exporters feared other nations would be allowed to ban certain potentially hazardous GMOs from their markets. The United States wanted to effectively invalidate the treaty by making it subordinate to the highly secretive, corporate-dominated World Trade Organization (WTO).

As the final round of negotiations started in Montreal, I authored a letter, signed by 22 Members of Congress, urging Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to



drop her demand of WTO supremacy over the Biosafety Protocol. As we said in our letter, "the WTO is wholly unsuited to [referee disputes over the treaty] because it has shown little concern for environmental health and safety."

Fortunately, when the negotiations were completed, the new treaty included a clause asserting that the agreement would not be subservient to the WTO. The Biosafety Protocol is a major first step for the world in beginning to deal with the implications of GMOs. We must continue to push policies that make our planet's long-term environmental health and safety a priority.

Rep. Bernie Sanders

1 Church Street, Second Floor
Burlington, VT 05401-4417

Telephone: 802-862-0697

Toll-free: 800-339-9834

http://bernie.house.gov • bernie@mail.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Official Business



M.C.
Bulk Rate

In This Issue...

A Special Focus on Environmental Issues...

A Letter from Bernie	1
Land and Water Conservation Fund	2
We Need to Protect Our Lakes, Rivers and Streams from Mercury Pollution	2
Putting Consumers and the Environment Ahead of GMO Profits	3
Corporate Welfare Hurts the Environment	4
The Fight Against Acid Rain	4

If you receive more than one copy of this newsletter, we apologize. Please feel free to pass the extra copy along to an interested friend.

This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense.

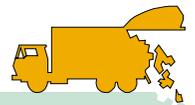
Helpful Telephone Numbers for Environmental Information

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

General Number	(202) 260-2090
EPA Region I (includes Vermont)	(617) 918-1111
Office of Indoor Air	(202) 564-9701
Office of Air and Radiation	(202) 260-5700
Office of Water	(202) 260-5922
Public Information Center – Publications	(202) 260-4977
Inspector General's Hotline	(202) 260-4977

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

Secretary's Office	(802) 241-3600
Department of Environmental Conservation	(802) 241-3808
Department of Fish and Wildlife	(802) 241-3700
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation	(802) 241-3670



Corporate Welfare Hurts the Environment

Every year, the U.S. government doles out **more than \$125 billion** in “**corporate welfare**” – **tax breaks, subsidies, and other wasteful spending** – largely to huge, profitable corporations that don't need taxpayers' support. Many of these corporate welfare programs also contribute to the degradation of our environment.

I am pleased that for the last two years I have successfully offered amendments to the Interior Appropriations bill that substantially cut the Fossil Energy Research and Development Program – a huge giveaway to oil and coal companies. I also transferred \$20 million into increased payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) to local governments whose boundaries include public lands, like the Green Mountain National Forest.

The result was that over 50 Vermont towns received larger PILT payments from the federal government. This combination of responsible fiscal and environmental policy was supported by environmental groups and won bipartisan support in the House. The vote this year was 248 to 169 to adopt the PILT amendment.

The Fight Against Acid Rain

Scientists tell us that acid rain develops when pollution – mostly from coal-fired electric power plants – enters the atmosphere and returns to Earth in the form of acid rain. Unfortunately, Vermont's location in the Northeast makes us a target for acid rain from pollution generated in Midwestern states.

I am a co-sponsor of legislation introduced by Rep. Henry Waxman of California and Sherwood Boehlert of New York that would require deeper reductions in the pollutants emitted by Midwestern power plants, which then blow east and contribute to acid rain. It would cut utility emissions of sulfur dioxide in half and cut nitrogen oxides even further, capping

emissions of nitrogen oxides at 70 percent of 1990 levels. If this measure becomes law, not only will Vermont be better protected from the dangers of acid rain, but the other 47 continental states would benefit as well.

