From: Springer, Darren [Darren.Springer@vermont.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2016 7:16 AM
To: Coriell, Scott
Subject: Re: Draft Release - edits welcome!

Maybe just throw in at end reminder that he also called for Exxon divestment so people don't think we gave up on that. Otherwise terrific, thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 10, 2016, at 7:13 AM, Coriell, Scott <Scott.Coriell@vermont.gov> wrote:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2016

Gov. Shumlin Highlights Damage to Lakes, Fish, and Forests Resulting from Coal

MONTPELIER – Continuing his push for Vermont to divest from coal stocks, Gov. Peter Shumlin today highlighted the negative effects the burning of coal has on Vermont's lakes and waterways, fish species, and forests and how it threatens important economic industries like tourism, outdoor recreation, and iconic maple sugaring.

The coal power industry is a major source of mercury emissions and mercury accumulation in the environment, impacting lakes, forests, and the species that inhabit both. Mercury and other harmful compounds resulting from the burning of coal are brought to Vermont by the way of precipitation, or what is know as acid rain, with devastating effects for the state's environment.

Vermont lakes are hit hardest, with up to 16 percent showing acid stress. In severe cases, acid compounds coming to Vermont through precipitation can lead to dead water bodies where native species cannot survive.

High levels of mercury also pose a concern for fish in Vermont's lakes and those who consume them. While mercury levels in Lake Champlain sport fish have declined since the 1990's, elevated levels of mercury mean Vermonters must follow Department of Health guidelines to ensure safe fish consumption. For pregnant women, these guidelines generally restrict consumption to between one and five meals per month of most sportfish.

Too much mercury in a diet, especially for pregnant women, can result in organ and central nervous system damage and impaired neurological development for children.

“Despite this pollution coming from out of state, it is Vermonters who pay the price, both with tax dollars required for clean-up efforts and in economic losses to businesses dependent on our state's natural resources,” said James Elhers, Executive Director of Lake Champlain International.

Much of the dirty air that contributes to acid rain travels across many states and ends up in Vermont forests, threatening their long-term sustainability. Years of acid deposition have leached vital nutrients from forest soils and impacted many of Vermont tree species, including:

- Red spruce was one of the first trees to draw attention to this problem through work by UVM professor Hub Vogelmann more than 3 decades ago. His research team’s work on Camels Hump led the nation in recognizing connections between red spruce decline and pollution from coal fired power plants.
- More recently Vermont learned that paper birch trees didn’t recover from damages of the 1998 ice storm where acid deposition has depleted necessary soil nutrients.
- Forests where acid rain has affected soils have slower tree growth, poorer recovery from tree damages from pests or abnormal weather, and perhaps the most troubling, fewer seedlings surviving into future sugar maple forests.

“The health and productivity of our forests depend on reducing air pollution and maintaining a climate that supports tree species we rely on for wildlife habitat, maple syrup, recreation, tourism, wood products and clean water,” Commissioner of the Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation Mike Snyder said.

Aside from the direct effects on lakes, fish, and forests, the burning of coal is the biggest contributor to climate change in America and poses significant risks for Vermont. One readily apparent effect of climate change is the recent increase in frequency of devastating storms and flood events which threaten Vermont watersheds and livelihoods. Warmer temperatures brought on by climate change may also reduce the range of cold water fish species such as our native brook trout and make environmental conditions more favorable for invasive, non-native species.

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