

**Testimony of Jon Groveman**  
**Policy and Water Program Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council**  
**(VNRC)**  
**on Atrazine**  
**February 9, 2007**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important issue. For the record, my name is Jon Groveman. I am the Policy and Water Program Director for VNRC. VNRC is Vermont's largest and oldest environmental group with over 5,000 members.

As you have heard today, atrazine is a widely used herbicide. Significant health concerns in humans have been raised about the use of atrazine. According to EPA, studies suggest that atrazine is an endocrine disruptor. Endocrine disruptors can cause cancerous tumors, birth defects, and other developmental disorders. In addition, atrazine is suspected of causing demasculinization in amphibians and fish and impacts on the ability of fish to reproduce.

VNRC addressed the concerns about atrazine in 2004 when we focused on Vermont's groundwater and drinking water laws, and the need to improve protections for the drinking water of Vermonters, and groundwater as an invaluable ecological resource.

Atrazine has been characterized by the federal government as the most commonly detected pesticide contaminating drinking water in the United States. In the Midwest, more than 1,000 communities spent millions of dollars addressing atrazine in drinking water. These communities sued the company Syngenta, the manufacturer of atrazine. The lawsuit claimed atrazine exposure could lead to health problems such as low birth weights, birth defects and reproductive problems. Syngenta settled the suit by agreeing to pay \$105 million to Midwestern water companies. See <http://cjonline.com/news/2013-01-25/syngenta-pays-millions-settlement-farming-states>.

Atrazine has been an issue for groundwater and drinking water in Vermont. For example, in 2004, there was dispute about the impact of atrazine use at a farm on groundwater and drinking water in East Montpelier. See [http://www.vpr.net/news\\_detail/70654/agriculture-committee-hears-farm-pollution-testimo/](http://www.vpr.net/news_detail/70654/agriculture-committee-hears-farm-pollution-testimo/)

In 2008, the Vermont Legislature declared groundwater as a public trust resource. This declaration means that the State of Vermont holds groundwater in trust for all Vermonters, and must ensure that it is managed in a way that is the best interest of Vermonters, and individuals do not have the right to use or impact groundwater to the detriment of Vermonters as a whole.

The State of Vermont often implements its public trust obligations in managing groundwater by adopting groundwater laws and standards. As you have heard this morning, Vermont's groundwater standard for atrazine is not sufficiently protective. In

fact, the use of atrazine was banned by the European Union in 2006. At a minimum the groundwater and drinking water standard for atrazine should be made more stringent in Vermont – dropped to the lowest standard in effect, which is an MCL of 1 ppb.

In closing, this discussion about atrazine is a preview of issues you will hear about this session with regard to implementing recommendations of the Act 154 Toxic Working Group this summer. The Working Group was formed last year by the Legislature to examine gaps in laws to protect Vermonters in light of the PFOA contamination crisis in Bennington Vermont. The Working Group recommended that the Legislature take action to address the harm that chemicals like atrazine and PFOA cause, including contaminating groundwater and drinking water. VNRC looks forward to working with your Committees to address these issues through legislation.