

# *The History of NHCRL*

As of August 2001

## **The Beginning:**

In 1997, Mike Pelletier remodeled his home located in Manchester, NH. Two new skylight windows were installed in the bedroom ceilings. However, the constant orange glow of the Manchester night sky along with nearby streetlights made him regret his skylight decision. A year later, Mike was at the Christa MacAuliff Planetarium at 'Astronomy Day'. Steve Forbes, also a resident of Manchester, was displaying a table with pictures of Light Pollution and Light Trespass. After talking about their experiences in Manchester, both agreed something had to be done.

With the help of others, they started meeting on a regular basis. By October 1998, the *N.H. Citizens for Responsible Lighting* (NHCRL) set out three goals: 1. Educate the public, companies and governmental agencies about Light Pollution/Trespass 2. Ask for local ordinances in Manchester and help people in other towns to do so and 3. Request a law be passed in the State Legislature on regulating bad lighting. Finding members and administrative tasks were handled by a few other members. Steve Forbes learned all about the technical issues. Mike Pelletier started contacting local and state politicians and civic leaders for help.

## **State Law Activity:**

Due to time constraints, the group had to draft and submit a bill to the N.H. Legislature by December 1998, or miss the cutoff for new bills for an entire year. Steve Forbes hit the Internet and put together a seven-page bill on Light Pollution/Trespass. The bill was submitted to the House and Senate with a bi-partisan group of 9 House and Senate members sponsoring it as LSR 328. After being sent to the Municipal and County Government Committee, it was debated during the spring and summer of 1999. Due to the complexity of the bill and the technical nature of the subject, the bill was amended into a Study Committee. With the phone calls of dozens of NHCRL supporters, the bill passed the House and went to the Senate.

Unfortunately, several opponents of this legislation spread untrue rumors about NHCRL profiting by this bill. However, due to the support of the community, the Senate also passed the bill to Study Committee by an 18-6 margin. Since late 1999, the Study Committee has met in Concord to review the issue of Light Pollution/Trespass every month. The Study Committee extended itself until November of 2000. The Study Committee ordered the NH Office of State Planning to make recommendations and then let every city and town in N.H. know about this topic.

Part of the effort to gain support for the State Bill was to continue education through the media. NHCRL officers were able to take to the radio airwaves by going on talk shows in Manchester WGIR, Nashua WSMN, and N.H. Public Radio. Newspaper articles were also written about the group in every major N.H. newspaper. Attached are articles from the Union Leader and Nashua Telegraph. To gain support in Manchester, the group produced 8 public access TV programs that played weekly for two months. Channel 9 in Manchester ran an 'Eco-Watch' two minute segment on Light Pollution based on our group's input.

In the Summer of 2001, the NH Office of State Planning finished a publication known as Technical Bulletin #15. This 'TB' was the fifteenth in a series of publications that help make N.H. more livable and ensure a quality of life. Over 400 NH cities and towns were sent this publication, one to the local planning board and another to the local government (board of selectmen or aldermen).

There was a failed effort at a second Bill in early 2001. This bill was very similar to the first bill introduced back in 1999. The legislature decided that the actions taken on the first bill (TB #15) were sufficient at the time.

#### **Local efforts:**

While the efforts continue with the State Study Committee, NHCRL started to concentrate on helping other cities and towns enact their own ordinances and site plans. With all the media attention, citizens from all over the area, including other states started to contact NHCRL asking for help. Detailed packets of educational material were sent to all that requested them. In some cases, we provided customized letters for people to sign and relay to their town government.

As the attached list shows, over 20 cities and towns are now being asked for site plans and ordinances by regular citizens. The plan is to have nearly 100 cities and towns considering measures to help the people of the community deal with Light Pollution/Trespass. Not only ordinary citizens ask for help, but NHCRL has been contacted by Aldermen, Selectmen, Planning Board members and Conservation Committee members.

Many companies and industries in NH have been contacted to improve their outdoor lighting. Distributors or outdoor lighting have been asked to become familiar with the issue to LP/LT.

#### **The Future:**

NHCRL seeks to continue the efforts to help local towns and cities enact ordinances and site plans. On a state level, we realize it might take several more years to enact meaningful legislation. Our group has a core active membership of 4 officers and about 15 very active members. The body of NHCRL consists of 95 members with some even from out of state. In March 2000, NHCRL held its first general membership meeting. Most of NHCRL's work and communication has been completed by Internet communications.

Education of this topic continues with media releases and stories. NHCRL members are asked to make presentations all over the state. Education is the key to winning this issue.

**The Opposition:**

Very little opposition was given to the efforts to curb Light Pollution/Trespass for the first year of our existence. However, in late 1999, elements of the power industry and lighting fixture industry started to cast negative doubts about our efforts. The Chamber of Commerce also decided to come out against our state bill since they desire 'no regulation on a state level'. Full time lobbyists are now attending the State Study Committee meetings and contacting the members to vote against all legislation. Main Street Incorporated has also acknowledged our presence and warned its members about NHCRL. The worse thing the Opposition did was to spread a rumor that NHCRL officers were going to profit by the proposed State Law LSR 328. However, our officers have nothing to do with selling electricity or lighting fixtures. The jobs of the officers are as follows: locksmith, computer engineer, technical salesman, union shop steward: all with no connections direct or indirect to the subject matter.

**Our Needs:**

NHCRL operates with no budget, no bank account and no treasury. Our communications are completed by Internet or simple post office mail. Photocopying is done at our work offices or local copy shops. Postage is paid out of the pockets of our members. NHCRL has a web site that was donated by one of our computer engineer members. We have been able to keep a dedicated phone line with answering machine for the past year although the bill paying did slip a bit last year.

In order to make progress with our educational efforts, we need to create large photographs of Light Pollution/Trespass. It is very difficult to capture the effect of these items. A professional photographer will be needed along with several large copies of the pictures. This would cost approximately \$150.

Many requests come in each month for literature and graphics of Light Trespass/Pollution. However, we can only give out black and white photocopies. We need to create a color education handout with details. This would cost about \$200.

We plan to hold several skywatches with local astronomers in 2000 to show people the beauty of the night sky. At the same time we will show the problems of Light Pollution/Trespass. We will need small colored cards to give out to hundreds of sky watchers. This would cost about \$50.

Our phone budget runs about \$30 per month. We would like to continue the telephone line and improve our phone message recorder.