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BEST ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM OF 2008-2009 HONORED

The Society of Environmental Journalists is proud to present the winners of the 2008-2009 Awards for Reporting on the Environment. SEJ's journalism contest is the world's largest and most comprehensive awards for journalism on environmental topics. Pollution near schools, longwall mining, biological invaders, climate change, environment and heredity, predator tagging, tar sands: these are just a few of the topics in this year's outstanding reporting being recognized by the SEJ awards.

Thirty-one entries in 11 categories have been selected. Reporters, editors and journalism educators who served as contest judges pored over 187 entries to choose the finalists representing the best environmental reporting in print and on television, radio, the Internet and in student publications.

SEJ will honor the winners Oct. 7, 2009, at a gala ceremony in the Concourse Hotel and Governor's Club in Madison, Wis., on the first day of SEJ's 19th annual conference. The Rachel Carson Environment Book Award winner will receive \$10,000 and a pair of marble bookends bearing the contest, book and author information. The student winner will receive \$250, a crystal trophy and up to \$750 in travel assistance to the annual conference. Each of the other winning entries will receive \$1,000 and a crystal trophy.

Visit SEJ's [Awards page](#) for links to most of the winning stories, or click in the links below.

SEJ's 2009 Awards for Reporting on the Environment winners, with judges' comments, are...

SEJ's Rachel Carson Environment Book Award

FIRST PLACE:

Andrew Nikiforuk, co-published by Greystone Books and the David Suzuki Foundation

[*Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent*](#)

Andrew Nikiforuk paints an alarming picture in northern Alberta, Canada: International oil companies clear cut huge swaths of boreal forest, rake off the boggy soil, scoop up giant shovelfuls of oil sands with the largest machines on earth and use copious amounts of boiling water to separate tarry bitumen from the sand so it can be turned into petroleum for your car in Kansas. The toxic residue that comes off the sands is stored behind gigantic dikes that leak, and downstream people and fish are sick. In his authoritative new book “Tar Sands: Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent,” Nikiforuk illustrates how an industry born in the 1960s has already industrialized an area larger than Florida. Nikiforuk shows that government agencies kowtow to industry, and that its models for monitoring environmental degradation are dubious. He found credible voices that question the sustainability of an explosively growing industry whose lifeblood is fresh water, an industry with holding ponds that rival, by volume, some of the largest dams on the globe. Until the 1970s, Chipewyan and Cree Indians lived off this rich land with no gas, electricity, telephone or running water. Today, Alberta is becoming the Saudi Arabia of the West. Foreign nationals easily outnumber locals, and the labor and housing shortages make Fort McMurray one of the most expensive places to live in the world. As oil reserves dwindle worldwide, this book sheds frightening new light on the future of energy.

Honorable Mentions (two, in alphabetized order by author's last name)

David Michaels, Oxford University Press

[*Doubt Is Their Product: How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health*](#)

Some books carry weight for the specific stories they tell. Others stand out for the clarity they bring to many, many stories. *Doubt Is Their Product* is one of the latter—a clarifying analysis of the strategies corporations, politicians and their allies use to defend dangerous products against damning science and common sense. Michaels focuses particularly on the tobacco industry, where the strategy of sowing doubt about clear science was first perfected, and on environmental hazards including asbestos, lead and vinyl chloride. But the strategies of doubt and confusion he exposes are prevalent in every scientific “debate,” from the human role in climate change to the reality of evolution. Writing as an epidemiologist, and from his personal experience as an Energy Department regulator for environment, safety and health in the Clinton Administration, Michaels brings a rare level of depth and credibility to his analysis. Importantly, he also offers direct, practical approaches to combating the problem of manufactured doubt in legal and policy decisions. *Doubt Is Their Product* will be a revelatory experience for anyone interested in the environment or in corporate regulation, and an invaluable tool for environmental journalists seeking to penetrate behind the veils of secrecy and obfuscation that surround so many environmental stories.

Nancy A. Nichols, Island Press

[*Lake Effect: Two Sisters and a Town's Toxic Legacy*](#)

One problem with environmental books is that they are often difficult to read. The language is technical, the list of toxics is long, and the warnings are impersonal. If you put down the book for the above reasons, the message is lost. Nancy Nichols makes the book very personal with her history of childhood along the polluted shores of Lake Michigan with her sister Sue. We care about the list of toxics in the water because she convinces us that it lies behind the cancer that killed her sister and eventually turned her own body against her. We care about these two women and what happened to them because the author makes them real, not cardboard cutouts for us to cluck over and then forget. “I cried for my sister. I cried because I didn’t think I could have children. I cried because I was afraid that if I did have children I would die of ovarian cancer when they were little or that I would pass on this horrible disease to them, or both.” That’s hardly impersonal, and it sure isn’t technical language. And yet, Nichols’ skills as a journalist allow her to investigate the history of pollution in the lake, particularly as it affects her home town of Waukegan, Illinois. She kicks butt and names names, in both industry and government. It’s a powerful story about the devastating effect of chemicals in our environment, told in a way that makes us all care.

Kevin Carmody Award for Outstanding Investigative Reporting, Print

FIRST PLACE:

Blake Morrison and Brad Heath, USA TODAY

[*The Smokestack Effect*](#)

A team from USA TODAY led by reporters Blake Morrison and Brad Heath analyzed millions of government records, led a nationwide canvas of independent air monitoring, and investigated polluting industries near schools in an exhaustive and original reporting project that proved the air outside hundreds of schools was rife with toxic chemicals unknown to parents, school officials and health authorities. With impressive ambition and breadth, the team produced a report that is both national in sweep and chock-full of local details relevant to all 50 states. The team compiled tens of millions of government records about air toxics from more than two dozen sources into what Editor & Publisher called “one of the most extensive online database reports of any newspaper.” The newspaper’s series has led to a \$2.25 million federal plan to systematically determine pollution levels outside schools. Congratulations to Morrison, Heath and the entire USA TODAY team for producing journalism that made a difference.

SECOND PLACE:

Sammy Fretwell and John Monk, The (Columbia, SC) State

[*DHEC Under Fire*](#)

Reporters John Monk and Sammy Fretwell of The State newspaper of Columbia, S.C., spent eight months digging into the state’s Department of Health and Environmental Control. Their report thoroughly, pointedly and fairly proved the agency had repeatedly failed to enforce environmental laws and sided with moneyed interests over public interests. A state law minimizing landfill waste was buried by huge new contracts for out-of-state garbage; a law to protect beaches was swept away by rules allowing mansions closer and closer to the eroding shoreline; and conservative legislators had the agency director’s ear. In case after case, the newspaper let the agency give its side of the story but showed evidence of mismanagement and failure. SEJ honors The State newspaper for its bold display of public service journalism aimed squarely at improving the protection of the environment in South Carolina.

THIRD PLACE:

Abrahm Lustgarten, ProPublica, picked up by WNYC radio, BusinessWeek, Albany Times-Union, San Diego Union-Tribune and the Denver Post

Is Natural Gas Drilling Endangering U.S. Water Supplies?

[*New York’s Gas Rush Poses Environmental Threat*](#) (Albany Times-Union)

[*Buried Secrets: Is Natural Gas Endangering U.S. Water Supplies?*](#) (BusinessWeek)

[*How the West’s Energy Boom Could Threaten Drinking Water for 1 in 12 Americans*](#) (San Diego Union-Tribune)

Abrahm Lustgarten’s ProPublica stories on natural gas drilling started in Upstate New York and followed the “fracking” trail westward to Colorado and Wyoming, at each stage carefully documenting how little regulators know about the environmental effects of a drilling process that so many energy companies are rushing to utilize. Thanks in part to these aggressive but fair stories, the risks of hydrofracking are finally being taken seriously by policymakers, and a formerly secretive practice is getting the careful scrutiny it deserves. Bravo to Abrahm Lustgarten and ProPublica for showing that there is a future for probing environmental journalism.

Outstanding Beat/In-depth Reporting, Radio

FIRST PLACE:

David Baron, independent producer for NPR's All Things Considered

[*Shifting Ground*](#)

Baron’s pieces exhibited outstanding original research, excellent personalization of the stories, excellent use of natural sound and interesting interviews to clarify each story. Exactly what enterprising radio journalism should be. Each piece was entertaining and together formed a series on land-use conflicts not often reported on by the media.

SECOND PLACE:

Ashley Ahearn, Steve Curwood, Jeff Turton, Living on Earth
[Lead and Violent Crime](#)

Ahearn's piece featured clear, easy-to-understand writing and outstanding use of natural sound and interviews, which led listeners easily through the story. She put a human face on complicated science research and put together a captivating piece of radio.

THIRD PLACE:

Shawn Allee, Environment Report, Michigan Radio
Nuclear Power Series
[Part I: Stuck with Old Nuke Plants](#)
[Part II: Stuck with Old Nuke Plants](#)
[Part III: Lifting Bans on Nuke Power Plants?](#)

Allee's series covered ground not often heard in environment reporting. Allee's reporting was original, well-researched and examined the issue of nuclear energy in a fresh way. Very solid radio reporting.

Outstanding Beat/In-depth Reporting, Television

FIRST PLACE:

David Novack, Richard Hankin, Samuel Henriques, Scott Shelley; Sundance Channel/The Green
[Burning the Future: Coal in America](#)

"Burning the Future: Coal in America" is a superbly balanced, focused, visual and personal narrative. Crafted solely through the eyes and voices of its subjects, this documentary's power is found in the unflinching effort to offer wide-ranging perspective regarding coal and our nation's energy needs. From coal miners to coal town residents turned environmental activists, we are drawn into that debate. What "price" in terms of health and our natural heritage are we willing to pay for affordable electricity? Are we often too willing to turn our eyes from the dirty work that supports the promises of clean, reliable energy? This brilliant documentary does not tell us WHAT to think, but it demands that we DO engage and join the profoundly important discussion about the shape of our energy future.

SECOND PLACE:

Ed Jahn, Jeff Douglas, Sarah Fox, Todd Sonflieth, Nick Fisher, Michael Bendixen, Bruce Barrow; Oregon Public Broadcasting
[The Silent Invasion](#)

"The Silent Invasion" is testament to the impact of in-depth research, superb photography and editing, and the willingness to wade — literally — into the weeds and waters where environmental battle is being waged. We are transported to the front lines; from the ranchers struggling to keep their connections to the land, to the Customs workers manning the ramparts against the unending tide of biological "invaders." We commend you for helping to ensure that "The Silent Invasion" will no longer be met with a silent shrug because of your commitment to environmental reporting.

THIRD PLACE:

Vince Patton, Nick Fisher, Todd Sonflieth, Michael Bendixen, Tom Shrider; Oregon Public Broadcasting
Oregon Field Guide
[Bighorn Pneumonia](#)
[Malheur Refuge Carp](#)
[Celilo Revealed](#)
[Mount St. Helens Mysteries](#)

"Oregon Field Guide" offers a deep exploration of the dilemmas we face as we try to "manage" our biosphere. We humans have learned about "unintended consequences" time and again as we change our environment and watch what unfolds. Whether it is carp that choke a once bountiful lake, a waterfall sacred to Native Americans now submerged by a dam, or the spread of disease from domestic sheep to their bighorn cousins, we have an uncanny way of often creating more problems than we solve. "Oregon Field Guide" captures these conundrums with perfect pitch and pace, and we hope they continue to tell those stories in such a compelling fashion.

Outstanding Beat Reporting, Print

FIRST PLACE:

Kenneth R. Weiss, Los Angeles Times

A Warming Sea: Subtle Changes Can Have Profound Impacts

[Infested Fish May Bear Scars of Global Warming](#)

[An Elusive Catch](#)

[A Warning from the Sea](#)

[From Slim to None?](#)

With clear, crisp and engaging prose, Weiss brought home the climate change story like few seasoned journalists have before him. Though his work was limited primarily to oceans, shorelines and Pacific Ocean fishing, Weiss went way beyond futuristic modeling and examined the here and now between southern California and Alaska. With deft storytelling void of hyperbole and other journalistic traps, Weiss peeled away many of the myths and conjecture that have kept the issue mired in a seemingly endless political battle among Capitol Hill bureaucrats while still conveying a sense of urgency. Weiss took a science-based, detective-like approach to the issue, but also breathed new life into it with visual writing that relied more on showing readers what was happening out in the field rather than telling them what he'd heard at some press conference. One judge commented how Weiss had brought readers "into the middle of the adventure" and had written dense topics in a manner so compelling it "was impossible to put these stories aside."

SECOND PLACE:

Asher Price, Austin American-Statesman

Austin Beat Journalism

[Documents Detail Attempt To Obtain License To Bury Radioactive Waste](#)

[Can UT Prof Neutralize Nazi Sub Threat?](#)

[Coal Plant Deal Shows Environmental Split](#)

[Austin's Energy Miser](#)

[A Mighty Wind](#)

[Just Add Water](#)

[Wells Dry the Farm](#)

From a powerful company that wants to open a radioactive waste landfill to a public water authority promoting suburban development in one of North America's most parched regions, Price took on movers and shakers during an era in which even some of journalism's largest and most prestigious news organizations have been protecting their sacred cows and cutting back on space for hard news. That he showed that kind of vigor and determination at a mid-sized publication that's in the hot seat of ever-volatile Texas state politics was all the more commendable. Price relied heavily on an aggressive pursuit of open records, plus a healthy dose of number-crunching, advice from technical experts, and meticulous, shoe-leather reporting in highly important subject areas that some reporters might consider mundane, right down to the state's refusal to divulge information about the potential for windblown radioactive particles. He lived up to the beat's mission of holding officials accountable. He even shed light on a rift among environmentalists over plans to build a new coal-fired power plant 140 miles northeast of Austin.

THIRD PLACE:

Mark Clayton, The Christian Science Monitor

Beat Reporting Entry, 2008

[US Coal Boom Suddenly Wanes](#)

[Aged Ships a Toxic Export](#)

[EPA Acts on 'Toxic' Ship](#)

[Why National Parks, Coal-Fired Power Plants May Be Neighbors](#)

[Is Water Becoming 'the New Oil'?](#)

[Off-Road-Vehicle Bans Seem To Please No One](#)

[Do Uranium Mines Belong Near Grand Canyon?](#)

Clayton tackled an impressive array of stories with finesse. In one, he embarrassed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency into closing a longstanding agency loophole that had allowed privately owned U.S. companies to scrap commercial ships on foreign soil, thereby circumventing domestic rules for disposal of cancer-causing PCBs and other toxics. In other stories, Clayton examined anything from how freshwater shortages are becoming more acute to how national parks have become imperiled by weakened air-pollution regulations. A gutsy confrontation of bureaucrats and some good thinking outside the box by a reporter at one of the few

publications left that reports on a global scale. One judge lauded him for synthesizing a lot of material in a relatively small amount of space.

Outstanding Explanatory Reporting, Print

FIRST PLACE:

Valerie Brown, Miller-McCune Magazine

[*Environment Becomes Heredity*](#)

In “Environment Becomes Heredity,” Valerie Brown deftly explains the thorny issue of whether chemical exposure can trigger multi-generational health problems. Brown employs a solid scientific knowledge, plain English, and humor to reveal how mothers exposed to certain chemicals may be passing genetic time bombs on to their children and grandchildren. She also describes the vehicle for those inherited impacts — not DNA, but the protein structures that package all genetic materials. Brown’s ability to break down the complicated scientific details surrounding how environmental impacts can affect future generations of animals was educational and entertaining — a rare combination in a story that dives into molecular biology, toxicology and genetics.

SECOND PLACE:

Stefan Milkowski, John Wagner; Fairbanks Daily News-Miner

[*Alaska’s Changing Climate*](#)

In the same way California has become the harbinger of social change in America, Alaska is proving to be a bellwether of climate change, as Stefan Milkowski shows in his penetrating examination of the state’s shrinking ice cap, starving sea mammals, melting permafrost, beleaguered spruce forests and ailing fish stocks. Milkowski’s series, “Alaska’s Changing Climate,” in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner describes an environment in the early stages of a transformation that is already destabilizing communities and undermining ancient modes of survival. Neither alarmist nor accusatory, Milkowski thoughtfully documents the evidence of a new natural order in which people, as well as flora and fauna, face a painful and costly adaptation.

THIRD PLACE:

John Shiffman, John Sullivan, Tom Avril; The Philadelphia Inquirer

[*Smoke & Mirrors: The Subversion of the EPA*](#)

Under former president George W. Bush the Environmental Protection Agency appeared, according to this Philadelphia Inquirer series, to lose sight of the mandate embedded in its name and to become, instead, a branch of White House pro-industry policy-making. In “Smoke and Mirrors,” John Shiffman and John Sullivan, with Tom Avril contributing to one of the four-part series, describe how the agency’s leadership repeatedly favoured political and economic pressures over scientific evidence, producing compromised programs, judicial defeats and continued threats to the environment and human health. With its strong narrative style, the series is detailed but easy to understand and compelling. The writers crafted the results of exhaustive research into a presentation of anecdotes, facts and figures, and personal profiles that offers a clear point of view but is also rigorous and fair.

Outstanding Online Reporting

FIRST PLACE:

Kristen Lombardi, Steven Sunshine, Sarah Laskow, David Donald; [The Center for Public Integrity](#)

[*The Hidden Costs of Clean Coal*](#)

[*Undermined*](#)

[*The Big Seep*](#)

[*Coal Ash: The Hidden Story*](#)

Most people know that mining coal is a dirty business. Kristen Lombardi, with powerful imagery, offers readers another startling way that the reality of the industry that supplies half of America’s power falls far short of its “clean coal” public relations campaign. In her extensive report for the Center for Public Integrity, Lombardi takes readers by the hand to witness the unintended consequences of “longwall mining,” said to be a superior way to extract coal than removing entire mountaintops. With Lombardi’s powerful storytelling, we spend time with a woman after mining machines have passed underneath her home; we are there as she hears the ping and pop of nails loosening from floor joists as the earth gives way beneath her house. We meet with farmers and others who have found their land’s springs and streams have disappeared, presumably swallowed by gaping tunnels burrowed

beneath their land. Her in-depth reporting takes a difficult environmental issue and makes it intensely personal, by enabling readers to spend time with its victims. Then Lombardi delves into the dirty residue—coal ash—from coal-fired plants. She didn't just revisit the dam of the stuff that burst in Tennessee and into headlines across the United States. Instead, she explored the broader implications of coal ash befouling water and habitat around the nation. Lombardi looked at the failure of government to crack down on this pollution and at how the industry has been much more effective in working the levers of government than reworking its own practices to protect its neighbors and neighboring landscape. In an age of increasingly shallow reports dominating the Internet, it's refreshing—and vital—to see a package so richly reported and explained in such an engaging and detailed way. The interactive document library, podcast, map and video add richness to the presentation in ways that demonstrate the power of the online medium.

SECOND PLACE:

**M.B. Pell, Jillian Olsen, Jim Morris; [The Center for Public Integrity](#)
[Perils of the New Pesticides](#)**

In the series “Perils of the New Pesticides,” a team of reporters did a fantastic job mining a government database to uncover an astounding set of statistics: that pyrethrins and pyrethroids account for more than a quarter of all fatal, major and moderate cases of adverse human reaction. The report from this team assembled by the Center for Public Integrity engaged in powerful storytelling, including the horrifying death of a child presumably in a fatal allergic reaction to an anti-lice treatment. “Perils of the New Pesticides” provides a startling revelation that these purported “good” pesticides, extracted from the chrysanthemum plant rather than concocted in a lab as a new organophosphate, can have disturbing and, at times, lethal impact on humans and pets. Highlighting this rise in cases of adverse reactions is a great public service for people with asthma and allergies as well as pet owners. The interactive search added a laudable service element.

THIRD PLACE:

**James Shiffer, David Shaffer, Tom Meersman, Brian Peterson, Glenn Howatt, Mark Boswell, [www.startribune.com](#)
[Renegade Riders](#)**

The judges applaud the reporting team for making full use of online media to do what regional/city news outlets have done so well for so long: they use their special brand of expertise and passion for serving their community to bring a local issue — in this case, ATV riders destroying fragile wetlands — into stark relief for all. It's also difficult to take on vocal and occasionally abusive user groups who want to have their way with the landscape, even if their use despoils things for others, and no easier for a city news outlet to candidly reveal the foibles of product use by local businesses (i.e., potential advertisers). We salute the Star Tribune's service to its readers in this special report for those reasons, and also admire its use of interactive and video multimedia components to enrich the story package.

Outstanding Small-Market Reporting, Print

FIRST PLACE:

Lowell Brown and Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe, Denton Record-Chronicle
Behind the Shale
[Part 1, Eminent Dominance](#)
[Part 2, Perils Afoot](#)
[Part 3, Culture Clash](#)
[Part 4, Voicing the Silence](#)
[Part 5, Neighborhood Metamorphosis](#)

The Denton Record-Chronicle's series “Behind the Shale” sets the standard for reporting on environmental issues at small-circulation publications. With striking personal detail, the paper's reporters told a great behind-the-scenes story about how land deals really work in Texas. It's not a pretty sight: example after example showed how the tables are tilted to favor corporations and lawyers over residents and how little government agencies had done to curb abuses. While some of the other entries had more refined prose, the Record-Chronicle deserves the highest marks for laying bare an issue in which virtually everyone in the 18-county region of the Barnett Shale has a stake.

SECOND PLACE:

Florence Williams, High Country News

[On Cancer's Trail](#)

In "On Cancer's Trail," High Country News reporter Florence Williams tells the story of a young Navajo biologist studying breast cancer so that she can understand the high incidence of the disease in her family and community. Williams, who spent a year reporting this story as a Ted Scripps fellow at the University of Colorado, has written a compelling narrative that is striking because of the trust her sources clearly felt for her and because of the complexity of the issues she describes — including the legacy of uranium mining and waste on Navajo land, the particular challenges of environmental cancer research, and emerging findings about uranium's estrogenic effects. In very human terms, Williams' piece brings to light an important, intricate story. It is an outstanding work of journalism.

THIRD PLACE:

J. Madeleine Nash, High Country News

[Back to the Future](#)

"The earth warmed considerably some 55 million years ago," is the quiet way J. Madeleine Nash begins her story in the High Country News, a small Colorado magazine, before asking, "what does that tell us about our current climate dilemma?" And the answer she provides is terrifying. Her "beat" in this case is the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, an interval of around 150,000 years when the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming came to resemble today's coastal Carolinas. This is science journalism at its best — accurate, brilliantly expressed and linked precisely to our own world. As her editor at High Country News, Jonathan Thompson, observed, Nash was able to bring together strong scholarship and storytelling in "Back to the Future"...and for that she deserves recognition — as does her publisher.

Outstanding Story, Television, Large Market

FIRST PLACE:

Christopher Bauer, Jenny Oh, Josh Rosen, Laurie Schmidt, Paul Rogers; KQED 9 San Francisco

[Quest: Tagging Pacific Predators](#)

Outstanding visuals, strong interviews and great narration make this KQED story an example of truly great environmental reporting. The Quest team unveiled the story about project TOPP, or Tagging of Pacific Predators, clearly, thoroughly and dramatically. Large sea inhabitants like blue fin tuna, giant leatherback turtles, manta rays and sharks are caught and fitted with electronic tags that relay information via satellite, bringing science to what Warner Chabot, then vice president of the Ocean Conservancy, called "the verge of a virtual information explosion." The data give scientists a better grip on what goes on in the vast areas of water, presently so little understood. The sea's inhabitants, acting as scouts, relay information about the watery environment — depth, temperature, light levels — and the tagged critters' movements — where they congregate, how far they travel in a day, giving a better picture of marine-life behavior.

Chabot summed it up: "If you inform and inspire the public, you will empower the public to respond." KQED and the Quest team have certainly informed and inspired. Well done!

SECOND PLACE:

Betty Ann Bowser, Patti Parson, Catherine Wise, The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer

[Louisiana Landfills Report](#)

Betty Ann Bowser succeeded in searching for, and finding, a powerful human story to illuminate the problems facing New Orleans residents hurt not just by the hurricane, but by the hurricane recovery. This is a difficult story that required reporting from within a culturally and economically "hidden" community. The Vietnamese farmer, no longer able to sell or eat his own crops for fear of contamination, speaks more loudly than any politician or official could to the unintended consequences of the Katrina cleanup effort. Building on that human story, this reporter probed deeply into how operators escaped the legal requirements to line their landfills. Betty opens a window for the audience into the many legal loopholes from which massive human and environmental problems are born. The cumulative power of Betty's many and diverse sources adds layers of impact to a story that unfolds logically and clearly over several minutes.

THIRD PLACE:

Daniel Sieberg, Paul Sedia, Jack Renaud, Eric Teed, Joe Frandino, CBS News
[*What's Killing the Bats of the Northeast?*](#)

In a short, concise and thoughtfully worded piece, Daniel Sieberg gives viewers an exceptionally broad spectrum of issues to consider. Rather than write declaratively about what is causing the bats' decline, Daniel trusts the audience to understand, as scientists do, that the problem is complicated, that the research is difficult to conduct, and that answers aren't always so easily found as we might like. By following Daniel into the caves with scientists, we are made to care about the world of the bats. When we see researchers working up close, in the dark, and speaking passionately about the loss of these creatures, the implications of losing bats becomes vividly clear — even for those who would not care to ever lay eyes on a bat in person.

Outstanding Story, Television, Small Market

FIRST PLACE:

Jim Parsons, Kendall Cross, Michael Lazorko, WTAE-TV Pittsburgh, PA
[*Drill Baby Drill*](#)

This is the kind of outstanding environmental journalism that every newsroom should commit to report. Parsons examined the complicated issue of natural gas drilling and the impact it has on water volume in rivers and creeks and managed to tell the story in a visually compelling and impactful way. His reporting was balanced and complete with eye-opening results. In particular, the line of trucks sucking all of the water out of a river won't easily be forgotten.

Outstanding Student Reporting

FIRST PLACE:

Mimi Abebe, Melissa Drozda, Cassie Fleming, Alex Haueter, Lucas Jameson, Kosuke Koiwai, Aaron Price, Kate Veik; University of Nebraska - Lincoln
[*Ethanol: Salvation or Damnation?*](#) (Magazine available in August online.)

The ethanol report was well-reported and exhaustive. The students took a vital issue in their community and shone a light on a wide variety of angles. That they went far enough to find people in their community affected by ethanol's varied impacts — from farmers to families shopping for tortillas — made this a clear-cut winner.

SECOND PLACE:

Sonia Narang, UC Berkeley Journalism School, Frontline/World
[*India's Uranium Town*](#)

The uranium series was challenging to report and the student journalist pulled it off. It was good to get multiple perspectives on the story — those views are sometimes easy to overlook in documentary-style reports such as these.

THIRD PLACE:

Meghan Foley, Melissa Ball, Randy Booth, Casie Brown, Ian Lord; The Equinox (Keene State College student newspaper)
[*Getting the Lead Out*](#)

Keene's series on lead demonstrated the kind of reportorial tenacity that forms the important foundation for accountability journalism. The Keene College students are to be commended for taking a good story and running with it. Very nice work on a local story, with use of a variety of sources, including FOIA-type work. Something to be proud of.