



SEJ Journal

Spring 2013, Vol. 23 No. 1

SPECIAL REPORT

Voice of the Planet: Is Journalism Ready for Energy, Climate Story?

NEW COLUMN: 'Freelance Files' on Goal Setting

Green Films Star at Sundance Festival

Reporter's Toolbox: Tracking Illegal Park Conversions

A quarterly publication of the

Society of Environmental Journalists

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Cover Photo: Brilliant nocturnal illumination etches the continents of the Western Hemisphere as they creep toward the solar dawn, captured by a polar orbiting satellite in a composite view of the whole planet made between April and October, 2012. The way we produce, distribute and consume energy is experiencing cyclic changes of its own; so is the way future journalists will report it. Coverage of both the big picture and small begins on page 6.
Credit: NASA Earth Observatory image by Robert Simmon

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Members Weigh in As Board Considers 'SEJ 3.0'

By DON HOPEY

So two newsy things, kinda related.

I want to pass along some results from SEJ's fall 2012 member survey, and also an update on the board's just-launched review of our organization's programs and services, an effort we are calling, not without some hope (or is it hype?) — "SEJ 3.0."

The member survey was filled out by more than 200 members out of 1300-plus members, including 172 journalists, almost two-thirds of them freelancers, and 46 academics and students. The self-selected, unscientific sampling confirmed some things we mostly all know, and also contained a few revealing insights:

- More than half of those responding said SEJ connections provided a good source of story ideas, improved their skills and helped them do a better job reporting. One-quarter said SEJ helped them stay in journalism.
- One in 10 respondents had been to more than 10 SEJ conferences, a quarter had attended at least two but fewer than five, but 34 percent hadn't been to any.
- SEJ programs and services graded as very valuable by more than half of respondents included the annual conference (65 percent), SEJ-TALK (54 percent) and the daily news digest SEJ-BEAT (52 percent). Others with high plus ratings included *SEJournal* (46 percent), the Fund for Environmental Journalism (41 percent), SEJ Awards program (39 percent) and the Freedom of Information *WatchDog TipSheet* (38 percent).
- Several SEJ offerings were unknown to a large number of members. Those included the diversity program, unknown to 41 percent; the mentoring program, unknown to 28 percent; and webinars, unknown to 27 percent.
- Asked what kinds of new programs and services they'd like to see SEJ provide, more than 60 percent said they had strong interest in tipsheets and reporting guides on emerging issues; new regional activities like "pub nights;" online publication of long-form environmental journalism; workshops on the craft of journalism; and an email newsletter containing news tips, SEJ news, member spotlights and other news of interest.
- Less support was expressed for new program suggestions for text messages containing SEJ information and new publications or services tailored for mobile devices.
- Asked if they would recommend membership in SEJ to other journalists, 96 percent of the survey respondents said they would. A little more than half said they were happy with their "level of engagement" with the organization, and many of those who weren't shouldered the blame, saying it was because they were too busy earning a living.

Respondent comments exposed some common themes. Several said the organization was an "inspiration," provided "camaraderie" and "community," and was a "lifeline." But a few find us "cliquish." Several said the conference is valuable for its "networking" and a number praised the listservs. Others want more regional activities, including regional conferences, and there was also demand for more training programs and services benefitting freelancers. Some like *SEJournal* in its printed form while others said dead-tree delivery is not the future.

That's all good information, and there's much more that will help inform the board as it assesses the rationale, functionality and finances for all SEJ programs, publications and services. Our goal is to produce a more sustainable operation that maximizes SEJ's effectiveness and meets the needs of journalists and the organization's journalistic mission.

We will need to think creatively. The programs and policies we have are familiar and they mostly serve our members well. But they are only one way to approach doing that job. If budget pressures require it — we're getting less funding from big foundation grants and need to raise more from smaller grants, earned income and membership — we may need to figure out a different way to do that job, or not do programs that are good but not essential.

Board committees are at work reviewing membership, operations, publications, finances and events. At the board's meeting in Seattle at the end of April, we'll be looking at all of SEJ's offerings from top to bottom and asking what its core functions are. And what are its aptitudes and capacities? Where can the organization afford to invest our financial and human resources?

There are hard decisions ahead about the functions SEJ will pursue and what form they will take. The review will be successful if the board can examine SEJ's programs and services with an eye on what is valuable to members and should be preserved, and what new initiatives are needed to serve the present and future of this Society of Environmental Journalists.

Don Hopey has covered the environment beat at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette since 1993. He also teaches an environmental issues and policy class with a writing component at the University of Pittsburgh, and for the last five summers has been an instructor for the public lands issues and fly fishing section of the Pitt Honors College Yellowstone Field Course.



Goal-Setting 101: You Must Lose a Fly to Catch a Trout

Editor's Note: Freelance Files is a regular column for and by SEJ freelancers. A rotating cast of journalists share hard-earned wisdom here about myriad aspects of weaving a life and business out of their independent status. SEJournal welcomes submissions for this column. Contact Freelance Files editor Sharon Oosthoek at soosthoek@gmail.com.

By CHRISTINE WOODSIDE

Early in my freelance career, a successful writer giving a talk about his six-figure income reminded me that I am a business owner. Hearing this made me sit up a little straighter and remember the "free" part of freelancing — choosing my work. But of course, with freedom comes responsibility.

As business owners, we must make a business plan that plays to our talents, enthusiasm and energy. Every year since 2000, when I left my staff newspaper job and started freelancing full-time, I list business goals, by hand, in spiral-bound notebooks I keep.

The goals can be idea-driven (write about dying lobsters), financial (propose adding tasks to editing contract for x-percent increase), practical (use a telephone log, open a business checking account). Two or three times throughout the year, I revisit and often change the plan.

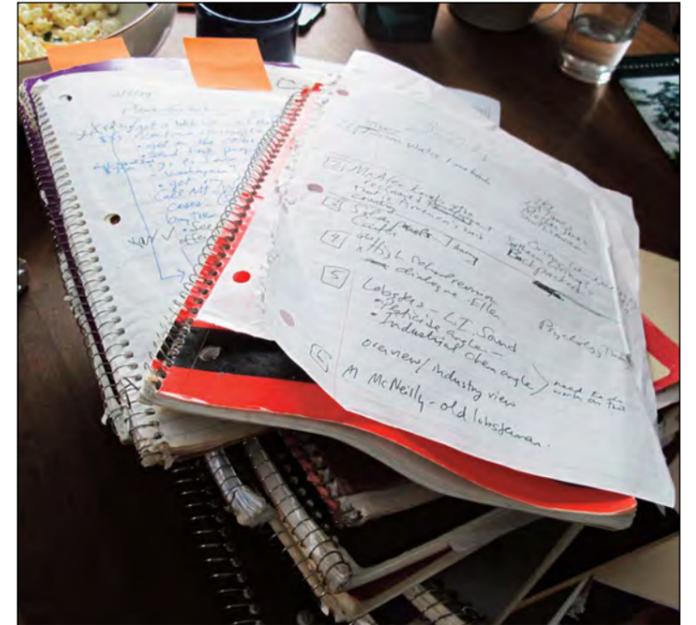
Working this way, I have tried, perfected, and occasionally rejected enterprises that many freelancers consider classic doctrine. First, I no longer feel I must sell a story to an editor before starting to work on it. That's because I write about forgotten stories and people often enough that my ideas are too quirky to sell quickly every time.

Second, I used to use my reporting for multiple articles. I don't feel I have to do that anymore.

So, early in my freelancing career, I wrote about the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut for Preservation Online, *The New York Times*, and a quarterly, *Connecticut Woodlands*. I reported on wild birds taking over an inaccessible city park on a beach peninsula for *Connecticut Woodlands* and Connecticut Public Radio. I wrote about taking my young daughters backpacking for an anthology, and for *The New York Times*. And when *The Atlantic Monthly* rejected a proposal after much discussion, I turned around and sold the proposal — which needed no additional reporting — as an op-ed to the *Washington Post*.

Those projects were great. But for every time I sold another one, I also spent untold hours, days, months, years, trying to resell these projects to outlets that ignored me or said no. I concluded that I was losing money by sticking to this concept of reselling reporting. I still use my knowledge again and again, but I no longer think in terms of repackaging. I feel more creative and energized this way.

Setting and reaching for these targets over twelve years have



Several years of the author's spiral notebooks, containing lists of goals and business plans. Photo © Christine Woodside

vaulted me from regional newspaper reporter to magazine and book writer and occasional radio journalist. Without dreams, I stagnate.

Some of the enterprises my goal list put me up to didn't go so well. It felt to me as if some schemes ripened fast into rotten fruit. I now think of those ambitions as mistakes, but in truth, they were good, too. Mistakes have taught me to better recognize those other goals that do lead somewhere.

2010, a case study in goal setting

The objectives I set for 2010, and their outcome, illustrate the value of both good and bad goals. As 2009 wound down and the nation recoiled at the financial crisis, I noticed that my gross receipts for the year had dipped a little.

I set six goals. Three were money-saving goals:

- I'd sublet the office I'd been renting for a decade and work from my house.
- I'd look for a new contract for regular work (on top of what I was doing).
- I wouldn't take a vacation unless it would yield paying work.

I know now that this list combined two misguided fantasies: that I was like environmental writer Wendell Berry or home-steading gurus Helen and Scott Nearing, or any number of environmental sages whose writing incorporated a deep understanding of their homes.

I know many writers who thrive working at home. I would learn that year that I don't. At home I occasionally procrastinated and wanted to putter around the kitchen. More often I worked all the time. The work day bled into the night. I never "went home" because I never left.

In 2011, I took my office back. (My subletter had never used it! I guess he's not like me. He did pay the rent, though.) After my big goodbye of the previous year, I ate some crow with my landlord, who billed me for another sign with my name on it. Lesson learned — and a good one. I need a geographic shift in order to

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Is Environmental Journalism Ready for the Path Ahead?

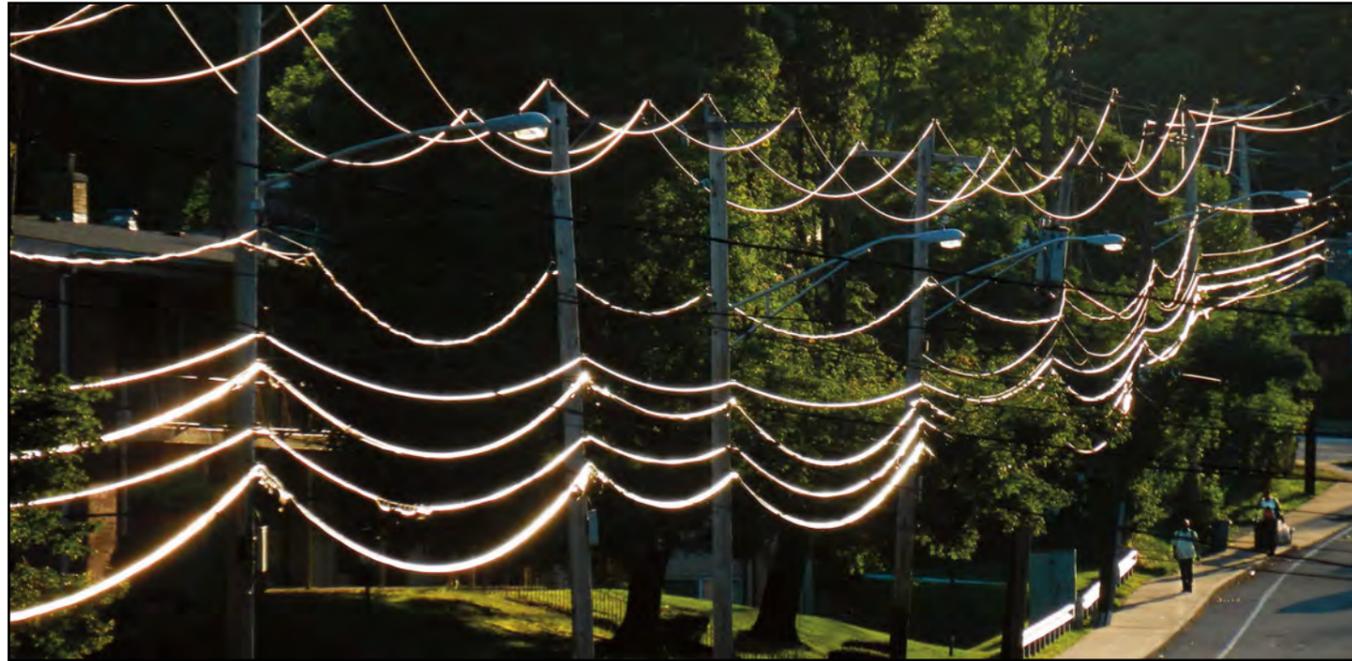


Photo: © Roger Archibald

As is often the case, patterns come into view over time and with many eyes. So as *SEJournal* editors started to put together seemingly disparate stories for this issue on climate change and energy policy, we began to see how deeply interconnected they actually were. To help our readers reflect on their interlocking facets, we've grouped a series of stories together in this special report to help make your reporting on energy and climate change more effective.

The resulting package includes two climate pieces: A thoughtful essay from veteran climate change/media observer Bud Ward asking how well journalism is poised to cover climate

change, and a report from SEJ's Jay Letto on workshops aimed at bridging the scientist-journalist gap in communicating about climate change.

The special report also includes two pieces on energy policy: Insights from an SEJ-organized panel that spotlighted developments and trends to watch for in the coming year, and the dos and don'ts of covering the energy beat from freelance energy reporter Jennifer Weeks.

We hope that the same way these trends came into focus for us, this coverage helps you make sense of and navigate what's ahead.

What's Coming in Energy? Veteran Reporters Look Ahead

Editor's Note: What big energy issues will emerge on the reporting agenda for the year to come? To find out, the SEJ convened a panel of top-flight environmental journalists at the Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington D.C. Jan. 25, 2013. Taking part were John Sullivan of Bloomberg BNA, Margaret Kriz Hobson of EnergyWire, Peter Behr of EnergyWire and ClimateWire, Dina Cappiello of AP, Peter Thomson of PRI's The World and Bud Ward of The Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media. In an edited transcript, here's what they see coming this year and beyond.

Dina Cappiello: Environmental regulations are going to be

used to start changing our energy portfolio. The EPA has a huge role in that. It has a bunch of power plant rules. Existing power plants are the whole enchilada, because if you look at doing greenhouse gas standards for new power plants, there are no new power plants in the pipeline. They're all pretty clean natural gas. So until you deal with the long, multi-decade-old grandfathering of existing power plants, you're kind of avoiding the issue. That is where the bang for the buck is.

If we don't burn coal here, that's great, but it's going to go overseas and be burnt elsewhere, and the plants there are going to be probably less efficient and more polluting, and this is a much big-

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COVERING CLIMATE

Are Journalists up to the Task? More Important — Is Journalism? E-Reporting Biz



By BUD WARD

How well is American journalism poised to cover the climate change story now?

The question is especially timely given expectations for final release over the coming months of federal research agencies' "National Climate Assessment," the nomination of former EPA air director Gina McCarthy as the new EPA administrator and of a new NOAA administrator, and of the scheduled initial release this fall of IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report.

What's more, rapid and troubling changes in the journalism field continue apace: *The New York Times'* decision to eliminate its specialized environment and climate "desk," and the paper's scrapping of its "Green" blog, which had been an outlet for freelancers, along with the continued cuts in specialized environmental coverage at other newspapers and the demise of valued outlets such as *The Phoenix* in Boston.

Let's say, for purposes of argument, that there is an adequate supply of journalists and journalist-wannabes — many of them no doubt among SEJ's own members — eager to sufficiently cover the innumerable challenges that make this uniquely "generational" set of climate challenges so journalistically demanding.

Granted that the bench could always be longer, and deeper too. But the talent is there for the asking, ready now and tomorrow and in the coming decades to take on the reporting and editing challenges associated with all that comes under the infinite umbrella of human-caused climate change.

But that begs the question, which, rightly so, involves not "journalists" but rather the institution of "journalism." It's a much more thorny question, and the answers are likely to be less self-gratifying, and far less comforting.

Can an institution in crisis cope with climate story?

If we assume American journalism is in fact "well poised," that still leaves open only the question of just how well poised.

No doubt there could always be more — more column inches, more air minutes, more continuing education opportunities, and gobs more Twitter tweets and Facebook friends and followers and all-things-digital. They're there, as stated earlier, "for the asking." The

issue comes down to whether their editors and news managers and salary payers — and their audiences — indeed are doing the asking.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

It's in fact cruel irony that these most pressing, yet in some ways incomprehensible, climate challenges come at a time of historic unease and transition in the media business. That's a term perhaps more apt now than ever before to the day-to-day practice of journalism in the U.S.

There are, after all, sound reasons that climate change is con-

It's a cruel irony that these most pressing climate challenges come at a time of historic unease and transition in the media business.

sidered a "generational issue," and, what's more, a "wicked" one both for communicators to speak to and for the public at large to understand and confront.

No matter how effective today's journalists and today's journalism are in tackling the climate conundrum, the problems it presents may well be ultimately unfixable. We can manage them, yes. But "solve" them? Most likely no.

Climate change poses a broad set of insidious societal, economic, political and (yes) environmental challenges that our children and theirs will still be wrestling with long after we've passed, or dropped, the baton. And wrestling, that is, as direct and indirect victims of its adverse impacts, but also as journalists and other communicators and educators striving to better inform the public generally.

With its most serious and most highly visible impacts still remote for many, both in time and in distance, and with carbon dioxide, the most important single greenhouse gas, both odorless and invisible, it's hard for many to visualize the myriad problems careening down the road toward us. Further compounding the challenge is the difficulty in assessing blame, and with it responsibility — the fact that there's no single or even institutional "black hat," no Megabucks Inc., no single villain.

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Changing the Language of Climate Change

By JAY LETTO

For years, we've heard over and over about how X parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 2050 will leave us with a 90 percent chance that ... Huh? Whatever!

This kind of language has left a large percentage of the general populace confused and vulnerable to disinformation about climate change. But last year — thanks in part to workshops run by SEJ — we witnessed a noticeable change in the science community's tone, as well as its ability to cut through misinformation on climate change with straight-forward language indicating its serious immediacy. And importantly, we hear scientists finally start talking about climate change in present tense.

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation, SEJ partnered with the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University to organize two climate change communications workshops that brought scientists and journalists together in an effort to break the molds of traditional communication and brainstorm over methods, styles and language that might best reach the general public. The SEJ workshops asked several questions:

- Is climate change so big and bad as to merit public service journalism similar to civil rights?
- Are there ways that scientists and journalists can collaborate, or at least cooperate, more directly to tell this story better?
- How can scientists become better messengers, and how can they avoid being misquoted, or taken out of context, in media stories?
- How can journalists get the quotes they need to tell the urgency of this story from scientists only willing to give the facts?
- Is it time to separate the general scientific consensus on climate change from the larger political debate in mainstream climate change stories?

The first workshop was held in Cleveland, Ohio, at the Great Lakes Science Center on June 9, 2012, bringing together about 15 scientists and 15 journalists from across the region. We heard from speakers on topics like human health, Great Lakes impacts and adaptation, and the sociology of climate change communications. Then we convened various role-playing exercises, e.g., the scientists and journalists worked together in groups of four to come up with the top stories from the speakers' presentations, including headlines, ledes and main thrusts of the articles.

We encountered everything from total resistance to openly embracing the notion of closer collaboration between science and journalism communities in telling the climate change story. But all



Journalists and scientists board pontoon boats on Gull Lake to talk about water temperature, algal blooms and changes in aquatic ecology.

Photo © Adam Hinterthuer

agreed that the issue was important enough to explore all options to communicate the story better.

The second workshop, July 8-10, 2012, was held at Michigan State University's Kellogg Biological Station on Gull Lake in southwestern Michigan. KBS is a Long-Term Ecological Research, or LTER, station focusing mostly on agriculture and fresh water systems.

We partnered 12 scientists and 12 journalists from the Great Lakes regions one-on-one with pre-conference homework, had them room together at KBS, and present together during the workshops.

Workshops bridged scientist-journalist gaps

We received rave reviews in evaluations from last year's workshops. Here's a sampling:

"I have learned much more about framing the issue and the challenges that are presented... and also somewhat more about what makes a story to journalists."

"I already had high confidence about environmental as opposed to 'beat' journalists. But it has increased even more. I've learned that their passion about the story is just as high as my own as a scientist."

"I have a greater appreciation for the complexities surrounding the communications challenges scientists face, and I understand that they aren't the same for each scientist."

"I think one of the most important lessons learned from this workshop is that scientists and journalists telling the story of climate change are working from very similar perspectives. Both groups want to find essential truths, convenient or not, and interpret them for the public."

New focus on regional engagement

The one-on-one pairing of the Michigan workshop worked very well for many reasons, and we'll be repeating it in future workshops, including one planned for KBS this June that will again partner 12 scientists with 12 journalists. Only this time we're bringing the scientists in from among the LTER sites across the country and will partner them with journalists from their region.

If, for most people, climate change feels remote, like it's some-

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Elephant Wrangling on the Energy Beat

By JENNIFER WEEKS

More than one observer has compared covering energy to the folk tale about the blind men who try to describe an elephant, and end up shouting at each other because they've each grasped a different part of the beast and believe their portion represents the whole thing.

Writing last year in *Grist*, David Roberts neatly summarized the challenge:

"[T]here is no singular 'energy journalism,' only various tribes with various beats... There are finance and business journalists who cover energy as a commodity business, tracking global supply and demand flows, prices, futures trading, all that sort of stuff. There are business and tech journalists who focus on clean tech. There are environmental journalists, who tend to cover energy (when they do it) through the lens of enviros vs. polluters. And there are political journalists who cover energy as a campaign and/or policy issue, sometimes as a specialty, more often as part of a portfolio."

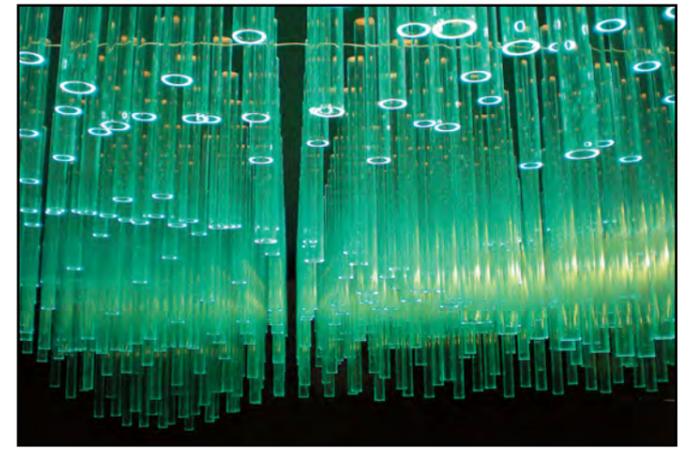
If the many angles of energy reporting are a challenge, then stories that address more than one dimension are likely to be better than articles that describe only one. As an example, consider ProPublica's award-winning coverage of the natural gas fracking boom. This expansive series (147 stories as of mid-March) includes many detailed accounts of harmful impacts to land, water and air from fracking operations, but it has also looked closely at the issue from other angles, including the adequacy of federal and state oversight, impacts on Native Americans, and pushback from local communities.

Most journalists don't have anywhere near that kind of scope, but it's possible to consider energy from several angles even in a single article. In a March 7 story for *The Guardian* ("Energy Poverty Deprives 1 Billion of Adequate Healthcare, Says Report," flagged by Andrew Revkin's Dot Earth blog), Claire Prevost summarized a report from the NGO Practical Action on "energy poverty" — the social impacts of living without access to reliable energy supplies in low-income countries. It's not news that energy networks are patchy and unreliable in India, Kenya and many other developing nations. But this story focused on human impacts of those shortages, such as clinics that can't offer vaccines because they have no refrigerators to store them, and children who try to learn in dark classrooms during blackouts.

Examples like these show how central energy is to modern life, and why energy demand is growing sharply in the developing world.

Avoid the 'gee whiz' and the lazy

The flip side is true — if multidimensional stories make good energy journalism, then one-dimensional stories make bad energy



Once destined to contribute to the country's solar power development, almost 1,600 specially designed glass tubes instead ended up as part of a public art exhibit named Sol Grotto 4 at the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, after they were abandoned at a San Jose, Calif., warehouse following the bankruptcy of Solyndra. In like manner, energy stories can take unexpected, circuitous and possibly even fortuitous twists and turns. Photo: ©Ron Sullivan

journalism. One archetype to avoid is the gee-whiz technology story, which breathlessly predicts that some new concept — an exotic biofuel, a Generation-X reactor design — will be a revolutionary breakthrough, without any discussion of cost, risk, regulatory hurdles, or other speed bumps that the technology may face.

Similarly, lazy reporting on energy politics boils complex public choices down to dueling slogans ("Drill, baby, drill!"/"All of the above"), but lets officials maintain contradictory positions like praising free markets while voting for ethanol subsidies.

Knowing some history of U.S. energy policy, and of technologies that have been tried before, can offer valuable perspective on current debates. For example, in assessing expansive projections of recoverable energy from shale oil, it's useful to know (as Margaret Kriz Hobson wrote in 2012, <http://www.eenews.net/public/energywire/2012/04/09/1>) that oil shale production has cycled through booms and busts in the United States for more than a century, but the technology has yet to be proven.

And no journalist should write about the idea of achieving energy independence without watching Jon Stewart's "Daily Show" review of pledges from presidents Nixon through Obama to reach that goal: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/wed-june-16-2010/an-energy-independent-future>

Advice on improving your energy reporting

Here, from an unscientific survey of a half-dozen energy experts with experience in state government, utility regulation and environmental NGOs, are some additional suggestions for improving energy coverage:

- Challenge dogma and assumptions by all sides — policy makers, environmentalists and businesses. Be skeptical of assertions that any single source — coal, wind, conservation — can meet all or most of our needs.

- Corollary: Do the math. It doesn't require calculus to test ideas like former Vice President Al Gore's 2008 proposal to generate 100 percent of U.S. electricity from zero-carbon sources within a decade. Start with reference sources like the U.S. Energy Information Administration (www.eia.gov) and the International Energy Agency (www.iea.org), but be aware that even respected agencies

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Special Report...Veteran Reporters, continued

ger problem. That's also something to consider in the year ahead, especially with John Kerry at State [Department]. That's going to be a pretty interesting choice; although he personally is obviously a climate warrior legislatively, and philosophically. Coming up in international negotiations will be what mechanisms we will use to curb our greenhouse gas emissions, and without a mechanism, China's not going to get on board. These big emitters aren't going to get on board if we say, 'Hey, we're going to just do efficiency standards here and there.' It's not going to work. We need something bold.

John Sullivan: Keystone [XL pipeline] will be one. There are a lot of economic interests that want the pipeline to happen, but environmental groups are very concerned that that's going to further promote the use of fossil fuels. But also flying a little bit below the radar — the coal industry is trying to export a lot of coal to China, and the administration will have to make a decision soon on the scope



The "Environmental Issues: What's Trending in 2013" panel included (l. to r.) John Sullivan, Bloomberg BNA's director of environmental news; moderator Margaret Kriz Hobson of E&E Publishing's *EnergyWire*; Dina Cappiello, national environment/energy reporter at the Associated Press; Peter Behr, public policy scholar at the Wilson Center; Bud Ward, editor at the Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media; and Peter Thomson, environmental editor at PRI's "The World." Photo: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

of the environmental assessment it'll be doing, whether to include greenhouse gas emissions as part of the usual environmental impact statement. The EPA weighed in last year on this and said, 'Perhaps you should take a look at greenhouse gas emissions in China from the export of coal there.' The Army Corps of Engineers, which will have to be doing that impact statement, seems to be of a different mind, although no decision has been made yet. But it's something we'll be looking at, certainly.

Looking at vehicle fuel economy standards, there may be another round of standards for heavy duty vehicles coming as early as the end of this year — a proposal, anyway. EPA will also be doing new gasoline standards to try to lower the sulfur content in gasoline. Lastly, on the regulatory front, the Energy Department has a number of energy-efficiency standards that they've been working on for a number of years. They have been bottled up at the Office of Management and Budget under review, and the thinking is that those may be able to see the light of day.

Peter Behr: My focus has been on the regulation of the shale gas boom, hydraulic fracturing, horizontal drilling. And that's a story,

as you know, that has been written much more at the state level than at the federal level. Congress in 2005 took away from EPA the power to regulate hydraulic fracturing under the Drinking Water Act, and so the primary control and oversight of fracking and horizontal drilling and shale gas development has been at the states. Now that doesn't mean that EPA and President Obama don't face some tough decisions about how they really regard this shale gas resource, which can be, as is often said, a true game-changer for the U.S. energy picture, with two ifs: if it can be produced economically and profitably, and that is an open question, and second, if it can be produced in a safe and responsible way so that there are not serious spills and accidents and contamination that really knock out public confidence in this resource.

One of the challenges the administration will face is whether to revise the new source performance standards they issued last year affecting the shale gas wells and hydraulic fracturing. The rules that they have issued do not directly regulate methane emissions, and the air quality issues involving shale gas development are within the scope of what EPA can do. The interesting question here is that the standards that were issued last year don't specifically address, or may not address, so-called wet gas development and oil development.

Now, because the price of natural gas has dropped so low, you see all of the companies are switching away from dry gas to the production of wet gas, which is methane that is also laced with ethane and butane, and so-called wet gases, which are priced in relation to oil, have a lot of value, and continue to be produced, and that's where a lot of the drilling is going on, in search of wet gas and in search of oil. The problem is that when you get wet gas and you ship that out to make ethylene and polyethylene, you also get a fair amount of natural gas, sometimes a lot of methane. What are you going to do

with it? You can flare it, and you can just vent it and let it go into the atmosphere. Methane, as you all know, is a very powerful greenhouse gas. So that's an issue that environmentalists hope to force on the EPA and there may be lawsuits that would take that issue and put it directly on EPA's plate.

Margaret Kriz Hobson: An issue on my plate right now in the energy field is Arctic drilling. Last summer, Shell had technical problems and was not able to secure the permits that would allow it to drill for oil. The question is, what about this year? Well, they've started off this year with a real bang. They had one of their drill rigs run aground in the Gulf of Alaska, and the second one has some pollution problems that they're dealing with — they need two operating rigs in order to actually begin oil drilling in the Arctic, because you need one to back up the other in case there's a blowout. So the oil drilling in the American Arctic, it's very, very much up in the air this year.

Peter Thomson: China's demand for coal, and the demand of the rest of the world for coal. Our demand for coal is shrinking con-

siderably, and is at a 40-year low, in large part because of the natural gas flood, and increasing efficiency during the recession. We have lots of coal, and our coal industry wants to export it to the rest of the world. There is huge demand in China, and China's demand for resources is going to swamp the other efforts of everybody else to deal with their own environmental issues. Australia is an analogous situation to the U.S. in terms of its politics, its demographics and

Fracking is not just a big issue here in the U.S.; it is exploding all around the world.

economics, and they have been addressing climate change and are way ahead of us. They have passed a carbon tax after a huge battle, which was very much like our battle here. They are making big pushes into renewable energy, but they have a huge coal industry there — and they are making big efforts to start shipping their coal to China and elsewhere. Which one of those is going to have a bigger effect on Australia's climate footprint? That's one of the big things that is going to be played out, as it is here.

Fracking is not just a big issue here in the U.S.; it is exploding all around the world. In some respects, this has really blown the idea of oil out of the water. The problem now is that we have too much. As far as we look into the future we've got more than we could possibly burn. So there are going to be a lot of battles about fracking and energy extraction around the world.

There are a lot of battles over nuclear power. Two really inter-

Freelance Files...continued

lead a productive life.

Another error in 2010: I found more work, all right. I was already writing magazine and web articles and editing two environmental journals. I thought I could take on another project, so I began covering the environment for a new website in Connecticut. I wrote many articles I was proud of, but the editor and I did not click. Nothing I did for him ever was right until the third try. I had moved on from short-form breaking news writer to magazine writer, and I could no longer switch gears back and forth from genre to genre. It hurt, but I called him up six months into the project and asked to move on. No hard feelings.

Goals with a gain

But I was not all wet. I made some sensible goals in 2010:

- Make every editor to be a repeat client. (My website designer told me he does this with his clients. It motivated me to keep communication open with editors.)

- Post new material each week to my website. Even if I don't make this goal, it nags at me to pound out something that's been on my mind for my section called "Get This." Or, I'll post another of my new articles. That goal ensures that my website will not be some neat thing I spent thousands on — but a tool to make me money.

- Draft the book about Laura Ingalls Wilder I'd been researching for years. This of course has occupied me for great hunks of time ever since. I have made major progress on four chapters, and I'm writing my book proposal. Because of this goal, I signed up for a class with a narrative nonfiction teacher, Mark Kramer, and every month or so the class meets in his kitchen. I have to show up

esting laboratories for the nuclear question and the balance against renewables are Japan and Germany. Japan is an involuntary laboratory; they are in an emergency situation. Germany is in a voluntary situation; they are trying to phase out nuclear power. They are both having growing pains and tensions around both of those; they are going to be interesting places to look at to see how countries wean themselves off of these technologies that have huge sunken costs and institutional momentum behind them.

On energy, there are a lot of interesting innovations. There is interesting stuff going on below the radar about renewable energy. In many places, there were pushes by NGOs and governments to try to find ways to get

solar, wind and other renewable energies on line. They haven't worked out very well. What you are finding in places like India and Pakistan, Africa, East Africa and elsewhere is that failures of governments to bring reliable energy to their people are actually creating a market for renewable energy among people who can afford it. And that is happening on all kinds of different levels, from rich people in Pakistan to rural folks in Kenya. People are starting to find ways to buy this stuff because they can't get it through the market, and that is a really interesting shift over the last few years.

Thanks to Wilson Center's Carolyn Lamere and Maria Prebble for their transcription of the panel. To view a video of the panel in its entirety and to read an additional news writeup, visit <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-year-ahead-environment-and-energy>.

with new drafts.

I talk about 2010 because it was a watershed year. I did work I'd never tried before and really understood my limitations, especially where time is concerned. Taking on that extra contract late in 2010 increased my gross receipts by more than seven per cent for the entire year. So it was decent income.

But as the editor and I struggled to work together, my malaise increased by an undetermined percentage. I had forgotten two hard-won lessons from goals I'd established very early in my freelance career:

- Match my skills and interests with work that delivers a good hourly wage. (Sometimes do work without concern for money, but only when other reasons are obvious.)

- Rent an office outside of the house. I might work at home some days, but I must have that outside discipline.

My handwritten business plans, usually penned during the chilly winter evenings each year, change as the realities of my personality, talents and the workplace smooth them out. Without a plan, though, I don't move forward. I know after all of these years that time spins wisdom out of all this goal-following.

Christine Woodside has been freelancing for twelve and a half years. She has written for outlets, including *Nature Climate Change*, *The New York Times*, *The Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media*, *Popular Mechanics online*, *Appalachia Journal (which she edits)*, *Audubon*, *New England Watershed and Connecticut Explored*. She wrote "Energy Independence" (*Lyons Press, 2009*). She's writing a book about Laura Ingalls Wilder and the pioneer myth. She lives in Connecticut.

Broken Promise: Database Helps Track Illegal Parkland Conversions

By **ROBERT McCLURE AND JASON ALCORN**

As government budgets increasingly come under the knife, a frequently advocated proposal is to close parks. Meanwhile, cash-strapped state and local governments have long sought to sell off parks or parts of them, and that trend appears to have accelerated as government budgets contracted in recent years.

But you know what? In many cases, these closures and sell-offs are illegal under federal law. There is almost certainly a story in your state — and pretty likely one right there in your region or city — about how parks built or improved with money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, or LWCF, have been privatized or otherwise improperly converted to something other than parks.

InvestigateWest, the Seattle-based newsroom where we work, looked into this trend and last year documented several high-profile examples. But it's a national phenomenon that our small staff couldn't hope to track comprehensively on our own. Our entreaty to you here is to figure out if it's happening in your part of the country.

InvestigateWest has for the first time made the complete list of almost 40,000 park grants available in an easily searchable database. That's an important first step, but more remains to be done. (Find how to use the database here: <http://www.invw.org/article/lwcf-grants-database-1283>.)

Oil offshore, land for parks onshore

In an era when diabetes rates are skyrocketing, the promise of public outdoor recreation forever embodied in the LWCF is more important than ever. It was a noble idea with roots in the late 1950s and early 1960s: Let's make sure Americans have places to exercise and stay healthy.

To ensure a steady source of funding, Congress decreed that a percentage of federal revenues from offshore oil drilling — which



On the shores of Lake Michigan, a private golf course and housing development, seen here in 2009, sit on public land once protected under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. Photo by Robert McClure/InvestigateWest

was then just taking off, and seemed poised to result in at least some environmental damage — delivered something to the citizenry.

That was the promise: Land for parks onshore, for every American, in exchange for probable offshore damage from the likes of the Deepwater Horizon. Some of the new parkland would be federal, but lots of money would flow to the states and local governments to open or improve their own stretches of green.

And that's where the promise broke down. State and local officials often forgot they were on the hook to keep these parks open and available for outdoor recreation by the public — forever. Legally. InvestigateWest's reporting focused on major examples in Michigan, New York City and Oklahoma, but these "conversions," as they are titled by the state and federal agencies, occur all over the country.

Under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act and regulations flowing from it, the National Park Service, or NPS, is supposed to police these transactions and make sure that if federally funded parkland is converted to some other use, it is replaced by parkland of equal recreation utility and equal financial value.

But that's not always happening, and there is likely an example in your turf that has really ticked off the locals. Beyond our detailed inquiries, we heard of plenty of others everywhere we looked that we simply didn't have the time to explore. We've heard from folks as far away as South Carolina fighting park conversions who found out through our database that the parks they are fighting to preserve are protected by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Spinning the local angle

To report this story in your town or region, here are the steps to take:

- Search the NPS or InvestigateWest database to determine which parks in your area were built or improved with LWCF grants. (You can use either one, but ours is fully searchable and includes all grants through 2011.) Only in the last ten years or so has the Park Service started to collect detailed location information. It'll get better, but for now, you can only look up all the parks in your county. But try searching for your city or the name of a local park, too. It might be listed under the project name or grant sponsor.

- Use your BFF Google to find out if there have been controversies over conversions of these parks. While InvestigateWest was

Continued on page 22

Covering Sprawl, Science and Chickens

Plus Speeches, Awards and New Jobs

Editor's Note: The "Media on the Move" column is on the move. SEJournal's "Media on the Move" has tracked the comings and goings of SEJ members since 2004. Now, nearly a decade later, with a vibrant SEJ website in place, providing faster, easier ways to share what members are doing, "Media on the Move" is shifting forums. This issue will be the last in which the column appears in its current form in print. Beginning this spring, SEJournal editors will work with the website staff to create an easy-to-use online form that will allow members themselves to offer updates on their doings, as well as provide links to their latest work, social networks and member profiles.

"Media on the Move" Editor Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune (fahys@sltrib.com) will continue to review and regularly publish those online updates, as well as explore ways to expand some of the most important and interesting member developments for deeper exploration in the SEJournal. Check the website for more information, and as always, let us know of your achievements, shifts in direction, if you've got a new job or sold a new project.

SEJ members continued to land intriguing and important gigs, even with the ongoing turmoil in the news industry.

One example is Seattle-based **Francesca Lyman**, who received a Fund for Environmental Journalism grant to write about suburbia's future. She travelled to Sacramento, Calif., to chronicle sprawl in the state whose culture, with its palm-lined boulevards, big lawns and swimming pools, raised suburban living to an art form. There, though, the latest "burst of the housing bubble has exposed the dark underside of the suburban dream, with its cascading foreclosures, shuttered malls and shopping centers — on an enormous scale." Her article, published in the *Sacramento Bee*, explored whether housing developers should concentrate on building out on undeveloped 'greenfields' or focus on urban infill projects and walkable neighborhoods. (www.sacbee.com/2012/06/24/4583230/the-conversation-our-new-lots.html#storylink=misearch)

Mark Schleifstein continued coping with dramatic change at his media outlet. Last fall, *The Times-Picayune* moved to a three-day-a-week print publication, on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, with a special sports tab home-delivered on non-publication days after New Orleans Saints games. The news staff, except those involved in actual publication of the print edition, now report for NOLA.com | *The Times-Picayune* on the web, 24/7. The web staff moved to a new location on the 32nd floor atop the One Canal Place building overlooking the Mississippi River in downtown New Orleans in January.

After 35 years of reporting for *Science News* magazine, **Janet Raloff** has been named the first full-time editor of its decade-old sister publication, *Science News for Kids*. The free, award-winning

online publication — aimed at middle-school students — is growing both in readership (quite international) and copy flow. Meanwhile, Raloff hasn't given up writing for *Science News* entirely. Of the five features that she brought back from her NSF-sponsored reporting trip to Antarctica last December, the first appears in *Science News* (on Mt. Erebus — the planet's southernmost active volcano).

Christie Aschwenden is the new managing editor at The Open Notebook (<http://www.theopennotebook.com/>), which strives to tell the stories behind science reporting. She develops content, assigning stories and selecting outstanding writers to feature on the site, and invites pitches: christie@theopennotebook.com. Christie continues to freelance and to blog at LastWordOnNothing.com. And you can find her on twitter @cragcrest.

Two of **John Platt's** articles about endangered species are reprinted in the new *Scientific American* eBook, "A Look Back: The Best of 2012."

The second edition of **Christine Heinrichs'** "How to Raise Chickens" sold out its first printing before it got to bookshelves. A second printing was made available in February. The latest edition focuses on raising standard and traditional breeds in small flocks.

Tom Henry of *The (Toledo) Blade* was the keynote speaker on Nov. 2, 2012 for the University of Toledo College of Law's 12th annual Great Lakes water-law conference, one of the Great Lakes region's largest and best-known. His speech, four days before the election, focused on how President Obama and challenger Mitt Romney avoided climate change and other environmental issues during their campaigns. Tom learned after 1.5 years of editorial writing he missed reporting more than he thought he would. He returned to the newsroom in mid-February.

Stephen Leahy was named 2012 co-winner of The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation/UN Correspondents Association Global Prize for coverage of climate change. (<http://www.ips.org/institutional/ips-wins-gold-for-climate-change-reporting>)

Sarah Watson was named full-time environmental reporter at *The Press of Atlantic City* and is focusing much of her time reporting on Hurricane Sandy recovery in southern New Jersey.

Katherine Murray is the new publications coordinator for Quaker Earthcare Witness (www.quakerearthcare.org), a network of Friends (Quakers) in North America and other like-minded people who are seeking to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective. Katherine sends out thanks to Muriel Strand for posting the job announcement on the SEJ members' listserv, SEJ-Talk. ♦

In Memoriam:

Brenda Box, Kathie Durbin

Long-time SEJ members Brenda Box and Kathie Durbin passed away in March. Box was an editor at NPR, and a former member of the SEJ board of directors. Durbin was an award-winning environmental journalist and author, and an SEJ member since 1996.

Learn more and share remembrances on the SEJ.org site about Box (<http://www.sej.org/grace-under-fire-brenda-box-remembrance>) and Durbin (<http://www.sej.org/sej-celebrates-kathie-durbins-life-1944-2013>)

Resources:

- Defense of Place, <http://www.rrri.org/defenseofplace.php>, Mill Valley, CA 415-928-3774.
- LuAnne Kozma, Michigan parks activist with knowledge of cases in other states: luannekozma@gmail.com; 248-473-5761.
- National Park Service Land and Water Conservation Fund unit: <http://www.nps.gov/lwcf/> Head: Joel_Lynch@nps.gov or call 202-354-6905.
- InvestigateWest package: <http://www.invw.org/article/pledges-forgot-local-g-1277>.

Global Environmental Issues, Journalism Star at Sundance



A scene from 'A River Changes Course,' a feature documentary film about the impacts of globalization and climate change on the lives of rural Cambodians. Photo: Kalyanee Mam, Migrant Films

By JoANN M. VALENTI

If change was the subtext of this year's 2013 Sundance Film Festival, then the topic of *climate* change came in for serious attention at the prestigious indie film festival, which has become a lens into what films will get wider distribution or even become surprise Oscar contenders like SFF 2012's "Beasts of the Southern Wild."

"Change is inevitable," Sundance Institute founder Robert Redford told reporters at an opening press conference in Park City, Utah, in January. "Some see change as positive, some as negative. [Indie films] give an audience a chance to choose."

And among the choices for audiences from among more than 1,200 submissions were films on the challenges of covering hard news stories, and focusing on the consequences of climate change and other environment issues.

Enviro docs cover climate, eco-activism, mega-tourism

For instance, the Grand Jury Prize for World Cinema Documentary was awarded to former Cambodian refugee Kalyanee Mam for "A River Changes Course," the story of a culture, lives

and land devastated by climate change and globalization. Mam spent two years following three families who faced the transition from agrarian to low-wage industrialization and the disappearance of natural resources. She captures the sound of rice stalks being harvested, river waters lapping the edges of floating villages and children harvesting sugar cane in the remaining jungle.

The film allows viewers to see from a safe distance families being displaced by deforestation, overfishing and an overall changing environment. Admitting she had no answers to the problems her film exposes, she said, "We need to understand the problem and really discuss the issues." Solutions will only come from working together, she said.

In "The East," a group of radical eco-activists targets the pharmaceutical industry in an effort to provoke more concern and attention to ethical murkiness. And an advocacy doc, "Blackfish," retells the horrid stories of ill-informed Sea World trainers attacked, sometimes fatally, by captive orcas. The mistreatment and unnatural conditions imposed on these "killer whales" should prompt further investigations of such "amusement" parks. Another clearly anti-mega-tourism film, "Escape from Tomorrow," had the filmmaker worried about lawsuits. The psycho-drama is sure to make you re-think future visits to Anaheim or Orlando.

The Alfred P. Sloan Prize for science in film was awarded to "Computer Chess," a quirky look back at the beginnings of machine intelligence research. "Filmmakers need to become more comfortable with science and technology," Sloan juror and WGBH Science Unit Director and Executive Producer of PBS's NOVA series Paula S. Apsell said in a post-fest interview. The same could be said for more serious environment stories in film.

Journalistic docs seek to move audiences to action

Films are a part of the process of change, with the shared experience of a film motivating an audience to engage, argued filmmakers at the festival. The aim is to alter the thinking of an audience, filmmakers on the "Turning the Tide" panel agreed. The challenge is to drive communities beyond what they see on film and online, to consider priorities.

"The Square," for example, from Egyptian filmmaker Jehane Noujaim, captures news not covered on state television, she said. American political economist, CNBC commentator, professor and Obama transition advisory board member Robert Reich claimed his 30 years of writing (including 14 books), speaking, and being on the presidential cabinet has had no effect. So he's moved to film (appearing in "Inequality for All" at this year's fest) to try to change the widening polemic between the rich and poor.

Panelist and Chilean filmmaker Pablo Larrain said his hope is to move audiences from fear to action and courage. People don't buy the ad "lies" any longer, whether it's a microwave "freeing" women from the kitchen or some elected official making a difference, he said. Film narratives can challenge what's made "illegal," Larrain added, citing the illegal alien label versus undocumented worker.

Guardian journalist James Ball on the panel "Out of Sight (and Outside the Law)" appears in one of several films on new technology's impact on communication and privacy: "We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks," "Google and the World Brain," "Jobs," a biopic on the Apple founder already being released in theaters, and "Terms and Conditions," screened at the smaller SlamDance Film festival down the street. While informative, these films will likely also make viewers angry, ready to take on more investigative journalism.

Citing the mantra, "journalism is simple, intelligence is complicated," Ball and fellow panelists discussed the immorality revealed through war coverage, the persecution of whistleblowers and the risks taken by journalists, particularly local reporters working in war zones. "There's no finite number of bad guys," said Peter Bergen, CNN's national security analyst and author of three bestsellers, noting that reports and accounts provided to journalists are unreliable, "lies pretending to be detailed, accurate."

Other relevant journalistic screenings at the festival included "Dirty Wars," an investigation of covert U.S. actions and "Which Way to the Front Line from Here? The Life and Time of Tim Hetherington," the late photojournalist and filmmaker ("Restrepo"). More information and access to some trailers is available at www.sundance.org.

JoAnn Valenti is a member of the SEJournal editorial advisory board, and an emerita professor coping with retirement.

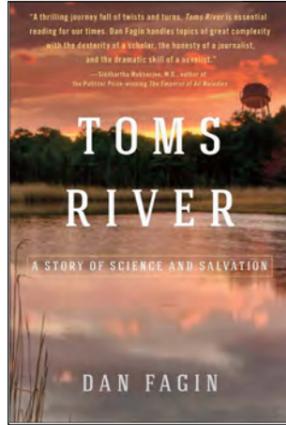


At right, wild orcas spouting at sea. Photo courtesy of Dogwoof Films.



A captive killer whale, from *Blackfish*, the story of a performing killer whale that killed several people while in captivity. Photo courtesy of Dogwoof Films

BookShelf



Tom's River: A Story of Science and Salvation

By Dan Fagin

Random House, \$28

Reviewed by TOM HENRY

Dan Fagin's book, "Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation," is a wake-up call for all journalists and would-be journalists who believe the environmental movement began with the first Earth Day in 1970.

It's true the modern environmental movement as we know it today had its origins in that massive event that occurred 43 years ago, one of this nation's largest ever with an estimated 20 million participants.

But Fagin goes Old School on us. The former SEJ president, now director of the Science, Health and Environmental Reporting program at New York University, puts the environmental movement in a much richer, broader and deeper historical context.

His story begins well before 1969, when there was a massive oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara, Calif., and when a Cleveland-area tributary of Lake Erie, the Cuyahoga River, had its most high-profile fire. It predates Rachel Carson and her landmark 1962 book, "Silent Spring," by centuries. Same for the impact that Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir had on early conservation and America's national park system.

Fagin rears back to the days of Paracelsus, a brilliant-yet-arrogant German-Swiss scientist from the 1500s known as "the father of toxicology."

Largely misunderstood and greatly under-appreciated, Paracelsus helped medicine itself evolve by focusing on the potential impact of poisons to the human body. Paracelsus argued that many things in nature have the capacity to kill us, so we should learn to manage them better. "The dose makes the poison" is the English translation and summation of his most famous quote.

That was a radical concept back then. Yet, as Fagin notes, the work of Paracelsus and his followers, especially an Italian physician named Bernadino Ramazzini, meant that disease "could no longer be explained away as the uncontrollable consequence of capricious deities, jealous mountain gnomes, or humoral imbalances."

Likewise, that developing branch of science raised — or

should raise — questions about modern parallels, such as when bureaucrats try to explain away cancer clusters as bad luck or as a rare combination of people with bad genes.

Fagin's book is a highly ambitious one. His historical framework sets the stage for a much larger discussion about how a once-idyllic New Jersey seaside community had the makings of being known more for its Norman Rockwell-esque lifestyle, only to become a poster child for corporate greed, corruption and horrific waste management.

The Toms River area eventually became the site of one of the largest legal settlements in the history of toxic dumping, a symbol of carelessness and industrial pollution.

One theme that emerges is that nobody had to be blindsided to the degree they were — and that this situation is hardly unique.

The book is sentimental, but full of passion and, above all, exhaustively researched.

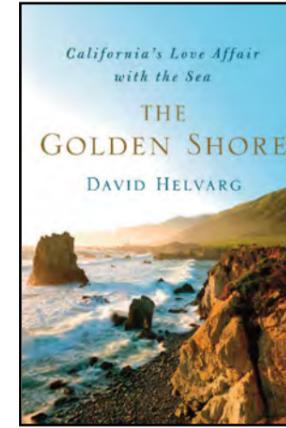
Fagin, one-time environmental writer at *Newsday*, has a strong background in reporting on cancer clusters and the effects of chemical exposure. At several junctures, his prose can be a little too heavy-handed and arcane, with long, confusing names of chemicals bantered about as if they were part of our common dialogue. To some degree, that's one of the inherent risks of getting knee-deep in the world of toxicology and epidemiology. It's arcane. It's messy. It's filled with scientific gobbledegook that the layman struggles with, no matter how it's sliced and diced.

These are minor issues, though. At its core, "Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation" delivers the goods like few other books of its kind.

This is difficult subject matter, but Fagin connects the dots from the days of Paracelsus to the era of midnight haulers and careless dumping to modern times. He takes you inside the lives of many victims, gets you to understand the politics of sluggish, even indifferent bureaucrats, and draws parallels to other major investigations into groundwater contamination, such as the one in Woburn, Mass., which became the focus of the book and movie called "A Civil Action."

This is a hard-hitting, gutsy book that goes well beyond the obvious. It takes readers behind the scenes and into the minds of those fiercely determined not to let their town's pollution pass unnoticed, while tackling some cumbersome and often-confusing science. It is a comprehensive, impressive look back at what should never have happened, but also a clarion call for the future as pressure mounts to roll back enforcement of water and air pollution laws.

Tom Henry writes for The (Toledo) Blade. He is a member of SEJ's board of directors, SEJournal's editorial board and is SEJournal's book editor.



The Golden Shore: California's Love Affair with the Sea

By David Helvarg

St. Martin's Press/Thomas Dunne Books, \$26.99

Reviewed by JIM MOTAVALLI

"The Golden Shore: California's Love Affair with the Sea" is SEJ member David Helvarg's sixth book about the oceans and the perils they face.

Helvarg is a former private investigator, war correspondent and documentarian who founded

the grassroots Blue Frontier Campaign in 2003 to draw more attention to oceans. At the time, he was living in Washington. He missed California, where he moved after college. He now lives near San Francisco.

Don't read David Helvarg for *New York Times*-style narrative. He's a participant, not just an observer. All his books contain first-person sections, and are mostly better because of it.

In "The Golden Shore," he's constantly boarding boats with scientists, Navy men, longshoremen, dock patrols and border police. He doesn't want to simply describe what these people do; he wants you on board with him getting sprayed by saltwater.

This is an uplifting book, even though it chronicles centuries of appalling treatment of the Pacific Ocean. The oceans are faced with resource exploitation, pollution, sea-level rise and acidification, but they're not dead. "Even today," Helvarg writes, "living on the bay, the second largest estuary on the West Coast, I'm amazed how, after centuries and millennia of human impact, habitation and dumb decisions there remains a wealth of wildlife on and off the water."

"The Golden Shore" works because it's fast-paced and nicely structured. The author doesn't get lost in minutiae. The main character — the California coast — comes into clear focus.

This book has a big historical story to tell, and the vivid backstory alone is worth reading it. Helvarg's book is a good guide to the sometimes benighted, sometimes enlightened, policies that have both threatened and saved the state's coast. The story of the California Coastal Commission, established in 1972 as an outgrowth of the fight against Sea Ranch, a major housing development north of San Francisco, is as inspiring as the exploitation of whales and fur seals is sordid.

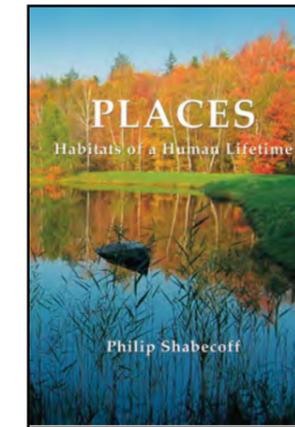
The commission, which took on iconic record executive-film

producer David Geffen and actor-director Clint Eastwood in beach privacy disputes, requires every waterfront community to have a coastal plan. Headed by the late Peter Douglas, it became a powerful force for shore protection. It was Douglas who often said, "The coast is never saved. The coast is always being saved." That's also a good epigram for this book.

Near the end, Helvarg talks about a shoreline battle that got personal — a fight against a mega-casino backed by Chevron that would have obliterated 422 acres of green space and eel grass meadows facing San Francisco Bay. Instead of hiding behind his notebook, Helvarg decided it was time to fight city hall and joined with a citizens group in a successful battle to defeat the developers.

The California coast is still bleeding from a thousand cuts, and threatened by many more. But it's also alive with fin and fauna, thanks to the Blue Frontier activists chronicled in these pages.

SEJ member Jim Motavalli's most recent book is "High Voltage: The Fast Track to Plug in the Auto Industry."



Places: Habitats of a Human Lifetime

By Philip Shabecoff

Becket Mountain Books, \$12.50

Reviewed by TOM HENRY

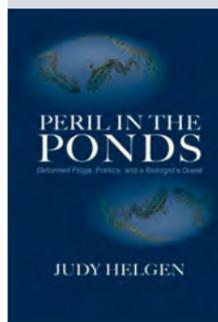
Don't let Phil Shabecoff fool you. "Places: Habitats of a Human Lifetime" is more than a memoir of the places he holds dear.

This groundbreaking environmental journalist shares some juicy tales of his upbringing in the Bronx, his glory days (and some not-so

glory ones) at the *New York Times*, various thoughts on covering former President Richard Nixon as a Washington correspondent and what it was like to have a front-row seat when many of America's landmark environmental laws were passed in the 1970s.

Along the way, he offers a taste of the *Times*' newsroom politics, revealing his views on some editors he liked and some he despised.

The places he holds dear — mostly in the Northeast and Europe, with impressions of some faraway places such as East Africa, Japan, and Vietnam — serve as more than a backdrop, though. They are weaved into a beautiful literary tapestry that is part history lesson and part wilderness tonic along the lines of what Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold would have written.



Peril in the Ponds

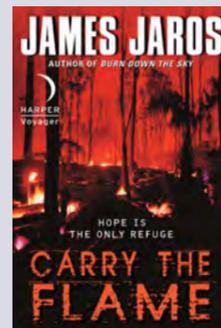
Deformed Frogs, Politics, and a Biologist's Quest

By JUDY HELGEN

University of Massachusetts Press

judyhelgen.com/book-peril-in-the-ponds

A government biologist gives an insider's view of the highly charged, controversial issue, deformed frogs, that aroused the public, politicians, media and scientists.



Carry the Flame

By JAMES JAROS

Harper Collins Canada

harpercollins.ca/books/Carry-Flame-James-Jaros

A thriller set after climate change has triggered a worldwide collapse of natural systems. "Gutsy," *Publishers Weekly*. "Stunning," *The Big Thrill*, *International Thriller Writers Magazine*.



How to Raise Chickens

Everything You Need to Know

By CHRISTINE HEINRICHS

Voyageur Press

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17124954-the-how-to-raise-chickens>

Whichever comes first for you, the chicken or the egg, this book will show you what to do next with longtime chicken breeder Christine Heinrichs explaining all the helpful DOs and important DON'Ts.



The Dilbit Disaster:

Inside the Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard of

InsideClimate News

by ELIZABETH MCGOWAN & LISA SONG

<http://bit.ly/VDYiyo>

This narrative page-turner on the million gallon spill of Canadian tar sands oil into the Kalamazoo River explains why and how the U.S. is not prepared for the flood of coming imports.

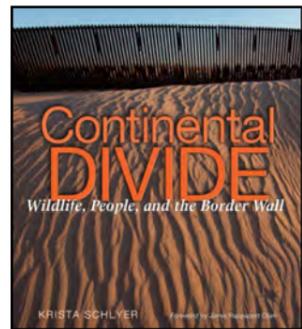
BookShelf...continued

The story begins and ends near an idyllic lake and forest near the top of Becket Mountain in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. Shabecoff's peace and serenity come from the family's Barn, a simple-yet-soothing structure that sounds like the sort of thing Thoreau and Leopold would have approved.

As you're reading, it dawns on you this is the prose of a retired newspaperman, but it's not. It's much more. There's simplicity, candor, and modesty in Shabecoff's writing, but — when the focus shifts back to the settings he has chosen to tell his life story — there is warmth, compassion and a vivid sense of awe and appreciation for nature.

What you learn from Shabecoff and the places of his life is that, yes, humans are interconnected through a common ecology, but our view of the world can be shaped by the microcosms and memories that form us individually as people.

The distance between the Bronx and the Shabecoff Barn isn't all that much in miles, but it is in perspective. This book is part travelogue and part career retrospective, in a tone that meanders from frank observations to poetry. You'll find yourself breezing through it one moment, then pausing to reflect another.



Continental Divide: Wildlife, People, and the Border Wall

By Krista Schlyer
Texas A & M University Press, \$30

Reviewed by TOM HENRY

Krista Schlyer's book, "Continental Divide: Wildlife, People, and the Border Wall" is far more than a book chock full of great photographs — and, trust me, they

are great, whether Schlyer is showing the playfulness of prairie dogs, the rugged beauty of bison, or the poignancy of a makeshift memorial for a woman who symbolizes the struggle of border crossings.

What I didn't expect, frankly, was such a beautiful job of storytelling. This book is a highly satisfying package of text and images, a complete work of great journalism that penetrates the reader's psyche with compassion. It is educational and inspirational.

I've spent much of my life living near an international border and, like many people in the Great Lakes region, haven't stood back and thought about it much. Former President Harry Truman described the U.S.-Canada border as the world's friendliest

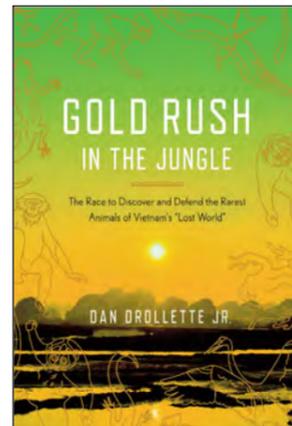
in 1947 and, more than 65 years later, Truman's observation remains valid.

Through Schlyer's book, I found myself much more empathetic about issues that affect the U.S.-Mexico border and about border issues in general, including parallel ones affecting humans and wildlife here in the Great Lakes region. Schlyer's book makes the case for why the U.S.-Mexico border wall is not only bad and ineffective policy, but destructive to a shared ecology and to the soulful fabric that has united the Southwest for generations.

"Wherever there are borders — whether they exist between nations or between rich and poor, old and young, or black, white, and brown — it is easy to amplify fears to the point that they distort reality," she writes. "Borderlands, whether in the mind or on the map, are always vulnerable to misperception, so much so that at times reality becomes unrecognizable."

This book dazzles you with photographs and with the research Schlyer put into explaining the science and politics of U.S.-Mexico border issues.

But it also gives you a sense of life along the border as seen through the eyes of some die-hard souls who live there. Schlyer did an exemplary job of finding real characters willing to share their stories, as well as the broader big-picture stuff. Her book shows a real commitment to the U.S.-Mexico border. It gets readers to understand why they should care.



Gold Rush in the Jungle: The Race to Discover and Defend the Rarest Animals of Vietnam's "Lost World"

By Dan Drollette, Jr.
Crown, \$25

Reviewed by JENNIFER WEEKS

The concept of biodiversity hotspots — areas home to high numbers of endemic species and under extreme threats — was proposed more than 20 years ago. Some hotspots, such as the island of Madagascar and the reefs of the

Coral Triangle in the western Pacific Ocean, are famous.

"Gold Rush in the Jungle," by SEJ member Dan Drollette, Jr., reveals a lesser-known hotspot: the hills and valleys of Vietnam.

Vietnam's mountains have been described as a "lost world," home to rare mammals such as leaf-eating monkeys and barking deer. Ironically, poverty and war helped those species to survive.

Poor roads, long rainy seasons, and rampant tropical diseases kept explorers from penetrating far into Vietnam during the colonial

era. During the war decades, from the 1950s to the mid-1970s, parts of the country were devastated by bombs and napalm. But other regions were less affected.

Then diplomatic isolation slowed the country's economic development.

Now Vietnam is growing quickly, and its exotic fauna are being wiped out almost as soon as they are discovered. Researchers want to find, name and protect new species, but trophy hunters and traders in exotic wildlife want to kill them. The result is a biological gold rush, with scientists and conservationists racing against mercenaries, poachers, warlords and local villagers, who may reap several months' wages in return for a single rare animal. Many species are used in Asia for traditional medicines: as one example, Chinese three-stripe box turtles (which are believed to cure cancer) can sell for \$5,000 per kilogram — more than cocaine or heroin.

The main hero of Drollette's account is Tilo Nadler, a self-taught biologist from the former East Germany who founded and runs the Endangered Primate Research Center — the first wildlife rescue center in Vietnam. The EPRC protects langurs and other extremely rare animals rescued from captivity or the black market. Drollette uses the EPRC to illustrate the hard work of conservation — learning rare species' habits and life patterns in detail, creating protected spaces where they can flourish, and in the best cases, releasing some into the wild.

Development threatens Vietnam's wildlife in many ways. Forests in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are being cut to provide material for Vietnam's furniture export trade. And for wealthy Asians, eating exotic animals is a sign of status. Vietnam is a major transshipment point for animal smugglers, who collect rare species such as Asian black bears in poorer countries (Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia) and sell them to customers in China, Taiwan, South Korea and Hong Kong. This pressure isn't unique to Vietnam, Drollette notes. It's also likely to play out in other closed societies such as Myanmar and Cuba as they eventually open up to world trade.

The news isn't all bad. Some rural Vietnamese strongly support local parks and nature preserves, especially if enough eco-tourists visit and spend money for tours and meals. The United States has finally started working with the Vietnamese government to clean up dioxin contamination — a legacy of widespread military use of the defoliant Agent Orange in the 1960s and 1970s.

Every so often, a miracle find occurs. Rafetus swinhoei, a five-foot-long freshwater softshell turtle, was long thought to be on the edge of extinction, except for three males. Then biologists found a female at a zoo in China that could still lay eggs. Now breeding efforts are under way.

As he describes these rare species and the scientists working to keep them alive, Drollette probes many central questions about wildlife conservation. Is it better to save one obscure species, or to try to protect many at once? Why not freeze rare animals' DNA for

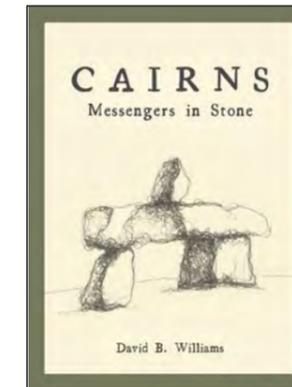
cloning in the future instead of spending time and resources keeping a few individuals alive in preserves? What's lost when a single species goes extinct?

The answers can be surprising. Biologists have searched for decades in some of Vietnam's most remote areas for a live kouprey — a rare wild ox with large curving horns. Only one has ever been found in a zoo — in Paris in 1937. But scientists are still looking, because the kouprey is believed to be one of the most primitive species of all living cattle. Because it evolved in southeast Asia, it is thought to be immune to many common diseases. Cross-breeding one with domestic cattle could provide a huge immunity boost, potentially worth billions of dollars.

That's why, even though the last live sighting was in the late 1960s, the search goes on.

Drollette's narrative is full of surprising insights into modern Vietnam and the world of wildlife conservation. "Gold Rush in the Jungle" shows how hard that mission is, and why we should want it to succeed.

Jennifer Weeks is a Boston-based freelancer and a member of SEJ's board of directors.



Cairns: Messengers in Stone

By David B. Williams
The Mountaineers Books, \$15.95
Reviewed by KAREN SCHAEFER

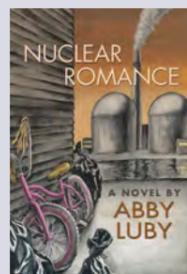
David Williams confesses that it was once as much a part of his job to destroy cairns as it was to build them.

In the 1990s, Williams worked as a park ranger at Arches National Park in southeastern Utah, where meandering trails in the barren

sandstone landscape are marked by small, stacked piles of rocks, to keep hikers on the path and off the fragile terrain. Williams says he frequently found hiker-made cairns that redirected foot traffic to areas the NPS was trying to keep pristine. These he carefully dismantled.

That human urge to build wayside markers is the premise for this slim volume, which briefly surveys the long history of building markers in stone. Using a park ranger-style delivery, shot through with equal measures of science, storytelling and humor, Williams takes the reader on a world tour of cairns, both ancient and modern. He speculates that cairns may be one of humankind's oldest forms of communication. But he says cairns as trail markers are just one

Continued on page 23



Nuclear Romance

by Abby Luby
Armory New Media
nuclearromance.wordpress.com

A newsman grapples with reporting about an aging nuclear power plant while becoming involved with a woman from the anti-nuclear movement.

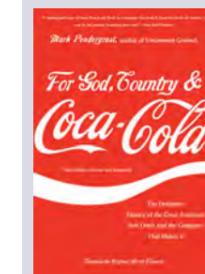


Japan's Tipping Point:

Crucial Choices in the Post-Fukushima World

by Mark Pendergrast
Nature's Face Publications
markpendergrast.com/japans-tipping-point

Can Japan radically shift its energy policy, become greener, more self-sufficient and avoid catastrophic impacts on the climate? An eye-opening first-person investigation and call to action.



For God, Country & Coca-Cola

by Mark Pendergrast
Basic Books

"Behind the glitz and fanfare, the bubbly brown beverage has had a tortured and controversy-filled history, meticulously chronicled in For God, Country and Coca-Cola." — *The Wall Street Journal* (fully updated 3rd edition)



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Special Report...E-Reporting Biz, continued

There's no data to suggest that the late cartoonist Walt Kelly had climate change in mind when, in a 1971 Earth Day strip, his iconic "Pogo" first penned the line, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

But he might as well have.

That the issue transcends traditional "environmental" problems and encompasses everything ranging from public health to infrastructure, from national security to international competitiveness, and from daily weather to yearly snowmelt and sea-level rise only increases the challenges facing the media.

And those are the very challenges that the "institution" of journalism appears now resolutely unprepared to address and resolve.

What breed of journalists can get the job done?

What skills might today's and tomorrow's reporters covering climate most need?

To do the job exceedingly well, they need to have in their DNA a lot of "ink in the veins" journalism, a sharp nose for news, and a keen knack for storytelling.

Being able to discern the real significance of the latest so-called "ground-breaking" research will be key, so they will need a lot of science smarts too and will need to know how to best vet and qualify those so-called "breakthroughs" often not deserving of that name.

That's a start, but it's far from enough. They'll need more than a tad bit of social psychology, and more than a dollop of aquatic biology to go along with a nugget of atmospheric chemistry. And

Leave traditional journalism in order to do truly good reporting on climate change? More than a few have done just that.

of course physics. And statistics. Oh. Did we mention economics? And international diplomacy and law? And the study of cognition and of persuasion methodologies?

The qualifications list goes on. But the key point is that more so than any previous issue they have been charged with addressing, the climate change issue deeply embodies an expansive net of diverse issues and specialty fields, many of them far afield from their past experiences and the courses most of today's journalists pursued and excelled at as students.

So into this daunting challenge comes journalism, circa early 21st Century: An era of shrinking news holes, vanishing hard news outlets, paring down of science beats and desks and other specialty coverage in preference for more "GAs," and a waning of American attention spans, geared now more toward infotainment, 140-character tweets, and "e-blasts" than to heavy-lifts of daily serious reading and reflection.

You get the picture.

So it's not only fair to wonder — it's actually irresponsible to ignore — the question of whether American journalism today in too many ways drives some to leave the once-hallowed bastions of outstanding reporting to do just that — outstanding reporting.

Leave traditional journalism in order to do truly good reporting

on climate change? More than a few have done just that, and their names are well recognized among environmental journalism savants. Names like Phil Shabecoff, Bill McKibben, Ross Gelbspan, Eric Pooley, Andy Revkin.

The belt-tightening, eyeballs-obsessed, "BREAKING NEWS" over-emphases characteristic of so many news organizations today imposes on quality journalism the kinds of constraints no self-respecting and enterprising journalist can conceivably welcome. Or long endure?

But while these are pitfalls primarily of the "institution" of journalism, it's critical too that journalists themselves accept some responsibilities on their own part: Too many of us, let's be honest, took news-writing and feature-writing classes, and other journalism courses knowing full well that in doing so we could avoid those danged statistics, mathematics, science, and physics electives we did our best to ignore. Those, that is, that might have given us some of the skills now so urgently needed in the media to report knowledgeably on an issue as daunting as our warming climate.

The same kinds of motives that drove those brilliant scientists to so diligently avoid journalism and philosophy and civics — their dread of words and letters and grammar and essay-writing — motivated many journalists to shun the science and math-based courses and expertise the sciences so demand.

Democracy demands we close the information gap

Did I mention here perhaps the most significant and troublesome shortcoming of contemporary journalism in so far as its dealings with our warming climate?

It's the issue of the steadily widening information gap, the chasm between those now and in the future having access to the world of rich and authoritative online information on climate change and its implications...and those not having, and in some cases, of course, not wanting, such information.

It's not traditional journalism but rather the Web and blogs and social media drill-downs and podcasts and more that serve well those already having a climate knowledge bounty, and still wanting more.

But it is within the repertoire of traditional journalism to serve also that much larger group of news — and information — havenots. Our democracy demands we do so.

Until journalists and their institutions of journalism measure up, how can anyone maintain that the democratic principles that attracted so many of us to journalism can now accommodate a response to the simple question posed other than with an abrupt "Poorly"? And then doubt that we now must go about doing all we can, individually and collectively, to rectify those shortcomings?

Bud Ward, a founding SEJ board member, is an independent journalism educator and former editor of Environment Writer. He edits the website, Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media.

Editor's Note: This is Bud Ward's final E-Reporting Biz column. Since the Fall 2007 issue, Bud in this column has contributed his deep expertise on how the changes in the journalism field have affected the environment beat, particularly in climate change coverage. SEJournal editors thank him.



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Special Report...Elephant Wrangling, continued

can get forecasts wrong.

- Avoid false choices — for example, energy supply vs. environmental protection, or conservation vs. production. (“At this point, these are just excuses not to think,” one source commented.)

- Understand the scale of technological change that is occurring in the power industry — notably, the impact of information technology — and explore how it will affect consumers.

- Recognize that 51 state-level jurisdictions (plus electric cooperatives and municipal agencies and federal agencies) control the pace of decision making about electric power generation, transmission and distribution, with all of the experimentation and chaos that this situation implies.

- Understand how utilities consider the environment in their planning processes, and how they manage risks — for example, fluctuating fuel prices or potential new environmental regulations — as they consider long-term investments.

- Recognize how easy it is for government to do nothing and how hard it is to do something, especially in a political climate in which well-funded people are hostile towards government.

- Pay more attention to energy issues in other countries, such as China’s long-term planning and its pledge to impose a carbon tax by 2015.

Jennifer Weeks is a freelance writer and SEJ board member who has covered many aspects of energy since 2004, including production, transmission, facility siting, and environmental impacts.

Special Report...Language of Climate Change, continued

thing that will happen well into the future or will only impact poor people far, far away, the focus this year is to bring climate change closer to home to engage regional audiences on how it affects their communities.

For two days our scientist/journalist pairs will brainstorm the best ways to reach lay audiences. Each pair will discuss regional impacts and how they’ve been communicated. What worked? What didn’t? What can be learned from successful examples of cooperation between scientists, journalists, civic leaders, the public?

We will examine regional impacts, vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation in the context of communication strategies. Role-playing exercises will examine the science and journalism communities and force everyone out of their comfort zones.

“I sense that the scientists gained more than the journalists,” noted partner organizer Dave Poulson with the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. “That’s not to downplay the journalistic gains. They were there... Sometimes the question that the journalist wants to ask a scientist is not necessarily the best question to ask (i.e., the scientist can’t/won’t answer). Work with the scientists to ask the appropriate question!”

That sounds a lot like collaboration, which is where our rapidly morphing journalism world might best go to meet the unprecedented challenges of climate change reporting.

Jay Letto is SEJ’s conference director and a former researcher at the Kellogg Biological Station.

Reporter’s ToolBox...continued

the first to show this as a national pattern, we noticed that many news outlets had covered the controversy around these park conversions without realizing there was an underlying pledge to the feds to keep these parks as parks. (Hence this Toolbox — let’s keep ‘em honest!)

- Contact local parks advocates as well as the national parks groups listed in the resource box on page 12.

- Contact the National Park Service in your region. Every state has an LWCF representative. Ask what conversions they are monitoring. Although there is no good national database on this, NPS regions should have their own databases and also can give you the lowdown on the conversions they are tracking.

- One angle we did not explore at length that’s becoming particularly pressing since we published last year is the idea by many local governments that they can simply shutter parks in the event of a budget shortfall. Under National Park Service regulations, this is forbidden without federal approval if the closure will last more than 180 days.

So it’s worth inquiring and probably even filing public records requests, if that’s appropriate, to find out what’s happening in your community or region. We stand ready to help you with background, advice, etc. Feel free to contact us at rmcclure@invw.org or jalcorn@invw.org.

Robert McClure, an SEJ board member, is executive director of InvestigateWest. Jason Alcorn is associate director of InvestigateWest.

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BookShelf...continued

of their many uses.

Throughout human history and across the globe, Williams recounts how cairns have been built to commemorate an event or a person, like a now-vanished cairn in Stockbridge, Mass., believed to have been built in honor of a long-dead sachem; to celebrate a religious ritual, such as those still built by Buddhists in Mongolia, called oboos; even to mark the burial of the dead, as evidenced by the many European Bronze Age passage graves covered with stones and earth.

Some of the most fascinating tales Williams tells are of prehistoric cairns built by hunters to help drive game. In the American West, for instance, these were often simple piles of rocks placed by prehistoric Native Americans to funnel bison down a narrow arroyo or over a cliff. Williams also regales readers with stories of expedition cairns, meant to leave behind a record of the fate of explorers of previously-unmapped territory. Included are stories of the tragic Scott expedition to the South Pole and the hunt for Sir John Franklin, an English nobleman who disappeared in the 1840s while sailing the North American Arctic searching for the Northwest passage.

A geologist by training, Williams is even lured by his inner geology nerd to discuss the best rock types and methods to build a cairn, the niche ecology of cairns (including a story about how certain types of oak trees in Israel grow only out of ancient cairns), and a fascinating take on how modern science is learning to date cairns through rock patina, lichen growth, and bioluminescence.

Designed more as a trailside companion than a compendium of cairn history, Williams’ book is nonetheless a delightful and often surprising look at this ancient human practice.

Karen Schaefer is an SEJ member and freelancer based in northern Ohio.



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In a scene from "A River Changes Course," a film that won the World Cinema Documentary Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival this year, Cambodian fisherman Sari Math surveys the horizon while setting out into Tonlé Sap, southeast Asia's largest lake, which normally vastly expands with backflow from the Mekong River during the monsoon season, then subsides quickly thereafter. But climate change is now interrupting that ageless annual cycle of the lake, as well as the livelihoods of those who depend upon it (see our coverage of the Sundance Festival on pages 14-15).

Photo: Kalyanee Mam, Migrant Films