

# SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

Vol. 9 No. 1

## Urban growth issues will not go away soon

# Considering sprawwwl

By **JIM SCHWAB AND STUART MECK**

Urban sprawl is one of the hottest topics in the land, gaining prominence as an issue suitable for major attention from presidential candidates. This attention would have been hard to imagine just a few years ago.

The issue has become hot for a number of reasons that deeply affect readers' lives. The sheer scope and complexity of the problem poses challenges for reporters, however, because they must find ways to humanize a subject that is often argued in terms of statistical data concerning infrastructure costs, air quality indices, and commuter travel times. Thus, it is essential for reporters to get to the point quickly.

Why does sprawl matter? These factors make it important to readers:

- **Quality of life.** Who wants to spend his or her life in traffic? In Atlanta, where the average daily commute to work is now 31 minutes, an anti-sprawl political movement is afoot to avert a predicted rise to 44 minutes by 2010.

- **Social stratification.** The flight to the suburbs that began in the 1950s has left decimated central cities with desper-

ately poor inner-city neighborhoods. Large numbers of children in low-income families pay the price by attending underfunded, crime-ridden schools.

- **Environmental impacts.** Paving paradise and putting up parking lots results in rapid increases in polluted stormwater runoff. All those commuters idling their engines during the slow-crawl hours on the interstate highways

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Photo by Chris Rigel

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## Stars take green roles

### Do celebrities impact on the environment?

By **DAVID LISICIO**

Actors John Travolta and Robert Duvall star in the 1998 film, *A Civil Action*. Their presence brings sudden and widespread attention to a case of corporate irresponsibility and deadly environmental pollution that previously managed to attract only a handful of wire service journalists and a book author.

Actor Woody Harrelson risks arrest to save old-growth redwood forests. Actor Ted Danson donates money, makes public appearances, and takes an active role in trying to keep our oceans healthy.

Singer Don Henley holds a concert to benefit Walden Woods. Actor and

director Robert Redford speaks out for the preservation of lakes and streams, urging all to find out "how green" their candidates are before voting.

Singers, songwriters, actors and actresses, politicians from famous families, people carrying the clout of name and face recognition are increasingly becoming spokespersons and banner wavers for dozens of environmental movements and causes throughout the United States and abroad. Some journalists are concerned.

James Bond and Superman are among the front-line crusaders.

Pierce Brosnan, who plays 007 in the movie *GoldenEye*, was in March

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# Now it's time to grow

Wasn't it Woody Allen who said he'd never want to belong to a club that would have him as a member?

Of course, he was trying to make us laugh. We've always known that it is the quality of SEJ members that makes the organization great.

I'll admit I used to think that the Society of Environmental Journalists was such a wonderful organization that the nation's journalists would naturally be attracted to it. Indeed, that had already occurred. What started as a dozen or so dedicated journalists in the Washington area quickly grew and grew until we hit about 1,000 members in 1994.

For a while we shook our heads, smiled and marveled at how this once-tiny group had blossomed into a national organization with an office staff in Philadelphia, many successful national conferences and on and on and on.

Today, we hover around 1,100 members—the place we've been for about three years. It's become clear that it's time to change the way we have thought about this issue. Membership—or increasing it—no longer will take care of itself.

The SEJ board recently adopted as one of its key priorities for 1999 the launching of a major membership recruitment effort, headed by SEJ vice president and membership chair Jim Bruggers. The first goal the board set: attract 100 new members by the close of 1999. If you've read the SEJ listserv announcements of late, you've seen a couple postings from Jim. One tells of one key plank in the new effort to recruit new members: our first-ever, half-price membership drive.

Until June 1, journalists who have never been an SEJ member can join the organization for only \$20. This membership, like any other, includes an *SEJournal* subscription, the *SEJ TipSheet*, and reduced registration rates for our national conference.

The Membership Committee is considering a number of other initiatives to increase our numbers. They include:

- Cooperative membership efforts with other journalism organizations. A member of the business writers group, for example, could join SEJ at a reduced rate for a year; and an SEJ member, in turn,

could join the business writers group at a reduced rate.

- A direct-mail campaign, targeting journalists across North America.

- An adopt-a-member program, in which members can sponsor a new membership for someone who has expressed hardship about the cost. Some board members at our recent meeting in Ann Arbor, Mich., adopted a group of students.

- A "Member-Get-A-Member" campaign, in which board members, regional representatives and other SEJ volunteers pledge to recruit a new member. Each board member has already pledged to

## Report from the society's president

By  
Mike  
Mansur



meet that goal by this year's end.

This recruitment effort doesn't spring from worry or desperation. Indeed, SEJ has had great success and its board has no grave concerns about its membership numbers. But it's also true that SEJ's membership has hit a plateau. And we know the organization has not made a strong membership recruitment effort since its earliest days.

Under the guiding hand of executive director Beth Parke, SEJ has been successful at attracting a number of significant grants from foundations. We hope to be in line for a number of future grants.

Increasing our numbers can only help us with those efforts. It can only further our mission of increasing the accuracy, quality, and visibility of environmental journalism. We know that this beat will be a key position in every newsroom in coming years and decades. Our continued membership growth should reflect that.

So I am asking each member to help

your organization improve itself. Think about your competitors or colleagues who don't belong to SEJ but who would benefit. (And if you're worried about the competition think about how it will challenge you to do even better.) Think about the editors who might be interested in learning more about the environment beat. Think about the journalism professors you know who would love to read the *SEJournal* but just don't know about it.

Don't limit your thinking to those writing strictly on the environment. The environment, as we all know, is too big to confine to a single slot. Even newsrooms with more than one writer find the beat bleeding over into politics, business, and local government beats.

I'd also ask for your suggestions. Anyone with other ideas about increasing our numbers should contact me or Jim Bruggers. I can be reached at [mmansur@kcstar.com](mailto:mmansur@kcstar.com); Jim's email is [ecowriter@aol.com](mailto:ecowriter@aol.com).

And, please remember what Woody said, because a club or organization truly is no better than its members.



Just to show how great some of our members are, I thought I'd pass on some tidbits from the essays written by members applying for SEJ's upcoming leadership retreat in Missoula, Mont.

"After years of being a non-joiner I've found SEJ to be a supportive and supportable club and I'm excited about the possibility of making some humble contribution to the organization's future," writes Randy Edwards of the *Columbus Dispatch*.

Or this from Deborah Schoch of the *Los Angeles Times*: "I believe strongly that environmental journalism is going to grow in importance, with the 2000 presidential campaign ahead and with complex issues like global warming and extinction gaining more and more prominence."

And Chris Bowman of the *Sacramento Bee*, who wrote: "By the year 3000, I cautiously predict that news managers will understand that environmental reporters need on-going, multidisciplinary training to stay current with their sources and readers. Until then, we have SEJ." ♦

*SEJournal* (ISSN: 1053-7082) is published quarterly by the **Society of Environmental Journalists**, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118. Membership \$40 per year (student rate \$30). Subscription fee \$50; \$30 library rate. © 1999 by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

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**The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)3 organization. The mission of the organization is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting. We envision an informed society through excellence in environmental journalism. As a network of journalists and academics, SEJ offers national and regional conferences, publications and online services. SEJ's membership of over 1,100 includes journalists working for print and electronic media, educators, and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's national conferences and to subscribe to the quarterly *SEJournal*.**

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*SEJournal* is printed on recycled paper

To the Editor:

I have not read Todd Wilkinson's *Science Under Siege*, but I'm nevertheless disappointed at Amy Gahran's review of the book in the Winter 1999 *SEJournal*. I believe she mistakenly applied to books the very legitimate standards of daily newspapers that reporters shouldn't take sides.

I have read dozens of environmental books, and few if any didn't take sides, whether it was Dixy Lee Ray or David Helvarg. Is Ms. Gahran questioning whether environmental journalists should write books in anything but a value-free, neutral tone?

Ms. Gahran says, "whenever a journalist slips into the realm of sympathizing with one side of the issue, no matter how well-founded or carefully considered that decision is, it automatically puts readers or other journalists on guard."

Check out the recent list compiled by New York University and published in the *New York Times*, of the 100 best works of journalism of the 20th century. Anywhere from one-third to one-half of those journalists "took sides," among them Rachel Carson with her *Silent Spring*, which ranked number 2. Would environmental journalism, to say nothing of the environment, have been better off if she had stayed on the sidelines?

—Tony Davis  
*Arizona Daily Star*

To the Editor:

I write to take issue with Amy Gahran's unforgiving review of Todd Wilkinson's book *Science Under Siege* in the Winter 1999 issue. Gahran castigates Wilkinson for having taken a stance in support of the whistleblowers whose stories he tells in the book. She argues, in effect, that he's lost his objectivity, and that there is no worse sin.

Hundreds, maybe thousands, of journalists have written books in which they take a stance, stated or implied. That does not mean that they are subjective in their newspaper and magazine reporting. I have read Wilkinson's work for years in *The Christian Science Monitor* and various magazines and have always found him leaning over backward to be fair to all sides.

To suggest that high-profile writers can't wear two hats on different occasions is demeaning to them. When people buy nonfiction books, they expect to read the author's point of view.

—Glenn Himebaugh, PhD  
Middle Tennessee State University

Amy Gahran responds:

In my review of this book, I included an excerpt in which Wilkinson explained his journalistic perspective of whistleblowers, and how that perspective evolved in the course of his reporting work. Several such references are scattered through the book. Clearly Wilkinson views his own role mainly as a journalist.

Had he presented himself as, say, an activist or scientist, then indeed I would have taken a different approach in my review.

—Amy Gahran

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## Attractive choices for meeting in LA

# Lights, action, conference...

Nobody's claiming it will be more glamorous, but SEJ's annual conference will undergo a slight facelift when it meets in Los Angeles September 16-19.

"Conference has never been held on the ocean, so a number of marine and coastal issues will be explored," said board member Gary Polakovic, one of the conference planners. "And because it's in a megalopolis, we'll be exploring more issues on the urban environment."

Three topics will dominate the conference program: The megalopolis and the new millennium; Hollywood and the environment; and the Pacific Ocean. Two plenaries will focus on what happens in the next century when most of humanity concentrates in megacities like Los Angeles.

Urban environmental problems? LA's a textbook case: smog, sprawl, species extinction, water wars, coastal destruction. Panel discussions are planned discussing them all. Their very existence has helped make California a world leader in environmental protection. If an environmental dispute is happening in LA, odds are it may arrive soon at a location near you.

As usual, the Thursday tours will be a big part of the program, with more field trips planned than ever before. Road trips will take participants to the nation's most popular and polluted

beaches in Santa Monica Bay, to some of the most expensive real estate-turned-battleground over an imperiled songbird, to infinity and beyond in a look at the intergalactic environment at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The conference features seven themes, and the theme room concept of last year will be continued to help participants navigate the subject matter. The themes are the West, the

Craft, the Globe, the Economy, the Nation, the Lab, and the Campus. In the theme room devoted to the Lab, for example, panels will be held on subjects such as smog research, bioremediation clean-up, and impacts of pesticides. The theme room for the West, on the other hand, will have panels such as environmental law enforcement, recreational impacts on public lands, and water politics.

There will be 30 panels on a variety of subjects. One will explore what part celebrities play in the environment, and celebs are being solicited to take part. More about that in the summer issue. Speakers for all sessions are still being lined up, with David Brower and Denis Hayes confirmed so far.

Attendees will get a taste of the Pacific when the *LA Times* hosts a Saturday evening dinner reception at the Long Beach Aquarium. Sunday morning has several sessions at the Streisand Center on the Barbara Streisand ranch in Malibu, where Barry Lopez and other authors will talk about writing. ❖



## No easy road for Polish journalism

### Two SEJ members cross the sea to teach seminars

By DAVID HELVARG

Ten years after the fall of communism, environmental reporters in Poland are trying to figure out how to carry on their work. They were left with a legacy of massive industrial pollution and a freewheeling consumer economy that's changing conditions in every sector of society, including journalism. Do foreign take-overs, consolidation, lay-offs, and no firewalls between editorial, advertising, and news coverage sound familiar?

Fellow SEJ member Monica Allen of the *New Bedford Standard Times* and I conducted a couple of environmental reporting seminars for two weeks last November in Kaziemierz and Krakow, Poland, sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based International Center for Journalists and the Polish Journalists Association (SDP). The five-day programs certified 26 reporters. More than a dozen of them were from the 100-member Ekos Club, which is something like SEJ if SEJ had survived tanks in the streets.

"The Ekos Club was part of SDP but really became active around 1982 after the SDP was banned under martial law," recalled Krzysztof Mering, over vodkas and Donald Duck orange juice in Krakow's Hotel Vera bar. "We found that by writing about the environment we could write negative things about Poland and the authorities didn't get it. So writing about the environment became a way for journalists to dissent."

Our groups in the two towns contained both mid-career and beginning journalists from environmental magazines, mainstream newspapers, radio and television, and included several well-known authors. Along with many informal discussions in nicotine-flavored pubs, we reviewed key elements of environmental journalism such as basics of good reporting, new approaches to reaching audiences, story development, and issues of journalistic ethics and practices. We formed reporting teams for field trips. We also spent a day visiting one of Poland's national parks, which included clearing snow off a picnic table for an outdoor snack of cognac, tea, and pretzels in refreshing zero-degree ice fog.

Poland remains 30 percent forest, mainly 20th-century growth of spruce, larch, beech, birch, and parasitic balls of mistletoe, topped by fat crows. Among the story topics we focused on were a controversial plan to reprivatize the forests, a proposal to hold the 2006 winter Olympics in Tatra National Park, traffic and pollution (Western Europe dumped over a million lead-burning used cars here between 1989 and 1990), and the social cost of reducing industrial pollution.

While our Polish colleagues were from a more advocacy-oriented tradition of journalism, they agreed that researching and reporting all sides of a story can only strengthen its impact. Their courage, passion, and commitment revived my faith in our profession. ❖



**Francesca Lyman** has joined the ranks of the "E-Columnists." A few months ago, she started "Your Environment" for MSNBC.com. The column is found in the Web site's Health Section on Wednesdays, and focuses on issues of environmental health. Lyman recently finished a children's book called *Inside the Dzanga Sangha Rain Forest* and is now working on one for adults about revitalizing cities.

Every year, **Peter Dykstra** will oversee the production of 500 stories in his new position as *CNN's* executive producer for Science, Technology and Environment. It is an expanded management role for Dykstra that also puts him in charge of two weekly half-hour shows.

Dykstra expects he will be doing a little less journalism, but because his crew is made up of "relatively low-maintenance grownups who know what they're doing" he hopes to keep his hand in the writing and producing end of things.

This spring finds **Orna Izakson** "back home." She has moved to Oregon to become the assistant director of the new Pacific Northwest Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources. (a wing of Frank Allen's Montana-based IJNR.)

Izakson will also be a contributing editor for the *Cascadia Times*, a monthly newspaper out of Portland. Although she had a great time as the environmental reporter for the *Bangor* (Maine) *Daily News*, Izakson writes, "I'm ecstatic about being back in the Northwest and I hope never to leave again."

"Playful and ironic" is how editor **Chip Giller** describes his on-line start-up *Grist Magazine*. "We're all familiar with doom and gloom [of environmental coverage]—so I want to make fun of all that and then move on and provide useful information people can act on. Sassy and serious."

*Grist* ([www.gristmagazine.com](http://www.gristmagazine.com)), which is a project of the *Earth Day Network*, will be on-line by the end of May. Giller, who was the editor of *Greenwire* until he went to Seattle to start *Grist*, says the project will be "the first original-content environmental magazine developed for the Web."

An exposé on the federal permitting process of mountaintop coal mining oper-

ations won **Ken Ward Jr.** of The *Charleston* (W.Va.) *Gazette* two awards. In March, he was recognized with the Stokes Award for energy and conservation reporting, and in April Ward captured the Scripps Howard Foundation's Roy Howard Award for Public Service Journalism.

The series sparked four federal investigations (all of which confirmed the paper's criticisms of the permitting process) and a lawsuit that has resulted in an injunction temporarily halting the permitting process of the biggest mountaintop operation to date. "It is one of the rare times that you write about corruption and someone does something about it," Ward says, "it was very gratifying." (Go to Bits & Bytes, p. 11, to see how Ken used computer-assisted reporting to research his stories).

## Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsy

**Monica Allen** and **David Helvarg** are heading overseas—again. This time the pair, joined by videographer **Robert Nesson**, will be running a reporters workshop on environmental issues of the Black Sea. It is part of a six-nation conference in Turkey, which is sponsored by the European Union and the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church.

Allen, the environmental reporter for the *New Bedford* (Mass.) *Standard-Times* hopes the weather will be nicer than in Poland where she and freelancer Helvarg last helped journalists learn the finer points of the environmental beat. (See opposite page.)

Those teachers among us may want to check out a new writing textbook co-authored by **Mark Neuzil** at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. The book is called *Writing Across the Media* and was published by Bedford/St. Martin's. It comes with a 60-minute videotape, instructor's guide, and access to a Web page with discussion questions and assignments.

It is back to the beat for **Peter Lord**. The environmental writer for the *Providence* (R.I.) *Journal* has been on

leave since last September. He spent that time working with young journalists at the University of Rhode Island. While there, Lord helped establish the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting and is also designing a minor in environmental journalism for the school's journalism department.

Fourteen journalists are the first class of fellows for a four-day workshop at the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting at the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography (see workshop details, page 9).

The first fellows are: **Larry Davey** of Interlock Media, (Cambridge, Mass.); **Florangela Davila** of the *Seattle Times*; **Heather Nann Davis** of *The Journal Day* (Manchester, Conn.); **Richard Gaffney** of Rick Gaffney & Associates, (Kailua-Kona, Hawaii); **Luis Grimaldi**, *Prensa Libre*, (Guatemala City, Guatemala); **Joe Haberstroh**, *Newsday*, (Melville, N.Y.); **Janine Landry**, *Newport Daily News*, (Newport, R.I.); **Amy Nevala**, freelance (Seattle); **Alex Pal Visayan**, *Daily Star*, (The Philippines); **Debi Pelletier**, *Stuart News*, (Stuart, Fla.); **John Richardson**, *Portland Press Herald*, (Portland, Maine); **Ariel Sabar**, *Providence Journal*, (Providence, R.I.); **Paul Tolme**, *Associated Press*, (Providence, R.I.); **Chris Woodside**, *The Day*, (New London, Conn.).

Every year, a handful of reporters try to turn themselves into scientists for a few weeks during the Science Writing Fellowship sponsored by the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. This spring and fall, **Perry Beeman**, the environment reporter for the *Des Moines Register* will spend two weeks working with researchers at Woods Hole, then will spend this another two weeks, this fall conducting experiments in the Brazilian Amazon.

*Did you get a new job? Are you starting a fellowship? Helping to teach or writing a book? Let your colleagues know! Send all professional news to George Homsy, phone: (617) 520-6857, email: [ghomsy@world.std.com](mailto:ghomsy@world.std.com), fax: (617) 868-8810.*



# First Stolberg award at LA Speakers set for MSU Institute

The first David Stolberg Meritorious Service Award will be awarded at the SEJ national conference in Los Angeles this fall, and SEJ members or others may submit nominations until July 15. The award will be given annually to the SEJ member whose service to the organization and fellow members epitomizes the volunteer spirit on which SEJ was built.

It is named in honor of Scripps Howard news executive David Stolberg, who provided the encouragement and financial support that allowed a group of environmental journalists to found SEJ in 1990.

The winner will be presented with a plaque. Names of winners will also be recorded on a plaque kept at the SEJ office

and displayed during national conferences.

Current members of the SEJ Board of Directors are not eligible. Prior board members are eligible, but only for work done prior to or after their tenure on the board.

Nomination letters should be no longer than one typed page and should summarize the nominee's volunteer contributions to SEJ. Supplemental materials may be submitted. The selection committee will consist of three judges appointed annually by the SEJ president.

Nominations should be mailed or e-mailed to Stolberg Award Nominations, SEJ, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118 or [crigel@sej.org](mailto:crigel@sej.org). ❖

## New Bookshelf editor joins SEJournal team

Mark Neuzil, a reporter and editor turned academic, has been named the new editor of the Book Shelf section of the *SEJournal*. He replaces Nancy Shute of *U.S. News and World Report*, who gave up editing the book review section after three years' service, because of an increased daily work load.

"Nancy did a great job, with erudite reviews of her own and careful editing of those by others," said *SEJournal* editor Noel Grove. "With Mark's experience and professionalism, Book Shelf continues in good hands."

Mark, an associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Environmental Studies Program at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, worked as an editor and reporter for the *Associated Press*, *The Star Tribune* (Minneapolis) and several other daily newspapers in the Midwest. His freelance

articles have appeared in *Better Homes and Gardens*, *the Christian Science Monitor*, *Field & Stream*, and others. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. His book, *Mass Media and Environmental Conflict: America's Green Crusades* (co-written with Bill Kovarik) was named an outstanding academic book of 1997 by *Choice* magazine.

He has reviewed books for both newspapers and academic journals, and has served as a book proposal reviewer for McGraw Hill and Iowa State University Press. His responsibilities as Book Shelf editor begin with the Summer issue of *SEJournal*.

Suggestions for books to be reviewed and offers to review books should be sent to Mark at the following address: University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105-1096. E-mail: [mrneuzil@stthomas.edu](mailto:mrneuzil@stthomas.edu). ❖

Steve Curwood, host of *National Public Radio's* "Living on Earth," will give the keynote address at the fourth Great Lakes Environmental Journalism Training Institute to be held June 1-5 at Michigan State University.

Curwood is one of more than 20 top journalists and environmental experts who will speak to the 25 journalists selected to attend the institute at MSU's Kellogg Conference Center. Among other top journalists scheduled to speak are Mike Mansur, Pulitzer Prize-winning environmental reporter at the *Kansas City Star* and president of the SEJ; Keith Schneider, former national environmental writer for the *New York Times*; Bud Ward, editor of *Environment Writer* and executive director of the Environmental Health Center in Washington, D.C.; David Hammond, managing editor of the Great Lakes Radio Consortium; and Jim Detjen, director of MSU's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism.

Other confirmed speakers include Mike Donahue, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission; Tom Baldini, chairman of the U.S. Section of the International Joint Commission; James Teeri, director of the University of Michigan's Global Climate Change Project; and Renata Claudi, an expert on zebra mussels and other exotic species for Ontario Hydro.

Journalists from the eight Great Lakes states and the Canadian province of Ontario are invited to apply. Those interested in attending next year's institute may contact Jim Detjen at (517) 353-9479, or visit Web site [www.journalism.msu.edu/environment/](http://www.journalism.msu.edu/environment/). Applications must be post-marked by March 15. No more than 25 applicants will be selected.

An effort will be made to train journalists with little formal background in environmental journalism, but those at all levels may apply. Those attending this year's institute will participate in hands-on computer-assisted reporting training sessions, visit an ecological research vessel on Lake Michigan and see how endangered trumpeter swans are being re-introduced into the Great Lakes' region. ❖

### Elections Committee will issue a call for candidates

SEJ's elections committee will issue on June 11 a call for candidates to run for the Board of Directors. Candidates must be active members in good standing. Candidate statements must be returned to the elections committee by July 26.

The election will take place at SEJ's Ninth National Conference in Los Angeles, Sept 17, 1999. Absentee ballots will be mailed to eligible voters on or

about August 14. To be eligible to vote in the 1999 Board election, active members must be in good standing (that is, current with dues) as of July 16.

Four seats will be up for reelection.

Associate and Academic representatives to the Board are elected every three years. The next election for these seats will be in 2001.

Watch your mail for details.



# Hot stories on Antarctica's ice

By DAVID HELVARG

There I was, on Torgersen island in the southern ocean, doing the first-ever recording of a penguin puking for science. After the bird, held tail-up over the bucket, was released, it shook its head, splashing regurgitated krill all over my boat-pants. Talk about getting too close to your story.

Then there was the time I was taking pictures of a leopard seal on an ice floe when a panicked penguin jumped into the Zodiac with us. Another time, while moving along at 15 knots two miles off the blue-white face of the Marr glacier our small rubber boat was bumped by a minke whale.

Sometimes you can have so much fun working as an environmental journalist it's hard to believe people pay you for the adventure.

One of those times for me was the six weeks I spent this past winter (which is the austral summer) at Palmer Station, Antarctica, the smallest of three U.S. science bases on the coldest, highest, driest of continents. I was there as part of a National Science Foundation program that facilitates several professional journalists visiting Antarctica each year. I'd submitted a two-page proposal in April, explaining what I wanted to cover, where I wanted to cover it (Palmer, on the island-studded, wildlife rich Antarctic Peninsula) and what outlets I'd be reporting for.

I was told the visit would be 10 days to two weeks. In September I got a call back saying that I was on for six weeks. The trick to Antarctic travel, I learned, is to go with the ice flow. I then took a battery of medical and dental exams. Those who "winter over" also have to take psychological tests, which struck me as pointless since anyone volunteering to spend five months in the dark and cold would by definition have to be nuts.

One of the magazines I was writing for flew me to Punta Arenas, Chile, where

on New Year's eve I boarded the 240-foot orange and yellow research/supply ship Laurence M. Gould. In Punta Arenas I was also provided with a duffel bag full of ECW (Extremely Cold Weather) gear for the duration of my trip. Four days after departure we arrived at Palmer,

## Grin & Bare It

which looks like a combination low-rent ski resort and outdoor heavy equipment dealership on a rocky boulder field below the ice of Anvers island. In the austral summer there were 23 hours of light per day and balmy weather, mostly in the 30s,



David Helvarg goes for the big picture

with occasional snow, rain, wind, and gale force storms, often on the same day—kind of like the Bay Area on steroids.

At Palmer I shared a room in GWR (Garage, Warehouse & Recreation) and an office with a view in the Biolab building. There I parked my laptop, had access to the internet eight hours a day (when the satellites dipped far enough south) and kept my hip packs containing notebooks, still camera, and radio gear. In the hallway I also kept my fleece, parka, sorel boots, and boat-pants. When the winds were below 20 knots (boating weather) I'd usually try and get out with one of the two lead scientists and their teams. Bill Frasier, a 25-year ice-veteran was studying climate and other impacts on Adelie

penguin colonies and Tad Day was studying Antarctica's only two flowering plants, pearlwort and hair grass, with his main "garden" on Stepping Stone island, south around the cold choppy waters of Bonaparte Point.

With 37 other people on station (27 men, 10 women) I found a companionable atmosphere in which people worked hard six days a week, and played hard on the seventh, climbing the glacier, visiting ice caves, taking the Zodiacs out in search of whales. They tended to be multi-talented for survival's sake. Sheldon Blackman, the base communications man, for example, turned out to be a good video shooter with his own DVD camera. Between that and my radio mike (jury-rigged as a boom) we were able to shoot a couple of segments for *CNN*, one on giant petrels—albatross-like scavenger birds—and another on rapid climate change taking place on the peninsula.

In such a bracing environment it's easy to be productive and I was able to achieve a kind of freelance perfecta, doing an online Internet diary for *Slate*, print stories and photos for magazines including *Sierra*,

*Sports Afield*, and *Travel & Leisure*, an opinion piece for the *NY Times*, TV (*CNN*) and radio (*Marketplace*, "The Environment" show).

The competition for the limited number of NSF journalist slots to Antarctica remains fierce but the rewards are considerable. There is also an NSF program for writers and artists (making us what, chopped seal liver?).

For more information contact NSF at (703) 306-1031.

*David Helvarg is an independent TV producer, journalist and author who is working on a new book, Blue Frontier—The fight to save America's living seas.*

## **Biologists rank reporters as educators**

# **Missing the boat on marine science**

By **SARA J. MCKINSTRY**

By reaching a large and diverse audience, the media have become a form of public education on the environment. According to one Roper survey, 68 percent of the American public gets most of its environmental information from television, 59 percent from newspapers, 32 percent from magazines, and 30 percent from radio. Policymakers also get environmental information from the media.

While public interest in and support of environmental issues has grown since the 1970s, the understanding of such issues has not grown concurrently. In a public poll on knowledge of environmental issues, conducted in December 1998 by The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation and Roper Starch Worldwide, the average score was 2.2, less than the 2.5 score generated by random guessing.

To study the role of both the media and scientists in educating the public on environmental issues, I teamed up with The New England Aquarium in Boston, Mass., and the Pew Fellows Program in Marine Conservation. We mailed an 11-page survey to 300 marine scientists across the U.S.; 136 responded. The scientists, mainly white males with doctorates in oceanography, biology, and ecology, work in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in marine laboratories and aquariums, and in universities and private firms.

*The two highest challenges scientists face with media are misquotation and getting the media interested.*

Questions included the following: What are the greatest problems facing the oceans today? How well does the media cover these and other environmental issues? What is a scientist's role in inter-

acting with the media, if any? Do scientists feel they have a responsibility to interact with the media and to get involved in marine policy making?

In general, media coverage of marine and environmental issues was rated poorly by the scientists in my survey. Fifty-five percent said television does not cover the issues very well, and 38 percent said the same of newspapers. Of other media, 35 percent of the scientists disparaged radio coverage, 23 percent did the same for Internet sites, and 13 percent gave magazines a failing grade.

While no direct causal relationship can be determined, media coverage of marine issues can lead to differences in opinion. Nearly 60 percent of the responding scientists said that scientists and the public disagree on important issues facing the oceans.

For example, the scientists cited overfishing and habitat alteration—through coastal development and urban and agricultural runoff—as the biggest problems facing the oceans today. In a 1996 opinion poll of over 1,000 Americans by SeaWeb, the public, on the other hand, cited oil spills, chemical runoff from large corporate farms, seafood contamination, and trash on beaches as some of the biggest problems.

More than 50 percent of my respondents agreed that the media do not understand the science behind environmental issues, are only interested in portraying environmental issues in antagonistic ways, and write about environmental issues crudely and confusingly. The scientists say the two highest challenges they face when dealing with the media are misquotation (88 percent of scientists agreed) and getting the media interested in their work (61 percent).

But there is encouraging news for the future. Over 90 percent of the scientists said they felt it was a scientist's responsibility to educate the public on marine issues. Nearly 70 percent said that scientists who interact regularly with the media are just doing their job; only 30 percent

questioned such scientists' research as having an agenda.

While most scientists will not go out of their way to contact the media or legislators, over 70 percent are willing to partici-

*News outlets need to allow journalists more time and space for environmental stories.*

pate in interviews, act as sources, or consult in the policy-making process if asked.

Over 60 percent of the scientists saw the media as an intermediary between the public and scientists. As such, they suggested ways to improve media coverage of environmental and marine issues. They also suggested that the media employ reporters who are environmentally and scientifically educated. News outlets also need to allow journalists more time and space to devote to more in-depth environmental stories, they said.

Journalists should cultivate more contact with scientists, including witnessing scientific research as it occurs. The scientists also requested guidance on how scientists themselves can give better interviews and report their findings more clearly.

If the public is to become more environmentally literate, the scientists feel, scientifically accurate stories that convey complex scientific issues must replace sensationalized, dramatized sound bites. Renowned biologist Jane Lubchencko has called for a "Social Contract for Science" in which scientists actively share knowledge, risks, uncertainties, and solutions with policymakers, managers, the media, and the public. Nearly 80 percent of the scientists in my survey agree.

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*Sara McKinstry, a former reporter for the Southbridge News in Southbridge, Mass., graduates this May with a master's degree in Environmental Economics and Policy from the Nicholas School of the Environment at Duke University. She hopes to write for magazines and newspapers on environmental issues.*



# From newswriter to newsmaker

## With wolves at the door, former reporter turns policy wonk

By MARK NEUZIL

For years, I told a good story about an encounter I had with a wild wolf in the Arrowhead region of Minnesota. A photographer and I were stumbling along a deer trail on one of those bitterly cold spring days when we rounded a sharp bend and almost ran over a wolf, going our direction. By the look of it, the animal had barely survived the winter. Skinny as a pipe cleaner and covered with mange, it limped off the trail into the woods almost as soon as it saw us.

People listened not because it was a story well-told, but because they had not heard anything like it. A run-in with a timberwolf was a rarity.

Not anymore. Minnesota now has 2,445 wolves running all over the upper one-third of the state—up from perhaps 350 at the end of the last bounty, in 1965. You can't swing a dead cat in the north woods anymore without hitting a wolf. The animals' time on the Endangered Species List in Minnesota is coming to an end, probably next year.

All of which makes for good copy. Normally, I'd be either reading the copy or writing it. But I ended up making it.

In late 1997, then-commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural

Resources, Rod Sando, created a citizen advisory board called the Minnesota Wolf Roundtable. The group was to write the management plan for the timberwolf once it came off the ESL and reverted to state control. Thirty-two Minnesotans representing views from the Safari Club to the Sierra Club were appointed to the panel, including me, one of three at-large members without a "vested interest."

After leaving daily journalism in 1993 to teach at the University of St. Thomas, I had developed an interest in wildlife law. Sando picked me because he'd read my book, *Mass Media and Environmental Conflict: America's Green Crusade*, and wanted someone with knowledge of touchy subjects and media. And the wolf in Minnesota is a hot button. This is the same state where a person or persons unknown captured a wolf, slit its throat and left it on the steps of the state capital in St. Paul to bleed all over the granite.

After many months of meetings, the Roundtable elected to apply most of the same rules that the federal "experimental" species designation uses for the Yellowstone wolves and others—no public taking, an aggressive damage control program, and state compensation for lost or injured livestock and dogs.



Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Olson/Wildlife Science Center

**Mark Neuzil examines a wolf skull**

As a neutral member, my primary role was as a deal-maker between the animal rights representatives and the farmers and hunters. In one instance, I supported a five-year ban on hunting and trapping—which time the issue can be reconsidered—which satisfied both sides. For dealing with the most contentious cases, a compromise allowed livestock owners to defend their animals against an attacking wolf providing they meet certain reporting conditions after the event. No one was entirely happy with the proposal, but all 32 voted for it. At this writing, it's being debated at the state legislature.

I stayed out of the news as much as I could, and found it rather easy to do; reporters covering the regular meetings and public hearings always sought out the extreme positions—the trappers association or the Farm Bureau—and left a guy in the middle of the road like me alone. At the end of the process, I was left with a feeling of satisfaction, not unlike the feeling I got as a daily journalist retelling a good story about an encounter with a wolf.

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*Mark Neuzil, a former reporter and editor for the Associated Press and the Minneapolis Star Tribune, teaches journalism and environmental studies at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul.*

### Hands-on activities at Metcalf Workshop

The first fellowships for attending a workshop at the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting were awarded to 14 journalists writing for broadcast, print, and electronic media (see *Media on the Move*, p. 5). The 14 were named to participate in a workshop May 22-26 at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, on a theme of "Measuring Change in the Coastal Environment: Water Pollution, Fisheries, Beach Erosion."

Housed at the University of Rhode Island, the Metcalf Fellows were to work with scientists in the laboratory and in the field, and hear lectures and a debate. The schedule called for them to conduct a fish trawl on Narragansett Bay, kayak and collect water samples on Narragansett River, visit a Geologic Information

Systems lab, and conduct geologic surveys of the southern Rhode Island coast.

Scheduled talks included Sandy Tolan, producer for *National Public Radio (NPR)*, speaking on "From Gloucester to Gaza: Social Tensions Over Scarce Resources." Cory Dean, science editor of *The New York Times*, would address how science is translated to the public. David Baron, science reporter for *NPR*, was named moderator of a debate entitled "Getting It On The Table: Why Can't Scientists Speak English, Why Can't Journalists Get It Right?"

The Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, named in honor of the late publisher of *The Providence Journal*, Michael Metcalf, was formed in 1997.

# Cruising trouble spots in Borneo

By WARIEF DJAJANTO BASORIE

The water was black before it was made into coffee. The pilot's mate on the riverboat I traveled on reached over the side, scooped a pot-full from the dark waters of a tributary of the Sekonyer River, and boiled it on a kerosene stove. In 30 minutes the boat's cook served steamy coffee, which I drank with no ill effects.

The color comes from the plants submerged along both banks of this river in south central Kalimantan, known to most people around the world as the Indonesian part of Borneo. In this area, the darker the water the better for drinking. It's the dull brown in the river's main body that signals trouble—pollution from upstream.

In December 1998, I was in a party of environment workers who traveled the 37.2-mile length of the Sekonyer to witness the problems of the Kalimantan interior. Our two klotoks—15-meter-long wooden motorized boats—started from the small but bustling port of Kumai tucked in a bight that faces south to the Java Sea. Its mouth features kilometers of nipa palms and mangrove swamps on both its banks.

The Sekonya serves as the western border of 1,025,050-acre Tanjung Puting National Park in Kalimantan. Polluted water is not the only problem in this largest protected area of tropical peat swamp and heath forest in Southeast Asia. Peat swamps cover wide parts of lowland Kalimantan, particularly along the west and south coasts. The park holds sought-after but dwindling tree species such as meranti, jelutung and ulin (ironwood). Its fauna include orangutans, gibbons, and hooked-nosed proboscis monkeys.

We reached the source of the brown-water contamination after four hours of steady chugging upriver. There small-time miners prospecting illegally on state land dig for gold, overturning the ground and creating sandpiles. Loose soil and sand wash into the water, causing the river to become shallow.

The miners also use mercury to bond with the grains of gold they collect, and residual mercury ends up in the river, which local people use for drinking water. A 1995 study revealed that the mercury content in the Sekonyer was 0.095



Photo courtesy of Budi Utomo/Kompaibindo

**A klotok heads up the Sekonyer**

milligram per liter of water—95 times greater than the amount acceptable for human health.

Besides pollution from mining, illegal logging is another concern within the park. Men hired by a town-based log merchant seek ramin, a tropical hardwood used for fine furniture. They come at night to avoid park rangers, explained chief ranger Herry Djoko Susilo, who earned a master's degree in parks and recreational areas from Michigan State in 1989. And they take full advantage of nature's ways. When the river flooded in November, the high level enabled the illegal loggers to cut trees and move their timber more swiftly downriver, an activity known as "flood felling."

Susilo says it is difficult to check on forest poachers with only 40 rangers to guard the vast park. "Must we keep alert 24 hours a day?" he asks in exasperation.

As if pollution and tree stealing weren't headaches enough, damage by fire was hot on the chief ranger's problem plate. The great forest fires in Kalimantan in 1997 that caused haze in Malaysia and Singapore more than a thousand kilometers away did not spare Tanjung Puting. The park lost thousands of acres of forest in its southern quadrant.

Susilo's men and teams of volunteers could manage small outbreaks of fires, using water pumped from the river. But they would contain one area above ground only to have flames spring forth again from the complex of peat burning beneath the surface.

Peat is plant material partly decomposed by the action of water. When people overturn the soil and expose the peat to the sun, it can catch fire even more easily. The widespread clearing of swamps in Kalimantan for rice fields and palm oil estates were a major cause of the big fires.

At the height of the forest fires in October 1997, Jakarta phoned Susilo to ask how he was coping. "The only thing we can do is pray," Susilo replied, referring to the underground fires. Perhaps in answer to prayers, December rains drenched the burning peat, but more than prayers will be needed in the future to remedy all the park's problems.

With trips such as ours, at least the problems are coming to light.

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*Warief Djajanto Basorie, former environment writer with the KNI News Service and the Manila-based DEPTHnews, now teaches journalism at the Dr. Soetomo Press Institute in Jakarta.*

## **SEJournal deadlines**

Summer '99 .....July 15, 1999  
 Fall '99 .....October 15, 1999  
 Winter '00 .....January 15, 2000  
 Spring '00 .....April 15, 2000

Send submissions to Noel Grove, editor, [ngrove1253@aol.com](mailto:ngrove1253@aol.com) or P.O. Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 20118.

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## The reporter's big time-saver

# CAR makes project possible

By KEN WARD JR.

Environmental journalism has always been a hotbed of computer-assisted reporting (CAR). A reporter who wants to analyze thousands of toxic chemical emissions had better learn CAR or face spending a couple years with a notepad and calculator. A newspaper that wants to give its readers the locations of hundreds of hazardous waste dumps might never get the story in print without a database manager and mapping software.

My own experience with environmental CAR dates back to 1991, when I first came to the *Charleston* (W.Va.) *Gazette*. At the time, we had only one old computer that had a decent-sized hard-drive. I learned to do a few crude searches on the National Library of Medicine's ToxNet service, and put together the standard "Top 10" pollutants stories. Later, I used ToxNet to compare the potential emissions from a pulp and paper mill proposed here to similar mills across the country.

My CAR work got a major boost over the past two years. The *Gazette* bought decent computers for four reporters, including me. Then I attended the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (<http://www.nicar.org>) national conference in Indianapolis in March 1998, and got training in spreadsheets, database managers, and the Internet. I also learned how other reporters are using computers.

Since then, I've produced a variety of CAR stories. For example, last summer there was a trial in federal court in Charleston of a toxic tort case filed against a Rhone-Poulenc chemical plant for a chemical leak a few years ago. A jury found for the company, but when the verdict came out the lawyer representing folks who live near the plant claimed his suit had forced the company to clean up its act and operate more safely. I was skeptical.

With a few hours research on the EPA Emergency Response Notification System web site, <http://www.epa.gov/docs/ERNS/>, I was able to download local chemical accident reports and show that the company had continued to have leaks, some bigger than the one that prompted the lawsuit. We published a neat little sidebar the day after the verdict, complete with a chart showing information about all of the leaks I found in the ERNS database. This added punch to our coverage of the trial and was a story that our afternoon newspaper competition didn't have.

I have also found that CAR is the only way to do long-term environmental reporting projects in a manageable or timely way. Last year, the *Gazette* published a series of articles called "Mining the Mountains," examining mountaintop removal strip mining.

Unlike old-time strip mining which chipped away at hill-sides to uncover coal, this technique blasts away entire mountaintops to reach paydirt. Normally, strip mines must be reclaimed to their "approximate original contour," or AOC. Mountaintop removal mines can ignore that standard and flatten out land if they submit plans showing how the area will be used for future economic development.

Like others, I suspected that most mountaintop removal

mines did not have plans for future development. Employees at the state Division of Environmental Protection said they didn't know about plans for all mountaintop removal mines, but they would have field inspectors go through permits to find out. Going through dozens of paper files promised to be an exercise that could take months.

So I huddled with a couple of guys in the DEP computer record-keeping section who told me they had a system that maintained information about mines permitted in the state. After acquiring a copy of parts of their database, I started doing my own research, and found a number of disturbing trends:

- The state didn't know how many mountaintop removal mines it had authorized. Permit writers and inspectors never bothered to fill in the database field that indicated what type of mine they were permitting.
- Environmentalists had told me that mountaintop removal was increasing. Industry officials said it wasn't. By running a few queries in FoxPro on a state database, I wrote a story explaining which side was right.
- Most importantly, most of the 134 mountaintop removal mines I was able to identify did not submit post-mining development plans when they were given permits by the state.

The results were two lengthy Sunday features published in May and August 1998. The articles prompted an investigation by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining, and by at least one congressman, Rep. Nick J. Rahall, D-W.Va. Now the state DEP is modifying its database and completing a project to fix the record-keeping problems I identified. My stories are available on the *Gazette's* website at <http://wvgazette.com/mining>.

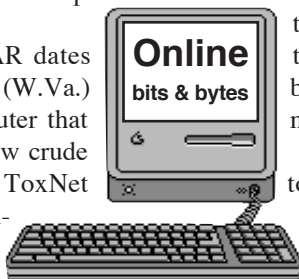
Last September, Gardiner Harris of the *Louisville Courier-Journal* conducted a similar investigation of mountaintop removal mining in Kentucky. Harris, who used CAR to produce a landmark series in April 1998 on black lung disease among coal miners, examined computerized state mining permit databases. He found the same types of problems, and his article has prompted an investigation by OSM officials in Kentucky.

Even if you're not up to—or given time for—a big project, you can use CAR to help with environmental reporting. For example, in writing about the ongoing debate over EPA's ozone transport regulations, I have used the agency web site to download lengthy documentation about the issue. This gives me quicker access to the primary sources, rather than relying on regional EPA flacks to send me press releases or industry lobbyists to provide their take on the controversy.

Also, keeping all those hefty reports on my hard drive instead of in piles on and around my desk has cut down on the cubicle clutter substantially, something every environmental reporter I know would welcome.

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*Ken Ward writes about the environment for the Charleston Gazette in West Virginia.*



## JUNE

5-11. **American Industrial Hygiene Conference** (including sessions on electric and magnetic field effects, groundwater and soil remediation, noise pollution, cleaning up indoor-air problems, and controlling air pollutants). Toronto. Contact: AIHCE '99, 1200 G St., NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20005-3967. URL: <http://www.aiha.org>

6-11. **Subsurface Remediation: Improving Long-term Monitoring and Remedial Systems Performance** (with focus on describing natural and chemical technologies to protect or clean up polluted soils and groundwater). St. Louis. Contact: Rebecca Glos, SAIC, MS R-4-3, 11251 Roger Bacon Dr., Reston, VA 20190. Phone: (703) 318-4797. Fax: (703) 736-0826. E-mail: [rebecca.l.glos@cpmx.saic.com](mailto:rebecca.l.glos@cpmx.saic.com). URL: <http://www.clu-in.org>

7-9. **Intersessional Meeting on the Operations of the Convention on Biological Diversity**. Montreal. Contact: Biodiversity Secretariat, World Trade Center, 393 St. Jacques St., Ste. 300, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2Y 1N9. Phone: (514) 288-2220. Fax: (514) 288-6588. E-mail: [secretariat@biodiv.org](mailto:secretariat@biodiv.org). URL: <http://www.biodiv.org>

7-9. **An international congress on industrial ecology**, sustainable development, environmental diplomacy, achieving zero-emissions industries; and strategies to introduce "eco-competitiveness" to transportation, pulp and paper, chemicals, and electronics industries. Paris, France. Contact: Penny Allen, Association for Colloquia on the Environment, 2 Avenue de la République, 92340 Bourg-la-Reine, Paris, FRANCE. Phone: (33)-1-4542-8964. Fax: (33)-1-4543-1187. E-mail: [cbona@club-internet.fr](mailto:cbona@club-internet.fr)

9-11. **Ag BioTech World Forum: New Frontiers in Agricultural Biotechnology** (sponsored by several biotech and seed publications, this conference will focus on such topics as transgenic fruits and vegetables, the status of labeling policies and regulations, food safety, and developing human pharmaceutical proteins— including edible vaccines). Las Vegas. Contact: IBC, 458 Park Ave., Worcester, MA 01610-1227. Phone: (508) 481-6400. Fax: (508) 481-7911. E-mail: [inq@ibcusa.com](mailto:inq@ibcusa.com). URL: <http://www.ibcusa.com/2313>

13-16. **Environmental Vehicles and Alternative Fuels Conference**. Ypsilanti, Mich. Contact: Geraldine Robak, The Engineering Society, 26100 American Dr., Ste. 500, Southfield, MI 48034. Phone: (248) 355-2910, ext. 11. Fax: (248) 355-1492. E-mail: [esd@esd.org](mailto:esd@esd.org). URL: [http://www.esd.org/conf/env\\_conf.html](http://www.esd.org/conf/env_conf.html)

15-16. **Implementing the Kyoto Protocol** (a conference sponsored by the Royal Institute of International Affairs). London, England. Contact: Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, 10 St. James Square, London, United Kingdom SW1&Y 4LE. Phone: (44)171-957-5754. Fax: (44)171-321-2045. E-mail: [mgray@riia.org](mailto:mgray@riia.org). URL: <http://www.riia.org/Conferences/cond.html>

15-17. **Agricultural Biotechnology: Food, Feed, & Fiber** (featuring sessions on introducing transgenic foods, handling questions about risk, intellectual property issues, and recent genetic developments). San Diego. Contact: Laura Powers, International Quality & Productivity Center, 150 Clove Rd., P.O. Box 401, Little Falls, NJ 07424-0401. Phone: (800) 882-8684. Fax: (973) 256-0211. E-mail: [info@iqpc.com](mailto:info@iqpc.com). URL: <http://www.iqpc.com>

20-24. **Air & Waste Management Association's Annual Meeting** (sessions on particulates and regional haze, ozone, biomass burning, air toxics, control technologies, indoor air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, municipal waste treatment, medical wastes, emissions inventories, health effects of air pollutants, compo). St. Louis. Contact: Sandra Provenzo, A&WMA, One Gateway Center, 3rd Fl., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Phone: (412) 232-3444, ext. 3159. E-mail: [sprovenzo@awma.org](mailto:sprovenzo@awma.org). URL: <http://www.awma.org>

21-24. **Fire & Grit: Working for Nature in Community—A Millennium Conference** (sponsored by the Orion Society, this conference seeks to initiate "dialogs" led by grassroots environmental leaders and others on subjects related to conservation, restoration, education, environmental justice, and economic reform). Shepherdstown, WV. Contact: Laurie John Lane-Zucker, The Orion Society, 195 Main St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. Phone: (413) 528-4422. Fax: (413) 528-0676. E-mail: [orion@orionsociety.org](mailto:orion@orionsociety.org). URL: <http://www.orionsociety.org>

23-25. **International Conference on Phytoremediation** (with sessions on how to use growing plants to collect or break down pollution). Toronto. Contact: Abby Votto, IBC USA. Phone: (508) 481-4473

23-26. **International Interdisciplinary Conference on the Environment**. Baltimore. Contact: Demetri Kantarelis or Kevin L. Hickey, IEA, Assumption College, 50 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01615. Phone: (508) 767-7557 or 7296. Fax: (508) 767-7382. E-mail: [dkantar@assumption.edu](mailto:dkantar@assumption.edu). URL: <http://champion.iupui.edu/~mreiter/iea.htm>

24-25. **International Conference on Asthma and Environmental Pollution**. Houston. Contact: V.M. Bhatnagar, Alena Chemicals of Canada, P.O. Box 1779, Cornwall, Ontario, Canada K6H 5V7. Phone: (613) 932-7702

27-30. **Forest Ecology into the Next Millennium** (including sessions on biodiversity, modeling forests under climate change, conserving invertebrates, roles of pollinators, and plantation designs). Orono, Maine. Contact: Jane Walsh, University of Maine, 2nd NAFEW, Catering and Conference Services, 5780 Wells Conference Center, Orono, ME 04469-5780. URL: <http://www.umaine.edu/fes/nafew>

## JULY

11-14. **International Low-Level (Radioactive) Waste Conference** (with sessions on treatment, shipments, and disposal of fuels). McAfee, NJ. Contact: Michele Samoulides, Electric

Power Research Institute, P.O. Box 10412; Palo Alto, CA 94303-0813. Phone: (650) 855-2127. Fax: (650) 855-2166.  
E-mail: msamouli@epri.com

**24-27. Fifth Biennial Conference on Communication and Environment** (Interdisciplinary conference that examines historical and contemporary perspectives on environmental communication). Flagstaff, Arizona. Contact: Brant Short, School of Communication, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011. Phone: (520) 523-4701. Fax: (520) 523-1505.  
E-mail: brant.short@nau.edu.  
URL: <http://www.nau.edu/~soc/p/ecrc/confer.html>

## AUGUST

**1-7. International Botanical Congress** (only convened three times in this century, these international botanical congresses are major events, with this one focusing on conserving endangered plants, risks of biotechnology, harmful algal blooms, unintended introductions of non-native plants, and how plants and climate change converge). St. Louis. Contact: Ellen Wilson, Burness Communications, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste. 1340, Bethesda, MD 20814. Phone: (301) 652-1558 ext 108. Fax: (301) 654-1589. E-mail: ewilson@burnessc.com.  
URL: <http://www.burnessc.com/press>

**9-12. 1999 Stockholm Water Symposium: Urban Stability Through Integrated Water-Related Management** (focusing on future strategies for urban water management; using a systems approach, the '99 Symposium will identify and formulate criteria and strategies for urban planning and development, paying adequate attention to different perspectives, stakeholder groups, and the environmental preconditions as defined by the "water address"). Stockholm, Sweden. Contact: Dave Trouba, Stockholm International Water Institute, 106 36 Stockholm, SWEDEN. Phone: (468) 736 20 78. Fax: (468) 736 20 22.  
E-mail: dave.trouba@siwi.org.  
URL: <http://www.siw.org/sws1999/sws1999.html>

**29-Sept. 2. Biomass: A Growth Opportunity in Green Energy and Value-Added Products** (sessions on carbon credits from biomass, biofuels for electricity, biomass conversions to chemical and fibers, environmental ramifications, gasification for utilities, and challenges in valuing biomass for green electricity markets). Oakland. Contact: Fourth Biomass Conference of the Americas, 1617 Cole Blvd, MS 1613, Golden, CO 80401-3393. Fax: (303) 275-2905. URL: <http://www.nrel.gov/bioam>

## SEPTEMBER

**16-19. Society of Environmental Journalists** (the ninth national conference of the Society, hosted by the University of California-Los Angeles). Los Angeles. (See story, p. 4.) Contact: Beth Parke, executive director, PO Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118-0280. Phone: (215) 836-9970. Fax: (215) 836-9972. E-mail: sej@sej.org. URL: <http://www.sej.org/conferences>

**20-23. EPA Region III Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Conference** (of interest to emergency planners

and responders, civilian and military environmental coordinators, medical and industry personnel). Washington, D.C., at the Washington Hilton and Towers Hotel. Contact: Diane Varhola, KRA Corporation, 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 890, Silver Spring, MD 20901. Phone: (877) 804-CEPP. Fax: (301) 495-9410. E-mail: dvarhola@kra.com.  
URL: <http://www.epacepp.com>

**20-23. International Conference on Environmental Radioactivity in the Arctic.** Edinburgh, Scotland. Contact: SEPA Public Affairs. Phone: (44) 1786-45-7700. Fax: (44) 1786-44-8040. E-mail: public.affairs@sepa.org.uk

**30-Oct. 2. The Greening of the Campus: Theory and Reality** (exploring opportunities for college and university campuses to provide environmental awareness and sensitivity). Muncie, Ind. Contact: Becky Amato, University College NQ323, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306-0220. Phone: (765) 285-2385. Fax: (765) 285-2384. E-mail: bamato@bsu.edu. URL: <http://www.bsu.edu/greening>

## OCTOBER

**18-20. International Workshop on Ultraviolet Radiation Exposure, Measurement, and Protection** (including sessions on health effects of exposures from lasers, sun lamps, and outdoor exposure, and the efficacy of protective measures such as shade, clothing, sunglasses and sunscreens). Chilton, England. Contact: Colin Driscoll, National Radiological Protection Board, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon, United Kingdom OX11 0RQ. Phone (for press): (44) 1235-822744. Fax: (44) 1235-822601. E-mail: colin.driscoll@nrbp.org.uk. URL: <http://www.nrbp.org.uk>

**18-21 15th Annual Conference on Contaminated Soils** (including sessions on bioremediation, chemical analysis, case studies, brownfields, military installations, chlorinated pesticides and other chemicals, jet fuel, MTBE, and role of growing plants in cleanups). Amherst, Mass. Contact: Denise Leonard, Environmental Health Sciences, N344 Morrill, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. Phone: (413) 545-1239. Fax: (413) 545-4692. E-mail: dleonard@schoolph.umass.edu. URL: <http://www.aehs.com>

## NOVEMBER

**16-17 Wetlands and Remediation: An International Conference** (encompassing the remediation of contaminated wetlands and the use of natural and constructed wetlands for the remediation of contaminated waste and wastewater). Salt Lake City, Utah. Contact: Karl Nehring, Battelle, 505 King Ave., Columbus, OH 43201. Phone: (614) 424-6510. Fax: (614) 424-3667. E-mail: nehringk@battelle.org.  
URL: <http://www.battelle.org/conferences/>

Check SEJ's web site at [www.sej.org](http://www.sej.org) for calendar updates. On the home page, click on the link: "SEJ's environmental events calendar."

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# Advocacy manual

*Green Ink: An Introduction to Environmental Journalism*

by Michael Frome

University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, 1998

195 pp., \$19.95 (paperback)

If you're among the environmental journalists who find themselves ready to leave mainstream journalism, this book is for you.

Frome, one of the nation's foremost authors on nature conservation, turned to teaching journalism late in his career. In *Green Ink*, he offers a provocative message: Advocacy journalism on the environmental beat is a venerable and worthy profession. Whether or not you agree, Frome offers insights that will enrich your understanding of the genre.

For several years, until his retirement, Frome taught a popular course in advocacy environmental journalism at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Wash.,—without apologies. He acknowledges that by doing so he violated principles held dear by many practitioners of the profession. "Advocacy writing is to the mainstream media and to many journalism schools sheer anathema," he writes. "They want writing to be free of 'value judgments', without evidence of imagination or sense of person."

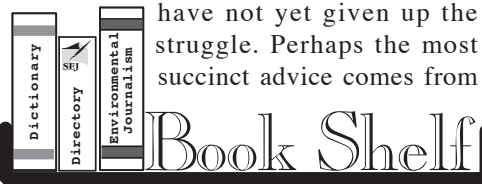
Frome sees it differently: "The best journalism carries authority and a sense of purpose. Literate writing, advocacy writing, contributes to a view of the world that is more rather than less complicated."

To this reader, what Frome calls advocacy journalism sounds closer to investigative reporting or interpretive writing than flat-out advocacy. "When reporters cover environmental issues, they go mostly to accepted authorities and official sources, accessible and respectable," he complains. "The independent-minded, irreverent reporter who digs through files and interviews dissenters is apt to pay the price of a complaint from the editor for that unforgivable sin, 'losing objectivity.'" Maybe, but that could also mean that he or she is working for the wrong newspaper.

Frome offers a distillation of his own experience here, including a brief but promising stint at the *Washington Post* after World War II, 10 years as a travel

writer with the American Automobile Association, and long stints as a columnist for *American Forests* and *Field and Stream*. Eventually new editors at both magazines nudged him out when they concluded his commentary on political matters was rubbing their subscribers the wrong way. He went on to write several books about public land issues, including the classic *Strangers in High Places, a history of the Great Smoky Mountains*.

In one of the book's most useful sections, Frome offers practical advice for the journalist who chooses the rocky path of free-lance writing, drawn from interviews with those who have made it, or at least have not yet given up the struggle. Perhaps the most succinct advice comes from



writer T.H. Watkins: "Read absolutely everything on the subject you can find, then unearth another way of presenting it, another angle, better research, a legitimate challenge to accepted truth—or find yourself another Love Canal."

Frome inevitably offers a roster of martyrs on the environment beat. Full disclosure demands that I mention my inclusion on that list. In March of 1994, I appeared with Frome on a panel at an academic conference in Reno, Nev., entitled "Media and the Environment: Passion, Politics and Empowerment." I was candid about the challenges I faced in setting aside my feelings about the logging of old-growth forests in order to maintain my professionalism as an environmental reporter. Too candid, as it turned out. Four months later, I was reassigned, and I subsequently left my newspaper job. To my surprise, I found my words at that long-ago conference quoted in Frome's book.

My story is hardly unique. It is worth asking what it is about advocacy and the environmental beat that prompts some reporters to forfeit professional advancement and financial security so they can keep doing what they love. Perhaps, as Frome suggests, it is that environmental journalism is a calling.

"Environmental writing reaches deeper, with beginning, middle, and end integrally joined," Frome writes. "It examines interlocking systems that touch every aspect of life: science, botany, biology,

economics, history, politics, ethics, and religion. It is not necessary to know them all, but the ability to ask questions and digest answers is a skill in itself, the basis of writing with breadth and perspective . . . It plays by a set of rules based on a consciousness different from the dominant modern American society."

—Kathie Durbin



## Handling the media

*The Piracy of America: Profiteering in the Public Domain.*

Edited by Judith Scherff

Clarity Press, Inc., Atlanta, Ga., 1999

278 pp., \$18.50 (paperback)

Learn how corporations completely circumvent the media. Find out more about the Wise Use movement that counteracts the efforts of environmentalists. Read about rent-a-scientist and news pollution.

It's all contained in *The Piracy of America*, a collection of searing articles by such authors as David Orr, Conger Beasley Jr., Douglas Trent, Wes Jackson, and John Stauber.

The piece entitled "News Pollution," by Stauber and co-author Sheldon Rampton, is particularly riveting. Both men work for the non-profit Center for Media & Democracy in Madison, Wis., and edit the investigative quarterly *PR Watch*. They are also co-authors of *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*, and *Mad Cow U.S.A.: Could the Nightmare Happen Here?*

The section on video news releases (VNR) produced by PR firms offers a detailed inside look at how these pre-packed promotions get used as legitimate news by deadline-maddened or budget-strapped TV stations.

An excerpt: "VNRs are as much a public relations fixture as the print news release," stated George Glazer, a senior vice president of Hill & Knowlton. "In fact, many public relations firms are well into the second generation of VNR technology. We use satellite transmissions from our own facilities almost on a daily basis, and wait eagerly for fiber optics systems to allow us to dial into nationwide networks."

“News Pollution” points to databases that PR firms keep on environmental journalists. For example, former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Dean Rotbart runs a firm called TJFR Products and Services, “which compiles dossiers on his former colleagues so that corporate clients know how to manipulate individual members of the media,” according to Stauber.

One edition of Rotbart’s TFJR Environmental News Reporter notes that Peter Dykstra, from *CNN*’s environmental unit, worked for Greenpeace for 11 years.

John Passacantando’s piece, “How Industry Combats Climate Protection,” spotlights among many things how an ad agency with a \$500,000 budget placed a 60-second spot on the Rush Limbaugh Show to counter global warming theorists. The bill was paid by the Information Council for the Environment (ICE), which had on its board key players in the fossil fuel industry. ICE hoped to show evidence of global warming was lacking, and to nudge the public away from alternative fuel sources.

Tarso Luis Ramos discusses the Wise Use movement in his article “Mobilizing Against Environmentalism.” An excerpt: “By characterizing environmental regulations as a principal cause of job loss and economic dislocation, and promoting activism as the only defense against economic ruin and government tyranny, Wise Use organizers have spawned anti-environmental citizens groups in communities throughout the West and the nation, dominating local politics with an industry agenda and building a power at the state and national levels.”

*Piracy* belongs on every journalist’s bookshelf.

—David Liscio



## Water warriors

*The Riverkeepers*

By John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
A Touchstone Book Published by Simon & Schuster, 1997  
302 pp., \$14 (paperback)

This is a story of grassroots activists, fishermen, boaters, and blue-collar workers who join scientists and lawyers in cor-

porate board rooms and the courts to clean waters polluted by urban growth and industrial success.

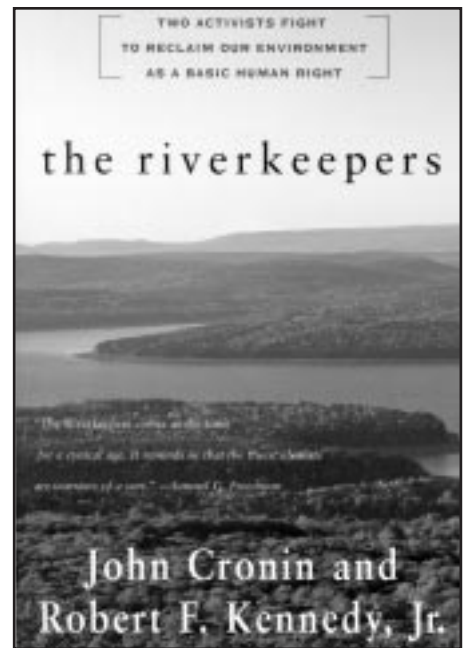
The idea of a riverkeeper started with Hudson River fisherman Bob Boyle in 1969. The Hudson River fishermen knew people were concerned about the environment as Earth Day 1970 dawned. Hatched over coffee and beer, the idea of river-keeping became reality in 1983 when the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association began the Riverkeeper program, and the two organizations merged in 1986. From New York’s Hudson River, the Riverkeepers spawned branches from San Francisco and San Diego to New Jersey and Georgia.

First, John Cronin tells his story from the standpoint of his career as a commercial fisherman who worked in all hours and in all weather until he became the first Hudson Riverkeeper in 1983. The fishermen believed in their fundamental rights to protect themselves from pollution spewing from factories, landfills, and toxic dumps. That’s why they organized and knocked on doors of young, eager lawyers such as Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Raised in wealth, but with a sense of public responsibility, Kennedy recounts the same love as Cronin for fishing and wading and swimming in the Hudson. Whether battling the Edison Electric Institute, a powerful representative of major utilities, or corporate giants such as General Electric, Cronin and Kennedy delved into the muck pouring from a hidden pipe in the dead of night to bring evidence of environmental crimes to an often indifferent judicial system. And sometimes, to their surprise, they won.

The Hudson River environmentalism has become a national model for activists trying to protect ecosystems anywhere. The striking thing about the book is its wealth of knowledge about environmental law from the Magna Carta to the current state of environmental justice. These themes flow along with the Hudson River, giving the reader a feel for the urgency and power rooted in the lives of ordinary men and women who search for environmental order.

The authors say at the end that Americans do not share a common culture, history, language, race, or religion, but what makes one an American is a commit-



ment to democracy and the land. It is refreshing to read how communities come together to tackle environmental problems.

—Mary Manning

## CEO Epiphany

*Mid-Course Correction*

by Ray C. Anderson  
The PeregrinZilla Press, Atlanta, 1998  
208 pp., \$17.95 (softcover)

This is succinct evangelism at its best. You can tell this Georgia carpet manufacturer has “seen the light” and wants to spread the gospel. But what makes this book unusual and worthwhile reading is hearing such sophisticated environmental preaching from a businessman, in the language business people like best: the bottom line.

Anderson draws on, and credits, the work of others—notably Paul Hawken, Bill McDonough, Daniel Quinn, and Karl-Henrik Robert—but his voice is that of a CEO of a billion-dollar company in the middle of its own mid-course correction and partway to becoming sustainable.

There are a lot of Big Ideas here—familiar to most environmental journalists, but probably not to most corporate executives. Among them:

(Continued next page...)

These and other books are available on the web at [www.sej.org](http://www.sej.org). Click on the “SEJ Store” link.

- the notion that it took the first billion years for the toxins of planetary creation to sink safely below the Earth's crust, while in the blink of an eye since the industrial revolution, humans have mined, drilled, and excavated those same toxins back up to the surface;

- the need for a more honest accounting system for business and government, one which includes the true value of natural resources and the cost of cleanup necessary after extracting and using them;

- an action plan for businesses that equates waste with inefficiency and lost profits.

There is a cult-like tone to Anderson's book. It is replete with lists of things like the 3 P's (people, product, place), the 4 system conditions and the 7 Fronts (to sustainability) and acronyms like QUEST (Quality Utilizing Employees

Suggestions and Teamwork) and PLET-SUS (Practices LEading Toward SUstainability). But what saves Anderson's book from being just another flavor-of-the-month business reinvention how-to is his comprehensible style and—for the most part—graphics. Even the preachiness works. By the time I put the book down, I was almost ready to go up to the pulpit and deliver my own sermon.

The fact that Anderson has actual results to show the economic value of running an environmentally responsible corporation gives the proselytizing a real-world punch. He claims that in just the second year of doing business more sustainably, his carpet company—Interface—increased sales by \$200 million without extracting any additional petrochemicals or raw materials from Earth's lithosphere. One key shift was moving away from car-

pet sales and instead toward carpet leasing, with Interface taking back the carpet and recycling it at the end of its life. Anderson's ultimate goal is to extract zero materials and emit zero waste sometime in the 21st century. In other words, to recycle everything to close the loop.

Ironically, while capitalism went global in search of greater profits, globalization may end up driving the green business agenda by making the interconnections and limits of Earth's ecosystem more obvious. As business increasingly has to solve costly problems of emissions and toxics, energy efficiency, and transportation to stay competitive, *Mid-Course Correction* has the potential to become a key road map for CEOs. In the meantime, it's an excellent primer on the emerging green business philosophy for journalists.

—Christy George

**New SEJ members from 2/8/99—5/12/99**

**ALASKA**

- Doug O'Harra (Active), *Anchorage Daily News*, *We Alaskans Magazine*,

**ARIZONA**

- Jennifer E. Sterba (Active), *Casa Grande Dispatch*, *Casa Grande*

**CALIFORNIA**

- Andrew D. Bridges (Active), *Pasadena Star News*, *Pasadena*

- Frances Fernandes (Active), *Press Enterprise*, *Riverside*

- Matt Fitzsimons (Active), *The Desert Sun*, *Palm Springs*

- Jackie Alan Giuliano (Active), *Environment News Service*, *Venice*

- Matt Golec (Academic), *University of Calif. School of Journalism*, *Berkeley*

- David Gross (Academic), *University of Calif. School of Journalism*, *Berkeley*

- Tony Hopfinger (Active), *Redding Record Searchlight*, *Redding*

- Christina S. Johnson (Active), *North County Times*, *Editorial Dept*, *San Diego*

- Lesley Kirk (Academic), *San Diego State University Journalism Department*

- Robin Musitelli (Active), *Santa Cruz County Sentinel*, *Santa Cruz*

- Emily K. Noha (Academic), *University of California, Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology*, *Santa Barbara*

- Mitch Tobin (Active), *Napa Valley Register*, *Yountville*

- Anita Wadhvani (Academic), *University of California School of Journalism*, *Berkeley*

**COLORADO**

- Jennifer Bowles (Active), *Associated Press*, *Boulder Bureau*

- Laura L Levaas (Active), *The Greeley Tribune*, *Greeley*

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

- Britt Erickson (Active), *American Chemical Society*, *Analytical Chemistry*,

- Caron Gibson (Associate) *Negative Population Growth*, *Population Ltd*,

- Kivi Leroux (Active)

- David Whitman (Active), *US News & World Report*

**FLORIDA**

- Tressa Whalen (Academic), *University of South Florida*, *St. Petersburg*

**GEORGIA**

- Juliet Charney (Active), *Atlanta*

**ILLINOIS**

- Melissa Ramsdell Knopper (Active), *The Daily Herald*, *Chicago*

**MASSACHUSETTS**

- John Loretz (Active), *Medicine & Global Survival*, *Cambridge*

- Tom Walsh (Active), *Patriot Ledger*, *Newton*

**MARYLAND**

- Brian J. Hewitt (Active), *Finger Lakes Productions International*, *Silver Spring*

**MICHIGAN**

- Gregory Dunn (Associate) *Acton Institute*, *Acton Notes*, *Grand Rapids*

- Kelly A. MacVoy (Active), *Cedar Springs Post*, *Grand Rapids*

- Chris M. O'Neal (Academic), *University of Michigan*, *Department of*

*Biology*, *Ann Arbor*

**NORTH CAROLINA**

- Baltazar P. Quinain (Active), *The Anson Record*, *Wadesboro*

**NEW YORK**

- Wayne A. Hall (Active), *Times Herald-Record*, *Editorial Department*, *Cornwall-on-Hudson*

- Keith Kloor (Associate) *Audubon Magazine*, *New York*

**TEXAS**

- Ingrid Truemper (Active), *Steven Publishing Corporation*, *Environmental Protection Magazine*, *Dallas*

**VIRGINIA**

- Ron Geatz (Associate), *Nature Conservancy Magazine*, *Arlington*

- David L. Haase (Active), *National Journal*, *Greenwire*, *Alexandria*

- David Hosansky (Active), *Falls Church*

**WASHINGTON**

- Orlando De Guzman (Active), *KUOW Public Radio*, *Seattle*

**WISCONSIN**

- Nikki Kallio (Active), *Wausau Daily Herald*, *Wausau*

**WEST VIRGINIA**

- Jack E. Fayak (Active), *WCHS TV8*, *Charleston*

**AUSTRALIA**

- Murray Griffin (Active), *Asia Environmental Review*, *Marrickville*

**VIRGIN ISLANDS**

- Dana Anderson-Villamagna (Active), *Virgin Islands Daily News*, *Christiansted*



# Anticipating partial disclosures

By PAUL ORUM

As stipulated by the Clean Air Act, 112(r), an estimated 66,000 facilities that use extremely hazardous chemicals have until June 21 to report to the EPA what could happen in a chemical accident, from the most-likely accident to a worst-case scenario. Much of the information will be available to the public on the Internet. Some in the chemical industry and government are resisting full disclosure and are working to restrict communication about chemical hazards. (See editor's note, below.)

The Working Group on Community Right-to-Know in Washington, D.C., believes that their arguments are not valid, and that full disclosure of accident scenarios is necessary to overcome institutional complacency, to encourage safer technologies, and to honor the public's right-to-know. For journalists planning on interviewing company spokespersons about the June disclosures, following are some sample objections you may hear, and possible responses to them. More may be seen at the web site: [www.rtk.net/wcs](http://www.rtk.net/wcs).

## **Worst-case scenarios provide a "blueprint" on how to sabotage industrial facilities.**

Risk Management Plans (RMP) do not include any information about how to sabotage an industrial facility—no technical data about how to cause a "worst-case" event, no tank locations, no plant security information, and no classified information.

## **Keeping information off the Internet will prevent "terrorists" from targeting chemical plants.**

Anyone can get information about the largest and most dangerous facilities storing chemicals without using the Internet (or using information already on the Internet). People can obtain information from the telephone book, direct observation, trade publications, industry public relations events, common sense, and other sources.

## **Disclosing worst-case scenarios will compromise national security.**

The U.S. EPA has specifically prohibited facilities from including any classified information in their Risk

Management Plans (61 FR 31726).

## **The EPA is taking sufficient steps to reduce chemical hazards.**

The U.S. EPA has never used its clear legal authority under the Clean Air Act, 112(r)(7)(A) and 112(r)(9), to reduce the hazards that the chemical industry brings into communities. Nor do the security agencies, Congress, or industry have a serious, quantifiable program to prevent these hazards.

## **The industry is taking sufficient steps to reduce chemical hazards.**

The industry has no quantifiable pub-



lic pledge and timeline to reduce worst-case vulnerability zones. Yet companies can reduce hazards by using safer chemicals, reducing process pressures or volumes, adding secondary containment or automatic shut-off devices, and widening buffer zones.

## **An EPA-funded study says putting information on the Internet increases risks.**

The study, by AEGIS, estimated relative risk using an undefined "x" as the baseline risk—but if "x" is very small (as experts believe), then two times "x" is also tiny. Remarkably, AEGIS omitted from its analysis any benefits from disclosing chemical hazards to workers, fire departments, and the public. Further, the report did not explain why use of the Internet would be necessary to target an industrial facility, nor did it identify any examples of people using the Internet to do so. The chemical industry funded a subsequent AEGIS study.

## **Providing only local worst-case scenarios satisfies the public's right-to-know.**

Without ready access to national information people won't be able to:

- Learn about hazards in other jurisdictions where relatives live or children go to school
- Prioritize correction of "year-2000" com-

puter failures that may cause an accident

- Hold government accountable for reducing hazards nationwide
- Link other national environmental, worker safety, and public health databases
- Conduct efficient education and training across many jurisdictions
- Analyze trends by geographic area, chemical, company, or industry
- Obtain timely access to information in all localities in the needed format-on-line, on diskette, or on paper
- Avoid needless information access burdens on local governments

## **Chemical accidents are infrequent.**

Every 15 minutes in the U.S., on average, a chemical fire, spill, or explosion is reported through the EPA's Emergency Response Notification System, or 38,305 incidents in 1997. Of these incidents, more than 1,000 caused death or injury. Further, current trends in infrastructure disinvestment and corporate downsizing are eroding safety.

A reader survey by Industrial Safety and Hygiene News found that "78 percent believe accidents are more likely as employees work longer hours, handle new assignments, and fear for their jobs." In addition, "year-2000" computer problems pose new hazards. The Gartner Group, which advises businesses worldwide, estimates that 50 percent of companies in the chemical processing industry "will experience at least one mission-critical system failure" due to date-related computer failures, which can lead to chemical accidents. Finally, health and safety figures often exclude both long-term health effects and contract employees (who are less familiar with facilities and have higher rates of accidents).

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*Paul Orum is associated with the Working Group on Community Right-to-Know in Washington, D.C.*

*Editor's note:* At this writing, the House subcommittee for Health and Environment plan hearings on HR 1790, a bill to withhold worst-case scenario information from the Internet. The senate environment committee approved such language May 11.

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# Hi-tech surprises: Should we look before we leap?

By PETER FAIRLEY

New technologies often come with unintended consequences. Take the destruction of the ozone layer, for example. The possibility of such impacts simply was outside of the realm of possibilities considered by chemical companies when they introduced “wonder products” such as chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants, brominated flame retardants, and other halogenated compounds. Avian reproduction was similarly off the radar screen when DDT made its debut.

Yet, as the end of the 20th Century approaches, I wonder whether we have learned a most important lesson from these technological surprises: to anticipate the unexpected, to expect the unpredictable, and respect those possibilities that appear unlikely. Reporting on the introduction of genetically engineered crops makes me think not.

Most reporting on these crops—plants that are engineered to, for instance, tolerate herbicide or resist attack by insects—has been either hysterical or dismissive. Meanwhile, the science regarding health and ecological threats from these crops paints a less certain picture. Worry tends to dominate European reports, reflecting strong consumer concern there over genetically-modified crops. In contrast, many U.S. reports reflect the relatively low profile the issue has garnered here.

A front-page story that ran in *The New York Times* last July is a particularly striking example. The story, “Europe, Bucking Trend in U.S., Blocks Genetically Altered Food,” opens with Kaspar Gunthardt, a Swiss potato farmer. After describing efforts by companies such as Monsanto and Novartis to get their crops approved in Europe, the farmer flatly rejects their use. “They are changing the basic rules of life and they want to try it all out on us... But it won’t happen on this farm. Here we are going to live like God intended.”

From there the article describes other Europeans, including several notables such as Prince Charles, who are as “inflexible” as Gunthardt, and seeks to understand why they have dug in their heels against agricultural progress. The explanations focus on “cultural” factors, including a strong environmental movement, a fear of drastic

change, the large number of small farms still run by families, and Europe’s experience during the Holocaust that genetics can be abused.

As an afterthought, the story mentions Europe’s recent experience with mad cow disease showing that regulators’ assurances of safety could be wrong. That is as far as the 2,257-word story delves into the possible ecological and health threats from these crops.

It is true that science has not yet proven that there is a threat. But that is not surprising, since the technology has only been widely used for a few years. Plus, little independent research has been done on

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## Viewpoints

is a regular feature offering a forum to those who deal with environmental issues in the media. Opposing viewpoints are welcome.

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transgenic crops—a problem that has long plagued pesticide science, particularly when risks rather than benefit are at issue. But the limited independent research available, while inconclusive, has cast doubt on sweeping safety claims put forward by boosters of the technology such as crop innovator Monsanto. Here are a few recent reports:

- University of Chicago ecologists reported in *Nature* last fall that transgenic mustard crops are 20 times more likely to interbreed with wild relatives than are mustard crops modified through traditional breeding. The results suggest that genetic engineering increases the likelihood that engineered traits such as insect resistance and herbicide tolerance will spread to wild plants.

- A New York University biologist found that Bt toxins in transgenic crops can accumulate in soil, threatening desirable soil insects. The researcher found that metabolic activity was lower in soil containing husks and other remains from Bt crops. This accumulation is unlikely when Bt sprays are applied (as opposed to the use of engineered crops) because the sprays contain a pro-toxin that becomes active only upon digestion by targeted insects.

- Using a simulated, computer-con-

trolled gut, researchers at two state research institutes in the Netherlands have found that DNA may survive longer in the human gut than previously believed. The research, reported this January, suggests that DNA from transgenic commodities—including antibiotic resistance genes used in the genetic engineering process—could pass to bacteria in the gut.

- A toxicologist at the U.K.’s state-funded Rowett Institute found that genetically-engineered potatoes containing lectins, natural plant defense peptides, can weaken the immune system of rats and stunt their growth.

Whereas the U.S. press has largely ignored these results, many European reporters have hyped it as evidence of certain doom. This is particularly evident in the case with the lectin-enhanced potatoes. Leading newspapers in the U.K. interpreted the research as a broad indictment of transgenic crops (the researcher fanned the flames by attacking the safety of genetically modified foods, while Rowett helped by sacking him).

The studies merely confirmed the obvious fact that harmful traits can be genetically spliced from one plant to another. Naturally occurring lectins in beans contribute to a regular stream of gastric upsets among people who undercook their beans, just as the lectins added to the potatoes upset lab rats.

The lectin-modified potatoes caused more harm to the rats than did conventional potatoes spiked with lectins. But more research is needed to explain this; at the very least, the original study needs to be peer-reviewed and published.

Reporters covering such a new technology must be patient as the science gathers, while insisting that science explores both the intended and unintended products of the seeds it sows. As with persistent toxins such as PCBs and DDT, these plants, once released, could prove hard to shove back in the bottle.

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*Peter Fairley manages the technology and environment coverage for Chemical Week, edits SEJournal’s Viewpoints column, and occasionally eats processed foods chock-full of genetically-modified soybeans.*

## Sprawl...(from page 1)

help keep major metropolitan areas in nonattainment for air quality standards.

- **Land supply.** Open space and farmland disappear in the face of bulldozers preparing the way for development of new residential subdivisions, strip malls, and office buildings.

- **Transit viability.** The main reason it is so hard to keep transit systems solvent is that we do not build neighborhoods with enough density to support transit ridership at an economically viable level.

So how do you get an angle on such issues? There is one aspect of the story that appeals to taxpayers, utility rate payers, public officials, and developers all at the same time. Sprawl costs money—buckets of money.

Various researchers, including Robert Burchell, a professor of urban planning at Rutgers University, and study groups with the Bank of America, the Maine State Planning Office, and the American Farmland Trust have studied the fiscal and economic impacts of sprawl and found them costly and a potential deterrent to a metropolitan area's long-term economic competitiveness. The sidebar included here on the best of the sprawl studies highlights some of these resources.

One Burchell study of New Jersey showed savings of eight percent for utility costs in compact growth, compared to

sprawl development patterns, and of 26 percent for local road infrastructure. These costs translate into real estate taxes and utility rates, the classic stuff of local political uprisings.

An interesting story lies in comparing your metropolitan area's governance structure with those in areas pursuing growth management strategies. Just last year, Tennessee enacted new planning legislation requiring municipalities and counties to develop urban growth boundaries, which establish outer limits for permissible new development. Other cities and counties use urban service areas beyond which they will not extend vital public infrastructure upon which new development relies. Regional governance structures have existed in the Twin Cities and Portland, Or., metropolitan areas since the 1970s and help to reduce the fragmentation otherwise inherent in much local government planning.

Even if your area is pursuing such strategies, the story may be instead, how well is it working?

Reporters can extract great stories from one simple question: What do neighboring communities in an area get to say about a proposed new development whose impacts extend well beyond the boundaries of the community that is approving it? What are the implications of allowing

## Sprawl Studies

- Burchell, Robert W., Naveed A. Shad, et al. 1998. "The Costs of Sprawl Revisited." (Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board).

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one community to reap the economic benefits while others get to share the pain?

What roles do states play in legislation on planning? Through enabling legislation, states delegate their authority to local governments to plan and control land use. Enabling legislation allows local governments to do something, but in a certain way and through certain mechanisms. Sometimes the local government will already have this power delegated directly to it through the state constitution or through a statutory grant of power by the state legislature. In some states municipalities have home rule charters that allow them to operate differently than state law would normally require.

Two standard acts published by the U.S. Department of Commerce in the 1920s laid the basic foundation for zoning and for planning in the U.S. One was the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (1922-26) and the other was the Standard City Planning Act (1928). When drafted, the acts were extremely popular, particularly the zoning act, and for much of the nation, the acts still supply the institutional structure for planning and land use control.

The acts were formulated during a period in which American cities were undergoing tremendous expansion. Then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover was particularly interested in ensuring that

*(Continued on next page)*



Photo by Chris Riegel

**Two acres of farmland disappear each minute, says American Farmland Trust**

## Sprawl...(from page 19)

cities had the tools to cope with this surge of growth and to protect private investment, particularly residences, from nuisance-like problems.

At that time, zoning itself was a relatively new concept and, in the early 1920s, cases involving zoning were just beginning to come before the state and federal courts. Thus, the drafting of the acts was also motivated by a desire for uniform national framework that courts would be reluctant to set aside when questions of the constitu-

tionality of zoning came before them.

While planning legislation worked fairly well during the early years of the post-WWII period, by the 1960s, states began to consider and adopt legislation that strengthened the role of the state protecting key state resources and overseeing, in some cases, local planning and land development control. Hawaii, for example, adopted statewide zoning. New York State created the Adirondack Park Agency to control development in the area around a state park in upstate New York.

Some local governments began to experiment with development timing or growth management systems that were intended to control the rate, as well as the location and character, of growth. These systems were enacted, in part, to ensure that when development occurred, the infrastructure capacity to support it would be there, either financed by the local government or other governmental units, or by the developer.

State planning reform got an early start in Oregon, which began working on its land-use planning system in 1973. The state-administered system is guided by 19

goals that have been adopted by the land conservation and development commission. All local governments must adopt comprehensive plans, and all municipal plans must include urban growth areas.

Florida also began revamping its system in the early 1970s and has continued over the years. In addition to reviewing local comprehensive plans, the state designates areas of critical concern, such as the Everglades, that are subject to special development controls. Through "concurrency" requirements in its state statutes, Florida requires that local governments ensure that public facilities are in place before the effects of new development are felt.

There are many states with laws that address development issues—states with comprehensive plans that can be studied for comparison to one's own region.

*Jim Schwab is a senior research associate for the American Planning Association and co-editor of its monthly newsletter, Zoning News. Stuart Meck is the principal investigator for Growing Smart (SM), an APA project funded by HUD and other federal agencies, and partners to develop model state planning and zoning legislation.*

### Monitoring sprawl issues

- **U.S. EPA, Antidotes to Sprawl:** <http://www.epa.gov/region5/sprawl/>
- **Sprawl Busters Web Site:** <http://www.sprawl-busters.com/>
- **Sierra Club:** <http://www.sierraclub.org/transportation/index.html>
- **Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse:** <http://www.sprawlwatch.org/>
- **Smart Growth Network:** <http://www.smartgrowth.org/>
- **American Farmland Trust:** <http://www.farmland.org/>

## Stars...(from page 1)

1998 part of a protest group of celebrities attempting to stop the seal kill off Canada's Prince Edward Island. Christopher Reeve, known for his role in the 1978 film *Superman*, joined Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s effort in 1993 to protect the Hudson River. In 1995, he aired a PBS documentary on gray whales. He also received an award from Danson's American Ocean's Campaign.

Environmentalists seemingly have embraced celebrity intervention. Jan Schlichtmann, the real-life attorney in the now well-known *Civil Action* case, said, "John Travolta arrives on the scene and suddenly everybody's interested in the case. Now that the movie is out, everybody wants to talk to me. I've had all kinds of offers to speak, university lecture invitations, been on all kinds of talk shows—*CNN*, *NPR*, public television, and everything in between."

James McCaffrey, executive director of the Sierra Club's Massachusetts chapter, said, "As long as the celebrity's interest is sincere and they are educated enough about the issue that they can educate the public, fine. I'm sure some celebrities do it to make themselves feel good. In some cases, self-promotion is probably



Photo courtesy of Orion Pictures Corp.

**Kevin Costner**

involved. But if the end result is an increased awareness about environmental problems, then it's a good thing anyway."

Danson has shown that his interest in the environment goes beyond the superficial, personally lobbying congressmen on Capitol Hill. In an interview with *E Magazine*, he said, "One of the reasons that we picked oceans is that it's a great metaphor for everything that happens environmentally. Global warming, the ozone-layer, everything has an impact on the ocean. It's like a mirror, reflecting the health of the planet."

Harrelson became actively involved in ecological issues after filling in for Danson at an AOC event. Since then Harrelson has made it clear he's willing to tangle with the government and big business in an effort to protect the environment and spark advocacy.

Cindy Delpapa, organizer for the grassroots Saugus River Watershed Council near Boston, said, "If people believe in it (environment), I don't care if they are a celebrity or not. If their name will help bring awareness, that's great. I don't think too many stars do it for their own self interest. They could do some horrible childhood illness and get more brownie points."

The Los Angeles-based Environmental Media Association (EMA), describes itself as "the premier organization of celebrities supporting the environment." In 1991, the EMA launched the Environmental Media Awards. Among those soon recognized "for their strong ecological messages" were the feature films

## Stars...(from page 20)

*Dances With Wolves* and *A River Runs Through It*. Television series such as "Northern Exposure," "L.A. Law," and "The Simpsons" were also honored.

Sev Williams, former EMA development director and current director of the Earth 911 Promotions Group, said his previous mission was to "get the environmental message into films, commercials and television programming." The EMA contends it assisted with development of the story line in the film *Free Willy*, which promoted "harmony between man and animals" through the tale of a young boy's friendship with an orca whale. It also takes credit for providing producer-director Rob Reiner with the exact words promoting the environment from a speech by Dr. David Suzuki, which actor Michael Douglas quoted while playing the President of the United States in the film, *An American President*.

Earth 911 gives consumers access to telephone hotlines and on-line Internet information about environmental issues in their localities. "When celebrities first became aware of Earth 911 in late 1998, there was a tremendous wave of support to get behind the movement," said Williams.

The movement received a boost from Julia Louis-Dreyfus, then a cast member of "Seinfeld." She agreed to record a public service announcement for radio, as did Wendie Mallick, of the TV show "Just Shoot Me."

"If a celebrity supports the environment, but also wants to get into the headlines, it's a win-win situation," said Williams. "They can get out there and do something they believe in, and let people know about it."

TV station managers can download the public service announcements free from Earth 911. "The PSAs get excellent airplay from media outlets," Williams said.

Do such efforts lead to changes in public policy?

"I don't know if it can be directly correlated into policy changes, but it does help," said Williams. "It shows the public that Hollywood endorses the environmental movement. It shows the public and those people working in government who feel

*As a Journalist, you look with skepticism at celebrity involvement with issues like environment*

*But you also realize that celebrity status has public interest, and you look at the news value.*

nothing is getting done, that they are not fighting the environmental battle alone but are joined in the trenches by some of America's most respected icons."

"The fact is, celebrities are figureheads in our culture," he added. "And for better or worse, celebrities are promoting environmental issues and environmental action, which does help get people off their butts," he said, noting that the 1997 event featuring Louis-Dreyfus attracted more than 2,000 new members to the Environmental Defense Fund.

Ray Baron spent four decades as president of Baron, Hillman and Melnick, Inc., a Boston public relations firm. "Selling an environmental idea to the public is no different," he said. "But you'd have to find a celebrity who has credibility. When I say that, I think Paul Newman, or maybe Robert Redford."

According to Baron, Newman has mass appeal that spans borders of age and gender. "Everybody can relate to Newman. There aren't many actors you can say that about."

Christopher Callahan, associate dean of the Journalism Department at the University of Maryland and a former AP reporter, said celebrities are unlikely to affect policy change. "If a celebrity came to town, sure, it's effective from a PR standpoint, at least for the tube. But for print, it's hardly effective at all."

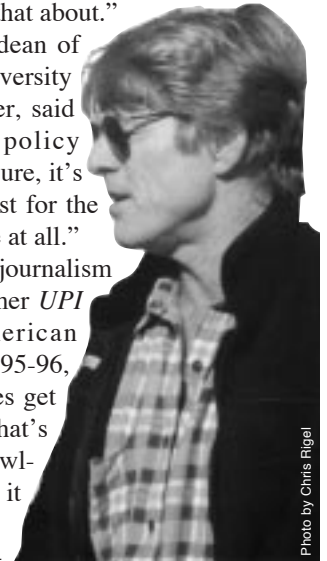
William Ketter, chairman of the journalism department at Boston University, former UPI reporter and president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors from 1995-96, said, "I think in some cases, celebrities get involved as part of a publicity stunt. That's unfortunate if they have a shallow knowledge of the subject. But in other cases, it can help generate public interest."

Without Don Henley's fund-raising to benefit Thoreau's Walden Woods and the volume of publicity it generated, the outcome might have been different, said Ketter, explaining that "as a journalist you look with skepticism at celebrity involvement with issues like the environment. But you also realize that their celebrity status has public interest, and if they are genuine about it, then you look at the news value."

Ellen Ruppel Shell, associate professor of journalism at Boston University and co-director of the graduate program in science journalism, questioned Henley's intervention. "Don Henley sings a few songs, gets people riled up, and charges \$1,000 or \$10,000 a plate for these fund-raising dinners. But the people who rely on Walden Woods as a resource are being done quite a disservice, and that has happened in other areas," she said. "City slickers come in and say, this pristine environment needs to

be protected from loggers or whomever because we've got a vanishing species here, but the local people are not given the same voice. Sometimes, they are not even asked for their opinion."

In Shell's view, the hit-and-run approach "can undermine the less sexy movements. Cleaning up a toxic waste dump or some of the Superfund sites isn't as sexy or romantic as saving the whales. The celebrities would probably save the whales first because of the photo opportunities it presents. It's worrisome from a journalistic perspective."



**Robert Redford**

Photo by Chris Rigel

*David Liscio is the environmental reporter for the Daily Evening Item of Lynn, Mass., and the SEJournal's Beat correspondent for Massachusetts.*

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# The Beat Correspondents

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The Beat is designed as an idea exchange for environmental journalists and educators. It relies on information submitted by reporters about important issues, outstanding coverage, and developments in environmental education and the communications profession on a state-by-state basis.

To submit ideas for possible mention in The Beat, contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s) or contact Beat editor Chris Rigel at (215) 836-9970 or [rigel@voicenet.com](mailto:rigel@voicenet.com).

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## ARIZONA

► Homebuilding giant Del Webb Corporation announced a \$2.5 million gift to kick off a fundraising drive to benefit Grand Canyon National Park—and touched off another controversy over commercialization of the nation's parks. Environmental reporter Steve Yozwiak of the *Arizona Republic* reported on the donation on Jan. 29 in a story that also delved into the increasing reliance by the National Park Service on the largess of private businesses. For information contact Yozwiak at (602) 444-8810 or [steve.yozwiak@pni.com](mailto:steve.yozwiak@pni.com).

► The Wildlands Project is a new initiative aimed at establishing broad swaths of wilderness across North America in a patchwork of regional habitats. The fledgling "rewilding" movement, born in Tucson by former Earth First! members, got an early public airing in the Jan. 28 *Tucson Weekly* in a story by Tim Vanderpool. Vanderpool can be reached at (520) 792-3630.

► A proposed Sonoran Desert National Park would cover 5,000 square miles along the Arizona-Mexico border. Organizers are already trying to figure out how best to ease the proposal through a politically tough Congress. Their answer, according to a March 15 story in the *Arizona Daily Star* by Tony Davis: the military's practice bombing runs and most hunting could continue, but no racing around offroad in four-wheel-drive vehicles. Contact Davis at (520) 573-4220 or [davis@azstarnet.com](mailto:davis@azstarnet.com).

► The San Carlos Apache Indian tribe settled a longstanding water-rights claim with the federal government, freeing up enough water to serve 300,000 people a year. The claim also means the tribe can access \$50 million in development funds Congress and the state agreed to give the tribe more than seven years ago. The settlement is expected to clear the way for similar resolutions of about 65,000 water rights claims in central and southern Arizona, according to reporter Steve Yozwiak of the *Arizona Republic*. Contact Yozwiak at (602) 444-8810 or [steve.yozwiak@pni.com](mailto:steve.yozwiak@pni.com).

## CALIFORNIA

► A government study released in March says construction that churns up naturally occurring asbestos creates a potentially significant health hazard to those living in California foothill communities. The report focused on Eldorado County in Northern California. The report also said quarries that crunch greenish, asbestos-laden serpentine rock for gravel and decorative landscaping may increase health risks of surrounding residents. The Asbestos Task Force of local, state, and federal officials and scientists from a dozen agencies was launched last year after a March 12 *Sacramento Bee* story exposed the hazards of asbestos in the construction. For more information contact Chris Bowman, *Sacramento Bee*, [cbowman@ns.net](mailto:cbowman@ns.net) or (916) 321-1069.

► Yosemite National Park is still reeling from the aftermath of a record flood in Jan. 1997. Business and visitorship continue on a downward trend. The visitor total for 1998 was 3.79 million—lowest since 1991. With rebuilding of Yosemite Lodge held up by an inadequate environmental study, it may be 2002 before the concession's business returns to normal levels.

Looming later this year is a deadline to file the preferred alternative for restoring sensitive Yosemite Valley. The plan is likely to include a controversial busing plan that will eventually force many automobiles out of the valley. Bottom line: Another lawsuit and further delay seem unavoidable on a plan that has thus far taken 19 years to get off the ground. For more on this Feb. 22 story, contact Mark Grossi, *Fresno Bee*, at (559) 441-6316 or [mgrossi@fresnobee.com](mailto:mgrossi@fresnobee.com).

► Southern California is watching as more counties and cities ban the commercial spreading of biosolids, or sewage sludge. Sutter, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin counties already have forbidden it. Now, Lancaster, a city about 30 miles south of Mojave in Los Angeles County, has banned it. There are simply too many unanswered questions about biosolids and their impact on the environment, officials say. What happens to the heavy metals and pathogens? How safe are water

sources? Will the land be contaminated forever? With some counties and cities balking over such questions, Kern, Kings, and Riverside counties become far more important to Los Angeles County, which contracts with those counties to spread the sewage of 5 million people. The wet and composted sludge is hauled away and spread on private lands, usually belonging to farmers. Contact Wendy Owen, *The Bakersfield Californian*, at (661) 395-7376 or [wowen@bakersfield.com](mailto:wowen@bakersfield.com).

► Clothes with built-in pesticide detoxifiers may soon be available to protect agricultural workers from exposure to some carbamate pesticides, researchers with the University of California at Davis announced March 23 during the American Chemical Society conference in Anaheim, Calif. Louise Ko, a UC Davis graduate student, developed a treatment for cotton-based textiles based on chlorine and the compound hydantoin, which can decompose up to 99 percent of methomyl and aldicarb within five minutes. Contact Janet Byron *Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News* at (510) 848-4008 or [bjanet@earthlink.net](mailto:bjanet@earthlink.net) for this March story.

► U.S. EPA Region IX will contribute \$100,000 to help California determine why residents of Lompoc have higher-than-expected rates of respiratory illnesses. Lompoc residents believe that pesticide drift from the region's farms is making them sick. Last year, California's Office of Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) released a study showing that Lompoc residents suffered from lung and bronchus cancers at a 37 percent higher rate than surrounding communities, as well as 85 percent more bronchitis and asthma. The story ran in the March issue of *Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News*. Contact Janet Byron at (510) 848-4008 or [bjanet@earthlink.net](mailto:bjanet@earthlink.net).

► Cattle readily pick up dioxin from pentachlorophenol (PCP)-treated woods in barns, enclosures, and fence posts on the farm, a USDA researcher told the American Chemical Society March 23. Furthermore, individual animals will have different dioxin exposures depending on how accessible and weathered the treated wood is and how likely the animal is to lick and chew it, said Vern Feil of the



Agricultural Research Service's Biosciences Research Laboratory in Fargo, N.D. The story ran in the April issue of *Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News*. Contact Janet Byron at (510) 848-4008 or [bjanet@earthlink.net](mailto:bjanet@earthlink.net).

► The population of sea otters along the California coast is dropping so quickly that scientists fear it could be an approaching extinction. After a calamitous century-long decline, then a revival, the numbers started falling again in 1995 by about 90 per year. The most recent count late last year estimates only 1,937 survive. The otter, the smallest marine mammal species on earth, is believed partly to be the victim of infectious disease, water contaminants, and fish nets and fishing pots. The *San Francisco Examiner* story ran May 2. Contact Jane Kay at [janekay@examiner.com](mailto:janekay@examiner.com) or (415) 777-8704.

► Most of California's rivers would be controlled by a Maryland-based company if giant utility Pacific Gas & Electric gets its way to transfer 68 hydroelectric facilities to its unregulated affiliate U.S. Generating. Along with the dams, which control flows on 30 rivers and streams in this arid state, PG&E would also transfer 136,000 acres of watershed lands to U.S. Gen. From there, environmentalists worry the land would be sold to timber companies. Special to *San Francisco Examiner*, April 25, by J.A. Savage of California Energy Markets, (510) 534-9109 or [honest@compuserve.com](mailto:honest@compuserve.com).

► After one year of experience with a deregulated electric industry, only about 1 percent of residential consumers have chosen green power. Despite the lack of interest, new renewables developers are lining up to build new plans with state subsidies. Special to *San Francisco Examiner*, March 28, by J.A. Savage of California Energy Markets, (510) 534-9109 or [honest@compuserve.com](mailto:honest@compuserve.com).

► Shifting priorities for millions of acres of forests and rangelands, the Clinton administration announced that environmental health of public lands—rather than logging targets or cattle grazing totals—will become the primary yardstick for measuring the success of

employees who manage America's national forest system. The new focus reverses 50 years of practice in which "getting the cut out" has been a dominant incentive across 191 million acres of national forests in the United States. This *San Jose Mercury News* story ran March 29. Contact Paul Rogers at (408) 920-5045 or [progers@sjmercury.com](mailto:progers@sjmercury.com).

► The *San Jose Mercury News* revealed the dramatic last-minute behind-the-scenes wrangling as California's giant redwoods—the largest remaining private groves known as the Headwaters forest—move into public hands. The story contains provisions of the \$492 million deal, a map, and a 15-year timeline of protests and political markers. The March 3 story was written by Paul Rogers with aid from Jim Puzanghera, Washington bureau, and Hallye Jordan, Sacramento bureau. Contact Rogers at (408) 920-5045 or [progers@sjmercury.com](mailto:progers@sjmercury.com).

## CONNECTICUT

► Plans to re-open a second reactor at the Millstone Nuclear Power Station in Waterford nearly floundered in April after a state judge granted a temporary restraining order to block the start-up of the Millstone Unit 2 by a Long Island-based environmental group. A lawsuit by Fish Unlimited—later dismissed—charges that starting up the reactor too soon would damage flounder larvae in the Niantic River, which feeds into the Long Island Sound next to the plant. Winter flounder in the river are a tenth of what they were in 1987; environmentalists blame the decline on cooling pipes sucking up larvae. State environmental officials say the cause of the decline is unclear. Contact Christine Woodside and Paul Choiniere, *The Day* (New London), (860) 442-0401.

## COLORADO

► In a water war that environmentalists have compared to Los Angeles' infamous grab of Owens Valley, developers in Colorado are proposing pumping water from a massive aquifer under an agricultural community in the southern part of the state to feed thirsty homes and businesses cropping up along Colorado's

booming Front Range. But in the saga's latest turn, Colorado's newly elected Attorney General—Democrat Ken Salazar—has warned the water developers they'll face a long and costly legal battle from the state. "We are going to fight them with all the resources that we have within the attorney general's office," he told the *Denver Post* in April. Salazar's warning comes despite the fact some Denver-area politicians think the water will be necessary to fuel more growth. For more information contact Mark Eddy at [wmarkedly@aol.com](mailto:wmarkedly@aol.com).

► Efforts to reintroduce lynx in Colorado have begun disastrously. As of mid-April, four of the first five reintroduced lynx died, apparently of starvation. State wildlife officials, however, are not ready to call the program a failure. They said from the beginning of the program in February that some of the 50 lynx it hopes to release this year would die and that there was no way to know if the reintroduction would be successful. Because the reintroduction is experimental, biologists will decide in late summer whether or not to continue next year. Animal-rights activists have criticized the release program, saying it's cruel to pull the tuft-eared cats from their Alaska homeland and place them in unfamiliar territory. Todd Hartman can be reached at (719) 636-0285 or [toddlh@gazette.com](mailto:toddlh@gazette.com).

► Colorado's first wind farm was up and running in February after encountering some initial turbulence, with 15 windmills generating electricity for about 6,000 customers. Public Service Company of Colorado expects to have 21 windmills producing wind power by late spring at its facility in the northeast part of the state, near the Wyoming border. The program fell behind schedule because—no joke—excess wind hampered construction of the wind turbines. The turbines are about 260 feet tall and the blades about 150 feet in diameter. Contact Roger Fillion at the *Denver Post*, (303) 820-1577 or [newsroom@denverpost.com](mailto:newsroom@denverpost.com).

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► Locally produced sewage sludge compost was a favorite of home gardeners and groundskeepers for golf courses and

professional baseball and football fields in the Washington-Baltimore areas. Even the White House used it. But, as an A-1 story in the April 10 *Washington Post* reported, only a few bags of ComPRO are left on store shelf since the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission recently shut down the smelly composting plant after years of complaints from nearby residents. Staff writer Scott Wilson can be reached through (202) 334-6000.

► Disappearance of 20 frog species in Costa Rica apparently stemmed from a climate shift, according to a report in the April 15 *Washington Post*. The piece by William Souder, a *Post* stringer, discusses recent scientific findings connecting the loss of frog diversity in mountain “cloud forests” to El Niño and the rise in sea-surface temperatures. The *Post*’s national desk is at (202) 334-7410.

### FLORIDA

► Lawmakers in Tallahassee are close to developing a proposal to build a state park or recreational area next to the controversial Rodman Reservoir in Putnam County. Such a proposal would be a major setback to environmentalists who have for 30 years fought for the restoration of the Ocklawaha River, dammed in 1968 as part of the doomed Cross-Florida Barge Canal project. The *Florida Times-Union* reported on this story March 26. Contact Thomas B. Pfankuch at (904) 359-4280.

► The *Times-Union* and the *St. Petersburg Times* have reported extensively on the Lake Apopka crisis, where a combination of pesticides have killed around 1,000 white pelicans and fish-eating birds. The toxic mix includes DDT, banned in the 1970s, as well as toxaphene and dieldrin, pesticides previously used on farmland in Orange County. Contact Steve Patterson at the *Times-Union*, (904) 359-4280 for Feb. 27, March 10, and March 18 stories.

► The *St. Pete Times* reported March 27 on the impact of a proposed \$130,000 cement plant three miles from pristine Ichetucknee Springs, where 200,000 people recreate and spend more than \$1 million each year. Park officials are concerned about the tons of polluting by-products from the 1 million tons of cement the fac-

tory would produce. Despite public opposition, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has maintained that so long as the company limits pollution to certain levels, the agency must by law issue a permit. Contact Craig Pittman at (727) 893-8530 or craig@sptimes.com.

► The endangered northern right whale that normally migrates to winter grounds on the Florida and Georgia coasts failed to arrive this year, the *Times-Union* reported on Feb. 2. Scientists are concerned with this second year of low birth rates, and are discussing moving the whale-scouting efforts further north. Contact Steve Patterson at (904) 359-4280.

► On March 31, The *St. Pete Times* reported that the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission will vote to change the listing process, requiring them to consider the “social and economic realities” of protecting animals. The last time the commission tried to add a few new species to its list of protected animals, state senators threatened to slash the agency’s funding. They contended that protecting the white ibis, the bird in question, would badly damage the state’s economy. But the game commission held firm, and four years later there has been no ibis-related financial disaster. Contact Craig Pittman at (727) 893-8530 or craig@sptimes.com.

► In what is being hailed as a victory for opponents of offshore drilling, Coastal Petroleum, who wanted to sink wells along the Gulf Coast from Apalachicola to Naples, suffered a setback in court. The company has leases to 800,000 acres of submerged land all along the Gulf Coast. It has spent years battling state officials and environmental groups over permission to drill there. The ruling affirmed the state Department of Environmental Protection’s right to demand a wide range of information from Coastal about its plans to drill. Coastal was seeking 12 drilling permits for waters off some of Florida’s prettiest beaches, including Anclote Key near Tarpon Springs and Sanibel Island near Fort Myers. Craig Pittman reported this story for the *St. Pete Times* on March 30. Contact him at (727) 893-8530 or craig@sptimes.com

► A *St. Pete Times* April 13 story

reported that on Central Florida’s Kissimmee Prairie, a pair of 4-year-old whooping cranes produced the first two eggs laid in the wild in the United States in 60 years. Although the eggs later vanished—probably due to predators—biologists are encouraged by what they see as a milestone for Florida’s experiment in reviving a species that had nearly disappeared. Contact Craig Pitman at (727) 893-8530 or craig@sptimes.com.

### IOWA

► Older earthen manure lagoons are polluting shallow Iowa aquifers, and the wastes could be threatening drinking-water supplies, according to studies discussed in a Feb. 19 article in *The Des Moines Register*. Most Iowans get their tap water from under ground. Manure seeping out of lagoons also could pollute streams and lakes, contributing to excessive algae and fish kills. Iowa State University researcher Stewart Melvin said scientists aren’t sure how far the pollutants get once they seep out of the clay-lined lagoons. Follow-up tests are planned. Contact Perry Beeman, *Des Moines Register*, (515) 284-8538 or beemanp@news.dmreg.com.

► *The Des Moines Register* reported March 15 on new approaches to environmental protection under newly named Iowa Department of Natural Resources director Paul Johnson. Farmer-conservationist Johnson has been on the job for a few months and already he’s growing impatient that the changes aren’t coming fast enough. He wants to help businesses cut pollution, fine them if they deserve it, and teach Iowans what the land is all about. Contact Perry Beeman, *Des Moines Register*, (515) 284-8538 or beemanp@news.dmreg.com

► Nitrates in some of Iowa’s waterways reached near-record levels early this spring, *The Des Moines Register* reported March 14. The director of the Des Moines Water Works said heavy fertilization of cropland last fall is largely to blame. Contact Perry Beeman at (515) 284-8538 or beemanp@news.dmreg.com

► The Ipsco Steel Inc. steel-recycling plant near Montpelier in eastern Iowa has sent 14 times more toxic pollutants into the air than its state permit allows, *The Des*

*Moines Register* reported March 12. The firm set unusually strict standards for itself based on new technology, but has had trouble meeting them. When the Iowa Department of Natural Resources told the company to fix the problem, Ipsco responded by applying for a permit change that would allow the extra emissions of lung-irritating sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. If the state stands by current permit limits, Ipsco could face fines or other legal action. Contact Perry Beeman at (515) 284-8538, beemanp@news.dmreg.com.

## KENTUCKY

► Kentucky officials, coal and timber companies, and environmentalists reached an agreement to limit strip mining and logging on Black Mountain, the highest point in the state. The deal was struck after a group of local schoolchildren began protesting plans to mine near the summit. For more information, contact Judy Jones, hazard reporter from the *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*, at (606) 436-6060.

► Peregrine falcon reintroduction is working in Kentucky. Half of the state's second nesting pair of the rare raptors appears to be a male bird released into the wild a few years earlier. In other avian news, a colony of black-crowned night herons was evicted from the Louisville Zoo and is now causing problems in nearby neighborhoods. For more information on these and other examples of urban ornithology, contact Andrew Melnykovich at *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*, (502) 582-4645 or Amelnyko@louisvil.gannett.com.

## LOUISIANA

► Marsanne Golsby has jumped out of airplanes, rafted down rapids, and driven motorcycles. So, eating two forkfuls of pan-fried catfish caught from a polluted bayou during a March 3 protest at the Governor's Mansion did not seem to her an unreasonable health risk, the press secretary to Gov. Mike Foster said. Golsby, 44, said the point she wanted to make by eating the fish is that many claims of ill health from pollution are based on emotion, not science. "We need responsible

environmental activism," Golsby said. "You cannot win an argument on emotion. What would be effective would be great science." In the March 29 *Baton Rouge (La.) Advocate* story, reporter Vicki Ferstel looks at problems assessing the risks from pollution. For more information, contact Ferstel at (225) 383-1111 or vferstel@theadvocate.com.

► Only about half the 2,300 samples taken last summer in a review of oilfield waste are valid, but enough good ones should be available to determine whether the waste needs to be handled as toxic, officials said. Oilfield wastes are one of several types of waste exempted from the nation's hazardous waste disposal laws. That exemption came under attack during a controversy in Grand Bois in Lafourche Parish, where some people claim a nearby oilfield waste site is ruining their health and property. Louisiana Gov. Mike Foster ordered the Department of Natural Resources to test waste for 120 days and determine the hazard potential and devise regulations if necessary. For details on this March 9 *Baton Rouge Advocate* story, contact Mike Dunne at (225) 388-0301 or mdunne@theadvocate.com.

► The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry revealed in April that blood tests of 28 residents in Mossville, La., showed higher than normal amounts of dioxin in 12 of those tested, some with levels 2-3 times higher than normal. In response, Gov. Mike Foster announced the formation of a multi-agency task force to address health concerns of those who live in the community. The Department of Environmental Quality plans to review the permits at all of the area industries and improve parish air monitoring, and the U.S. EPA will include dioxin testing as part of a comprehensive study to find out just how much pollution is in the Calcasieu Estuary. The story ran April 15 in the *Lake Charles American Press*. Contact Sunny Brown at (318) 494-4081.

► Three in 10 samples of the most common oil-field waste produced in Louisiana—salt water produced with the oil and gas flowing from wells—contained levels of benzene high enough to be classified as a hazardous waste,

according to an LSU analysis. Gov. Mike Foster ordered a testing program for oilfield waste last year in the wake of a controversy over oilfield waste disposal in the Lafourche Parish community of Grand Bois. The next step is for a Houston consultant, Dr. Ben Thomas, to validate the study and then determine what health hazards the wastes pose. Contact Mike Dunne, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, (225) 388-0301 or mdunne@theadvocate.com

## MASSACHUSETTS

► Boston's newly-built secondary sewage treatment plant is a gardener's dream, according to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). The solid waste stream runs through an "enrichment process" at the Deer Island facility before the sludge is shipped to a fertilizer factory. When the sludge arrives at the Fore River plant, it is de-watered and baked at a high temperature in large rotary kilns to kill bacteria and shape the material into pellets. Most of the fertilizer is shipped for use in out-of-state commercial agriculture. However, some is donated by the MWRA to the "contributing" communities to be used on parks, ball fields, for landscaping and other municipal projects. Some of the sludge has been sold at Boston-area nurseries and landscaping businesses. Last year, customers purchased approximately 66 tons of Bay State fertilizer. Customers can obtain complete information on the fertilizer testing programs, its results and applicable regulations at [www.mwra.com](http://www.mwra.com). Contact: David Liscio, *Daily Evening Item*, Lynn, MA 01901. (781) 593-7700, ext. 236. Email: dliscio@aol.com.

► Leading Massachusetts environmental activists are alarmed by word that a top lawyer for state transportation czar James J. Kerasiotes has made Gov. Paul Cellucci's short list for state environmental protection commissioner. The lawyer, Lisa Liss, currently general counsel for the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction, is largely unknown on Beacon Hill. However, she has links to Kerasiotes, whom many environmentalists consider hostile to government regulation, mass transit, and efforts to curb highway-induced sprawl. Stephanie Pollack, a senior attorney at the

Conservation Law Foundation, said the appointment of a key player at the EOTC to commissioner of the DEP could “create a perception the fox is in charge of the hen house.” Contact Peter Howe, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000 for details on this April 14 story.

► Federal officials in April gave the Charles River a B-minus for cleanliness, up from near failing grades four years ago. The healthier condition was attributed to partial elimination of CSOs and industrial discharges. John Devillars, regional administrator for EPA in New England, said the cleanup initiative hopes to sign up 100 businesses as part of a new coalition. To boost the effort, five area universities and a few businesses have formed the Clean Charles 2005 coalition. Contact Peter Howe, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000, for details on this April 14 story.

## MAINE

► Media outlets from across the country covered a March 3 announcement by Maine Gov. Angus King, the New England Forestry Foundation, and the Pingree family of Maine, of what environmentalists touted as the largest conservation easement deal in U.S. History—an agreement by the Pingrees to sell development rights to 754,673 acres of land, a tract larger than Rhode Island.

Coverage of the \$28 million deal included national newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, as well as many regional and local news outlets, most notably *The Portland (ME) Press-Herald*. The Pingrees have owned and managed about 1 million acres of Maine timberland since 1840.

The deal would allow the Pingrees to continue to own and cut timber on the land. But it would prohibit development—reflective of an emerging trend in the Northeast and across the country—of timber companies selling off assets on their lands, like development rights, while retaining ownership and the right to continue logging.

The coverage of the Pingree deal tended to be glowing. But many stories did note criticism from some of the more preservation-minded environmentalists in New England, who argued that the

Pingrees would essentially be receiving \$28 million for agreeing not to develop land that would likely never be developed anyway, and that conservation easements are not as protective as outright land purchases. Contact Robert Braile, *Boston Globe*, (603) 772-6380.

## MICHIGAN

► Open a jar of sediment from Michigan’s Horse Creek, and the petroleum fumes sting your nostrils. Dry out the sediment, and it will burn. In a continuing series of stories, *Saginaw News* reporter Carrie Spencer is covering the removal of 260,000 cubic yards of heavily polluted muck from the Pine River and its tributaries. River sediments are rife with benzene, the pesticide DDT, and oil wastes. Since 1977, the Pine has had the nation’s only health advisory based on DDT and PBB, a flame retardant: residents should not eat fish of any length. In part, the contamination is due to Velsicol Chemical Co.’s dumping between 1936 and its state-mandated closing in 1978. For more information about the EPA’s cleanup plans, call Spencer at (517) 776-9682.

► From the snowbound hills and cedar swamps it calls home, the lordly profile of the moose is emerging to change the lives of the residents, hunters, and scientists who are its closest neighbors. Michigan officials, warily watching rising moose numbers, have embarked on a plan to capture 46 of the half-ton animals and attach radio collars to study them. Driving the study are urgent questions that may decide the future of the state’s herd, reintroduced from Canada a decade ago. In his Feb. 15 story, *Detroit News* reporter Jeremy Pearce looked at scientists’ attempts toward an accurate moose census, plans to reduce moose-car accidents, and the possibility of a hunting season to control numbers. Contact Pearce at (313) 223-4825.

► The diversion and sale of Great Lakes waters was examined in a series of stories in February and March by reporters of the Great Lakes Radio Consortium (GLRC). Controversy began in 1998 after a Canadian company agreed

to sell Lake Superior water to Asia. The International Joint Commission, which includes American and Canadian officials to oversee the lakes, is preparing an opinion—expected in August—on all sales. In the meantime, commission members have held public meetings throughout Great Lakes states to gauge public opinion. To date, the majority of voices have been against any sale. These and other environmental stories can be found on the GLRC website at [www.glrc.org](http://www.glrc.org). Or for more information, contact managing editor David Hammond at (734) 7641-9210.

► Ornithologists are concerned about the fate of thousands of robins that remained in Michigan because of bizarre winter weather patterns. A statewide bird census in February counted robins in numbers three times higher than expected, according to *Muskegon Chronicle* reporter Jeff Alexander. Scientists were unsure whether to encourage birdwatchers to feed the robins or let the birds struggle on unassisted. An unusually warm autumn and good supplies of food lulled the birds into delaying migration until late December. When temperatures fell and heavy snow arrived in January, the birds were stranded. Experts had suggested that feeding by humans might further interfere with natural migration. Others argued that feeding would be critical to keep robins alive. The robin is Michigan’s state bird. For more information about Alexander’s Feb. 2 report, call him at (616) 725-6370.

► Three years and \$2.3 million after Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer created a special city department to clean and reuse vacant urban land, environmental officials don’t know the number or location of hundreds of polluted sites. The lack of a brownfields inventory remains a profound bar to the city’s renewal and is speeding sprawl toward the suburbs, writes *Detroit News* reporter Jeremy Pearce. In a March 9 story, Pearce found state and federal officials have mistakenly relied on Detroit officials for brownfields information. The sites are suspected of harboring PCBs, oils, solvents, and other serious chemical hazards. Residents complain little is being done to clean neighborhoods blighted by dirty open land. City officials have responded with a call for patience and more time, but haven’t announced a

timetable for the inventory's completion. For more information, contact Pearce at (313) 223-4825.

## MISSISSIPPI

► The April 11 Sunday edition of *The Clarion Ledger* printed a special eight-page pullout called "A Flood of Development: In Harm's Way." Written by Bruce Reid, the story package, complete with color photographs, maps, and charts, looks at the Easter Flood of 1979, when the Pearl River inundated Jackson, Miss. Twenty years later, commercial and residential development is rampant in the floodplain, with apparently little thought given to the potential for another disaster. To get a copy of the story, call Bruce at (601) 961-7063.

## NEW MEXICO

► The long-awaited opening of the controversial Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M., attracted much press coverage in March. On March 28, environmental reporter Mike Taugher of the *Albuquerque Journal* detailed the 25-year debate over nuclear waste disposal policy—and the discussion that continues to loom—just days after "the first box of radioactive trash" was deposited in the underground dump. Mark Hummels of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* reported on emergency precautions before the waste began to move through the state in a March 24 article. Contact Taugher at (505) 823-3833 or mtaugher@abqjournal.com. Contact Hummels at (505) 986-3030.

► Radio personality Don Imus' plan to establish a working cattle ranch for cancer-stricken children is the center of a water-rights debate. *Santa Fe New Mexican's* Ben Neary reported on Imus' plans to secure the water rights from an old pickle manufacturing plant in the March 18 issue. Contact Neary at (505) 986-3030.

## NEW YORK

► In the wake of efforts in Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia to limit the amount of out-of-state trash dumped in their states, New York City mayor Rudolph Guliani is look-

ing to send up to 15 percent of the city's 12,000-tons of daily trash upstate. New York plans to close its Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island by the end of 2001, and state officials like Virginia Gov. James Gilmore don't agree with Guliani's January remark that Virginians should feel honored to receive New York trash in their state's giant regional landfills. City officials hope that sending some trash to landfills and incinerators upstate and on Long Island will "deflate some of the arguments" other states have made against receiving the Big Apple's cores, stems and seeds. (See "Virginia," page 30.) For details, contact Lisa Rein, city hall bureau, *New York Daily News*, (212) 210-2214.

► Some Democratic lawmakers in Albany have thrown down the gauntlet amid suspicions that state hazardous waste site cleanup standards would be weakened. Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, D-Westchester County, chairman of the Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee, released a draft report in February from a panel appointed by Gov. George Pataki to come up with a funding mechanism for the state's superfund program. The report recommends the adoption of risk-based cleanup standards, which Brodsky pledged to oppose. Some of the changes may be administrative, however, and not subject to legislative approval. As of mid-April, the panel had not released its final report. Contact Matthew Cox, *Newsday*, (518) 465-2311.

## NORTH CAROLINA

► Big polluters rarely have to pay in North Carolina, according to stories published in May in *The News & Observer* of Raleigh. An investigation of Gov. Jim Hunt's Department of Environment and Natural Resources revealed that DENR allowed polluters to violate their permits for years. Spreadsheets generated from a dozen separate databases, along with analyses of more than 100 individual polluters, showed how assessed fines are usually a small fraction of the legal maximum, and even those penalties plummet during settlements with state lawyers. Follow-up stories examined intervention by politicians in penalty cases, a loophole in which polluting schools get their fines back and the state's failure to enforce

drinking water safeguards at highway rest areas, churches, and convenience stores. For more information, contact staff writer James Eli Shiffer at jshiffer@nando.com or (800) 365-6115, ext. 5701.

## PENNSYLVANIA

► Two stories running March 5—6 in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* described a Montgomery County agricultural nightmare of deformed calves, discolored crops, and purple pigs dying by the hundreds and then quickly decomposing. Many of the area's farmers complain of nausea and feeling faint while working in the fields. The long series of problems, first noted in the early nineties and occurring throughout the mid-Atlantic region, has left environmental and agricultural officials baffled. The EPA has visited four of the Montgomery County farms for soil and water testing, but so far have no indications of environmental or human health emergencies. Some farmers—whose distrust of government officials was evident during EPA visits—question why the nearby Limerick nuclear-power plant, a Cabot Corp. chemical plant, and several landfills have not been investigated more thoroughly. The story was reported by staff writer Matt Stearns, *The Inquirer's* main number is (215) 854-2000

## TENNESSEE

► Finally justifying her employer-subsidized trip to the Chattanooga SEJ conference, Debbie Gilbert wrote the cover story "Can the Smokies Be Saved?" for the Feb. 25 issue of *The Memphis Flyer*. The article looks at various problems facing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park—poor air quality, forest decline, traffic, lack of funding—and examines possible solutions. You can read the story online at [www.memphisflyer.com](http://www.memphisflyer.com), or contact Gilbert at (901) 521-9000 or [gilbert@memphisflyer.com](mailto:gilbert@memphisflyer.com)

► After devouring much of the forests in Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia to feed their chip mills, pulpwood companies are moving into Tennessee, where logging is virtually unregulated. Complaints resulted, however, when an Alabama-based logging firm made the mistake of clear-cutting a 1,200-acre tract

right beside heavily traveled I-40 in West Tennessee. Motorists, noticing the logged area, notified regulatory agencies, whose only possible response was to cite the company for violating water-quality laws (allowing sediment to wash into streams; channelizing without permits). Several bills have been introduced to the Tennessee legislature which would, if passed, require loggers to take more responsibility for their actions. Right now, environmental compliance is mostly voluntary. Memphis reporter Tom Charlier wrote about this in the April 19 *Commercial Appeal*. He can be reached at (901) 529-2572.

### TEXAS

► The Texas Legislature is debating a bill that will allow industrial plants that are exempt from the state's clean air laws to voluntarily comply with state regulations. The grandfathered facilities emit nearly a third of the industrial pollutants in the state. Gov. George W. Bush strongly backs the voluntary program, saying he believes "business and a healthy environment can co-exist." Environmental groups are insisting that the industrial plants be made to conform with the latest clean air regulations. And they are criticizing the program because it doesn't require the plants to install any pollution controls in order to gain a permit from the state. Recent documents obtained by them show that the bill now pending in the legislature was written by industry lobbyists. For more information, search for stories written by Ralph Haurwitz of the *Austin American-Statesman* or Bill Dawson of the *Houston Chronicle*. Or contact Robert Bryce at rbryce@auschron.com.

### UTAH

► The U.S. Bureau of Land Management completed a new study of federal lands in Utah and found that an additional 2.6 million acres have wilderness characteristics. The new inventory of Utah's 22 million acres of BLM land found that about 5.8 million could be set aside for wilderness designation, which prohibits vehicles and development. A coalition of environmental groups, meanwhile, has introduced a bill in Congress calling for 9.1 million acres. That bill and

the BLM study are being vigorously opposed by Utah politicians and rural Utahns, who believe wilderness will impede their ability to make a living from the land. For more information, contact Jim Woolf or Brent Israelsen at *The Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045.

► On several occasions in March and April, a mysterious stink wafted over north Salt Lake City, prompting dozens of calls to state and county environmental regulators. Theories for the malodorous air have been many: a deteriorating Great Salt Lake, a venting of smells from deep in the Earth through Wasatch Fault, hijinks by the oil refineries. To date, an EPA air-quality sleuth has been unable to identify the nature or source of the smell. The Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the 2002 Winter Games has not been ruled out as a suspect. Contact Jim Woolf, *Salt Lake Tribune*, at (801) 237-2045.

► Six Mapleton, Utah, residents, three of whom suffer from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, have filed suit against the neighboring Trojan Explosives plant, alleging the company polluted the groundwater for more than a decade with disregard to health and the environment. The plant in 1986 was the site of a catastrophic failure of a waste pond, which poured tens of thousands of gallons of nitric acid into the ground. But the company's polluting of the groundwater goes back further, according to the lawsuit. The plant's owner, Ensign-Bickford Industries Co., of Connecticut, refused to comment on the lawsuit. For more information, contact Brent Israelsen, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045.

### VIRGINIA

► Trash has been the top environmental story in Virginia, which imports more garbage than any state except Pennsylvania. The issue emerged last fall with reports that when New York closes its Fresh Kills Landfill, Virginia could receive 13,000 more tons of trash a day. (See "New York," page 29.) The topic stayed in the public eye when state inspectors found medical waste in a landfill designed for household garbage and when a trash-hauling truck overturned on an interstate. New York Mayor Rudolph

Giuliani then created an uproar by saying Virginians should accept his city's garbage because they enjoy Big Apple culture. The upshot: The General Assembly passed and the governor signed restrictions on the state's garbage industry. The laws, effective July 1, ban garbage barges, restrict the construction of landfills and cap the amount of garbage dumped in Virginia's seven giant "mega-fills" at last year's levels.

Several in-depth reports complemented the day-to-day coverage: On Jan. 10, Scott Harper and Ledyard King of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported that more than 150 landfills across the state were leaking pollutants and contaminating groundwater; on Jan. 14, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* published a primer on the issue, explaining the science and symbolism of landfills; on Jan. 22, Patrick Plaisance of the *Daily Press of Newport News* reported that despite the controversy, a landfill company was buying \$3 million cranes and other equipment to expand operations; and on Jan. 31, the *Times-Dispatch* reported how once-needy counties have received millions of dollars for schools and other projects by allowing the landfills. For more information, contact Harper at (800) 446-2004, extension 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com; Plaisance at pplaisance@dailypress.com; or Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► A series Nov. 22-24 in the *Roanoke Times* explored the question: "Will forests survive the new timber rush?" Reporters Mike Hudson and Ron Nixon wrote that nearly a century after being devastated by clear-cutting, Virginia's forests are ready for harvest. Loggers, critics, and the state argue whether enough is being done to protect natural resources. Among the series' major findings: The amount of sediment put into rivers and streams by logging operations has increased every year since 1993; many logging sites violate the state's anti-erosion guidelines; and violators often fail to correct the pollution problems they've caused. For more information, contact Hudson at (540) 981-3332 or mikeh@roanoke.com, or Nixon at (540) 981-3347 or ronnn@roanoke.com.

► Developers and landowners are

rushing to exploit a little-known crack in federal regulations that has allowed the draining of thousands of acres of wetlands in Virginia and North Carolina, according to a March 16 article in *The Virginian-Pilot*. The rush stems from a court decision in Washington last year that freed property owners to cut ditches and drain certain wetlands without permits or oversight from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Officials blamed the decision for the loss of up to 10,000 acres of wetlands in coastal North Carolina, where state officials have closed the loophole. In Virginia, about 1,700 acres of wetlands have been lost to development and 4,300 acres might be drained soon. Contact Scott Harper at (800) 446-2004, extension 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com.

► In the Zephyr community in southwest Virginia's Floyd County, residents don't get electric bills—because the homes are powered by solar energy, Ron Nixon reported March 21 in the *Roanoke Times*. The community began in 1983 when five families bought 30 acres and placed the land in a trust. The residents share a commitment to living as environmentally consciously as possible, so they have kept their houses off the electrical power grid. Instead, they use solar panels, backed by propane generators. Nixon said the residents live a modern lifestyle but must conserve energy: There are no electric clocks—and no light inside the refrigerator. Contact Nixon at (540) 981-3347 or ronn@roanoke.com.

► Cleanup efforts have begun on the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River, one of the most contaminated waterways on the East Coast, Scott Harper reported Feb. 22 in *The Virginian-Pilot*. Environmentalists hope to reverse more than a century of pollution beginning with Chesapeake's Scuffletown Creek, which flows into the Southern Branch. The creek is the first site on the Elizabeth River where engineers and scientists will attempt to purge bottom sediments coated with tar-like creosote, chemicals, and heavy metals including lead, zinc, and chromium. The experiment is sponsored by the Elizabeth River Project, a grass-roots environmental group. Contact Harper at (800) 446-2004, extension 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com.

## WASHINGTON

► The federal government has denied the plan of operations for the proposed Crown Jewel open-pit gold mine in north-central Washington, saying it failed to meet the requirements of the 1872 Mining Law. Attorney Roger Flynn of the Western Mining Action Project argued that the law does not allow for the huge millsites required by modern mining techniques, and the agencies agreed. Flynn hopes to apply his argument to other mining proposals in the West, but the Battle Mountain Gold Corp. plans to challenge the decision on the Crown Jewel project. Michelle Nijhuis reported on this story in the April 12 edition of *High Country News*. Contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or michelle@hcn.org, or find the story at www.hcn.org.

► In March, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed nine species of salmon and steelhead trout under the Endangered Species Act. One is the Puget Sound chinook, a threatened salmon species whose range extends from the Canadian border to just beyond the southern extent of Puget Sound in Washington state. One run of these fish in the White River dwindled to less than 50 before rising recently to a few hundred fish; once, the river was home to thousands of chinook. Meanwhile, the human population of Puget Sound is expected to grow from 3 million to 4 million by the year 2020. Dustin Solberg reported on this story in the April 12 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or dustins@hcn.org, or find the story at www.hcn.org.

► Washington's Loomis State Forest has 25,000 roadless acres, and environmentalists say they'll spend millions to preserve it. In just a few months, the Loomis Forest Fund has raised \$3 million, but contributors say they need \$10.1 million more to compensate the state for the cash it could make from logging. The forest, which borders Canada, is part of an endowment of state lands where logging revenue is used to build new public schools. It's home to the healthiest lynx population in the lower 48 and also serves as a critical habitat corridor for Canadian

wildlife. If the land is purchased, locals will still be able to hunt, fish, and bike in the Loomis. Rebecca Clarren reported on this story in the March 24 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, contact HCN at editor@hcn.org or (970) 527-4898, or find the story at www.hcn.org.

## WEST VIRGINIA

► Mountaintop removal mining continued to be a major news story in West Virginia. (See page 11.) In March, a federal judge issued an injunction which blocked the largest mountaintop removal permit in state history. The order prompted repeated protests outside the federal courthouse, the state Capitol, and the offices of *The Charleston Gazette*, which published a series about the issue in 1998. In early May, the *Charleston Daily Mail* published a series of articles about the history of coal and its influence on the state's development. Contact Ken Ward Jr. at the *Gazette* for information, (304) 348-1702 or email kward@wvgazette.com

► Paul Nyden of the *Charleston Gazette* produced a lengthy Sunday article May 9 which examined the lax enforcement of coal truck weight limits under Republican Gov. Cecil Underwood, a former coal executive. Underwood's Division of Highways has pulled all inspectors off smaller highways—where most coal truck traffic is—and put them on interstates, which have fewer overweight truck problems. Contact Nyden at (304) 348-5164.

► The *Clarksburg Exponent-Telegram* published a series of articles about electric deregulation which included discussion of the possible environmental implications. For details, contact Julie Cryser at (304) 626-1149.

► Plans for a huge resort development in the Blackwater Canyon, near Canaan Valley, received lots of media attention. Allegheny Wood Products wants to build a 600-acre development, including 280 residential lots and a large resort lodge. The company revealed its plans in permit applications filed with the state DEP. Jeff Young of West Virginia Public Radio broke the story, which then

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## The Beat

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received coverage in the *Gazette* and by Brian Farkas of *The Associated Press*. Contact Ward at the *Gazette* for more information, (304) 348-1702 or email kward@wvgazette.com.

► Jenni Vincent of the *Morgantown Dominion Post* (formerly of the *Fairmont Times-West Virginian*) has been covering state hearings about acid mine drainage problems in Grassy Run, a Marion County stream in north-central West Virginia. The DEP cited Martinka Coal for polluting the stream with acid drainage from an abandoned mine in the area. Martinka is appealing the citation. Contact Vincent at (304) 292-6301.

### WISCONSIN

► The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel's* environmental coverage developed into a two-pronged approach during the week of April 11-17. Tom VandenBrook reached the front page of the Sunday paper, with a story on a state proposal to set up a hunting season on sandhill cranes. A few days later, Don Behm had a front page story on low water levels in the Great Lakes. Both reporters can be reached at (414) 224-2000.

► Two alternative weeklies in Milwaukee are merging, leaving unclear the new paper's coverage of environmen-

tal issues. *The Shepherd Express*, which occasionally featured lengthy environmental features and offered a semi-regular round-up of environmental tidbits, will join forces with *Metro*. *Metro* did less coverage of the environment, and that paper's editor will head the joint publication. Contact the publisher, Louis Fortis, at (414) 276-2222.

### WYOMING

► In northeast Wyoming, millions of pounds of explosives are detonated each week in the Powder River Basin's 17 open-pit coal mines, creating clouds of nitrogen oxide gases which can cause respiratory problems and lung damage. Although the clouds have some residents worried, the coal industry says that the risks to people are small. The federal Office of Surface Mining has been cracking down on the mines in the state, however, and the industry has created a task force to consider ways to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions. Eric Whitney reported on this story in the May 10 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or editor@hcn.org, or find the story at [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

► A private company's plans to dam a river on Wyoming's Bighorn National Forest has not found many fans—even among government agencies. The

Sheridan-based company Little Horn Energy wants to build two reservoirs on the river, but some critics say the dam would sacrifice valuable wildlife habitat. Members of the Crow Tribe, who live about 15 miles downstream, worry that the reservoir will leave their reservation with reduced flows and muddy irrigation water. The U.S. EPA has also been critical of the project. However, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is paying an estimated \$500,000 for an environmental impact statement, due out in the spring. Gabriel Ross reported on this story in the March 1 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, call *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or editor@hcn.org, or find the story at [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

► A lone wolf howl was heard in Jackson Hole, Wyo., for the first time in over 50 years this November. Since then, 11 wolves have been sighted, some of them only five miles from the town of Jackson. Reactions to the arrival range from ecstasy to grim resignation; while some residents and visitors flock to the nearby National Elk Refuge, hoping for a sighting, others fear the wolves will wipe out the elk herd. Biologists say it's too early to predict the wolves' impact on the herd. Rachel Odell reported on this story in the Feb. 15 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or editor@hcn.org, or find the story at [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

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