

SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

Vol. 11 No. 2

Green rights cases return Courts, EPA grapple with environmental justice

By MARGIE KRIZ

After four years in which environmental justice issues all but disappeared from the national radar screen, "green" civil rights concerns are emerging again as a result of controversial court cases and renewed activism in the civil rights community.

More important, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman has ranked environmental justice as a top priority, although she left a mixed legacy on the subject in New Jersey.

Whitman has persuaded conservative Republicans in Congress to give her

a little breathing room on the issue.

Rep. Joe Knollenberg, R-Mich., recently abandoned his EPA budget rider that had tied the agency's hands on civil rights matters since 1998. At the same time, House Republicans are giving Whitman more money to handle civil rights complaints. At a July appropriations markup, the panel provided \$11.9 million for the agency's environmental justice efforts, an increase of \$2.7 million above fiscal 2001.

The extra resources will help Whitman clear up the backlog of civil rights complaints she inherited when she took the reins of the agency early this

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Becoming your own publisher

By JOHN PALEN

These days I'm working on the 21st monthly number of *Midland Issues*, my one-man-band local government (with environment coverage, of course) newsletter.

I just got home from an elderly housing-tenant council meeting. Stories are in the works on arbitration of the firefighters contract, wetlands mitigation, a consumer products probe of a wall-mounted school table that fell and

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Inside Story

'The secret history of lead'

By MIKE DUNNE

Sometimes great stories emerge as an almost bizarre discovery far, far removed from the original fascination.

Jamie Lincoln Kitman's "The Secret History of Lead" is such a story and it won a 2000 Investigative Reporters and Editors Award. He is a former newspaperman and currently an attorney in Nyack, N.Y. He also writes for *Automobile* magazine and the English publication, *CAR*.

The story ran in *The Nation* in the March 20, 2000 edition. It is available online at <http://www.past.thenation.com/issue/000320/0320kitman.shtml>.

Kitman's article concludes that General Motors and the forerunner of the Ethyl Corp. decided that anyone could use ethanol as an octane booster to reduce the "knock" or pinging of internal combustion engines, but tetraethyl lead could be patented and royalties

earned. The lead additive became so widely used that pennies of the price of each gallon of gasoline pumped paid for the right to use the octane booster.

In the years after lead was phased out of gasoline in the United States, Kitman reported that the mean blood-lead level in Americans has declined more than 75 percent. "One could estimate conservatively that about 68 million young children had toxic exposures to lead from gasoline from 1927 to 1987," Kitman wrote.

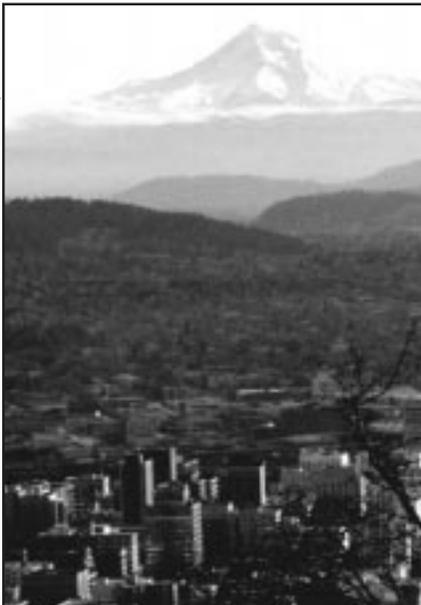
He sees some parallels between the story of leaded gasoline and other environmental controversies today. He recently agreed to answer a few questions about how he produced his story and the reaction, or lack of, to it.

The following question and answer session has been minimally edited:

Q. How did you come up with the idea?

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Photo by CHRIS RIGEL



Journalists from across North America will meet in the shadow of Mt. Hood for SEJ's 11th Annual Conference, Portland, Ore., Oct. 17-21, 2001. See a report on what's in store in "Ecotopia," page 4.

In rough waters, let's find refuge in SEJ

These aren't easy times for journalists or journalism.

I heard one media executive on C-SPAN call it "bloody summer." There have been layoffs. Early retirements. Buyouts. Media consolidation. More layoffs. And of course we witnessed Jay Harris resign as publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News* in protest of the seemingly endless push for higher profits.

At my newspaper in Louisville, we lost valuable links to a proud past when several people took their incentive-laden early retirements. For those who did, I'm glad for them.

The stories are similar elsewhere. One of my former editors in California took a buyout and decided to embark on a new career. Good for her; she'll make a fine teacher. And it's good that companies are finding humane ways to downsize.

But, as a profession and an industry, we're losing good people. It's not all just "weeding the garden," as I've heard some in the business coldly call these periodic blood-lettings. Where are we headed?

Where will we find the next generation of talented, dedicated, public service-oriented journalists? Will those of us who work as journalists find news organizations that will support aggressive, public service-oriented journalism?

All of this angst comes after years of pondering why circulation in many mainstream newspapers has been declining; why TV stations are having a hard time attracting viewers to news programs; and why so much of what constitutes news these days is just about scandal. And sex. And crime. And more scandal.

Fortunately, I've found my oasis. It's the community of SEJ.

I would argue that at no time has SEJ been more important. For ourselves. For our chosen profession. And for our communities and society at large.

I'm writing this as we prepare to gather for SEJ's 11th Annual Conference. I've come to know the importance that many of us place on getting together at least once a year to swap war stories, develop ideas, expand our understanding of important issues and pick up new skills.

Given the uncertainty of the economy, and the changing marketplace for news, networking can come in handy. In

many ways, SEJ is a giant support group.

I suspect we'll have much to talk about at Portland State University.

And it won't be just dismal industry trends, and the fact that more of us had to spend more of our own money to attend the conference because of company cutbacks in training and professional development budgets.

We'll be able to talk about the return of environmental news as a hot topic once again. It's slopping over into all kinds of other beats, especially politics.

Of course we can thank the change of presidential administrations for that, as George W. Bush puts forward an array of controversial policy proposals. As SEJ

Report from the Society's President

By
**James
Bruggers**



founding President Jim Detjen wrote in the recent newsletter for Michigan State University's Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, "The Bush administration has the potential of becoming an extraordinarily important era for environmental journalists."

I wonder how many specialists on this beat have suddenly started receiving calls for assistance from our colleagues in other beats who must negotiate the difficult terrain of environmental journalism.

We can offer some guidance on the uncertainty of science, for example, or the arcane regulations with acronyms such as TLV, PEL, and BMP, or the alphabet soup of government agencies and environmental laws such as FERC, FLPMA, NFLMA and ATSDR.

As one SEJer recently told me, rather proudly: "I'm the parts per billion guy in my newsroom."

He's onto something: Ours is a valuable franchise.

I'm also convinced more than ever that we produce stories that people want to read, watch and hear. Most focus groups and polls I know of place environmental coverage near the top of the interest scale.

That's good. But such consumer demand for our product brings both responsibility and rewards.

The responsibility, I believe, is for environmental journalism to serve as a beacon. We provide an example to the rest of the profession by offering an important alternative to the steady diet of scandal that's fed to the news-consuming public.

We offer readers high-quality, in-depth coverage of complicated yet compelling stories about news that matters most to people. Stories about the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the open spaces that sustain not only the natural world, but also our own mental and physical health.

We're the quality of life beat.

It's my hope that through our work as environmental journalists - and through the work of SEJ in the larger journalism community—we can help lead the way out of this "bloody summer."



Many thanks to Frank Allen's Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources, the Scripps Howard Foundation and Loyola University for helping SEJ put on its third leadership development retreat this summer in New Orleans.

And thanks to the participants. They came from across the United States, Canada and Mexico for a long weekend of discussions about journalism and how to keep SEJ vital. The participants learned more about SEJ; SEJ staff and board members who attended learned more about our membership.

One result will be a much stronger strategic plan for the organization, which serves as a blueprint to help keep the organization focused as we move forward. SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke and the board have been working on an update of the plan this year.

But I believe the biggest benefits will come down the road, as some of the participants take on greater volunteer roles in our organization. ❖

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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 more than 1,000 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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 Spring '02 May 1, 2002
 Summer '02 August 1, 2002

Coming to 'Ecotopia' will be worth every penny

Portland conference promises valuable mini-tours, panels and skill-builders

By CHRISTY GEORGE

So you want to go to the SEJ annual conference at Portland State University this October, but your company's bean-counter is balking in these economically murky times?

Well, your colleagues in the Pacific Northwest have some mighty persuasive things to say about why any journalist, anywhere, can benefit professionally from a working trip to the land that styles itself as Ecotopia.

"There is no event each year where more environmental decision makers and policy shapers are gathered in the same place at the same time," says Scott Miller of Seattle's KING-TV, who will lead a field trip to Mt. St. Helens, where nature is reclaiming the land nearly obliterated 20 years ago in the volcano's eruption.

Even if you live in a place where few fish survive in local rivers and most trees were turned to timber centuries ago, you can explore universal land, water and wildlife issues on field trips, mini-tours and panels.

"In the Northwest, natural-resource issues are writ large, so the debates and solutions that occur here are potentially and often actually precedent-setting for the rest of the country," says freelance reporter Orna Izakson, who will lead a tour to view an old-growth forest at treetop level from a canopy crane.

Environmental economists are re-examining the assumption that all battles over natural resources should be framed as "environment versus economy." But it's clear that the high-stakes battles in the West often pits science against politics—a trend surfacing nationally.

"Science played a huge part in shaping the region's political and social landscape over old growth forests, water and salmon, to a point of essentially stopping powerful and influen-

tial timber industry in its tracks after virtually running the Northwest as a fiefdom," says forest tour co-leader Lance Robertson, who covered the spotted owl battles for the *Eugene Register-Guard*.

Whether the politics are left, right or center, there is a special intensity to Western disputes.

"If envelope-pushing protest hasn't come to your town yet, it won't be long before it does," says public radio reporter Tom Banse, based in Washington's capital, Olympia. Banse will moderate a panel on "pushing the boundaries of civil protest"—whether it's torching forestry labs in the Pacific Northwest or luxury homes in Arizona desert suburbs or on Long Island, N.Y.

A fierce independent streak also flavors the Western "wise-use" movement, says panel leader Brodie Farquhar of the *Casper Star-Tribune*, even though mining, energy, timber and recreational vehicle industries are key funders.

"There is a deep-seated nostalgia among wise-use members, for an America they remember through childhood memories of the '50s or the stories handed down from parents and grand-parents—an idealized America of hard work, opportunity unimpeded by regulations, straight talk, respect for neighbors and deals settled by handshake rather than lawyers," says Farquhar.



Headliners

Expect to hear more from both anti-government and anti-globalization forces, now that George Bush is in the White House. Expect a chance to question Bush cabinet members at this year's conference.

Energy Department Secretary Spencer Abraham, Interior Department Secretary Gale Norton, EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman and U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth are among those invited.

Friday morning's provocative plenary session—moderated by ABC TV's Robert Krulwich—will ask CEOs and innovators in high-tech, biotech and nanotech whether there is always a technological fix for everything that ails the environment.

Later, Robert Sheckley and other local science fiction writers will speculate on what the future holds for the environment. After all, notes moderator Jeff Shaffer, a Portland-based commentator for the *Christian Science Monitor*, "20th century science fiction writers correctly predicted many remarkable trends, including the development of giant screen TV sets and the growth of global communication networks."

This year's keynote speaker is Conservation International head Russell Mittermeier—"a real life Indiana Jones," according to *San Jose Mercury News* environment writer and session organizer Paul Rogers.

Conservation International, started by Intel founder Gordon Moore and financially backed by corporate leaders, is working to save 60 percent of the terrestrial plant and animal species in the world by preserving the 1.4 percent of the globe where they live.

How much more cost-effective can you get than SEJ's annual conference?

In one place, over one weekend, you can quiz top Bush administration officials, consider the relationship between technology and the environment and bring home a story that connects to an issue in your hometown.

Plus, you can hone your skills with workshops on the Web, geographic information and software, storytelling and science reporting

"Enhance your research skills and give your stories more punch" with a hands-on focus on pesticides, radiation, energy, and bioregional news services," says Web workshop leader Phil Wexler, National Library of Medicine.

"It's more than just cool maps to illustrate an important story. The software allows you to take unanalyzed data from different sources and ask it questions," says GIS workshop leader Ed Hunt of Tidepool. "A GIS analysis can tell you where the story is. It can be the first source for your investigation."



“NASA had the moon landing. Molecular biologists have the human genome project,” Rogers says. Now, “wildlife biologists have an equivalent: The ‘Hot Spots’ movement: a race to halt species extinction around the world, from the California-Oregon border to the Amazon rainforests, before it’s too late.”

New Tech, Old Timber

The new Northwest is being transformed by the retreat of the old natural resource extraction economies and the rise of the tech industry. This year’s conference will look at everything from saving salmon to recycling semiconductors to stopping suburban sprawl.

The tech boom brought with it rapid population growth—which in turn triggered Oregon’s revolutionary land use planning laws.

“The fast-growing West is plagued by many of the same sprawl-driven challenges as the cities of the Rust Belt—too much traffic congestion on inadequate road systems, long commutes, languishing inner cities, extra burdens on schools and utilities caused by leapfrog development,” says Kathie Durbin of the *Columbian* newspaper in Vancouver, who will compare development on her side of the river to that in Portland during a Thursday field trip.

A Saturday afternoon mini-tour on sprawl will focus on the boom zone that surrounds the state’s largest private employer, Intel, its subsidiaries and spinoff tech businesses.

“It’s no utopia, but it’s a planning mecca,” says tour leader Brian Back, a writer for the *Portland Business Journal*, who moved west from Atlanta, the nation’s commuting hotspot. His tour will show off a place where there are alternatives to “the homogenized big-box strip mall scene...where you can still survive as a pedestrian without a car” and where “developers can still make a profit.”

Saving forests and farms was a key motivation behind Oregon’s sprawl-busting movement. But *The Seattle Times*’ Hal Bernton says even “fertile soil and a myriad of crops” couldn’t protect the state’s farmers from the same forces affecting the nation’s farm belt. This Thursday field trip will give you a glimpse at “a new farm economy based on growing landscaping and flowers for suburbia and grapes for wineries,” sometimes organically grown.

Businesses here are embracing green design, too, which is to say energy efficiency. Whether it’s buying solar-powered computers or putting a living roof on a building, sustainable design is a question for “every structure that’s built in America—from an affordable housing project in Detroit, to a new office tower in Dallas, to a new microchip factory in Framingham,” says green building tour leader Mitchell



Portland’s Willamette River is a Superfund site and also influenced by the city’s ESA status

Hartman, managing editor of *Oregon Business* magazine.

Volatile prices, thanks to the recent energy crisis in the West, he says, have helped push businesses to conserve.

Since the Depression, giant hydroelectric dams have provided cheap electricity that has powered the Northwest’s pulp mills, aluminum companies and aircraft industry. Getting access to that low-cost power is one reason California deregulated its energy market, sparking an unanticipated crisis.

But California is “hardly the only susceptible state,” says deregulation panel moderator Miguel Llanos of MSNBC in Seattle. It could happen to any state, which is why his panel will look “at and beyond California, with panelists including Western state government officials and a top executive from Enron, the world’s largest energy marketer.”

Oregonian reporter Jonathan Brinckman will help lead a Thursday field trip to the Bonneville Dam and a salmon hatchery on the Columbia River.

“This complex issue—with the region seeking to balance fish protections against hydropower, agriculture, forestry and development—is one of the gnarliest public policy problems in the nation,” he says. “Portland, with listed fish, its signature rivers and massive federal dams and hatcheries nearby, is a fantastic place to learn about it.”

Portland and Seattle are the first big cities to be listed as ground zero for protection under the Endangered Species Act. A Saturday afternoon mini-tour will trace the path of an urban salmon stream that must be reclaimed under the ESA.

“If the Northwest doesn’t save its salmon, that tasty canned salmon you buy at the Giant Supermarket in Washington, D.C., will have to be imported from Chile,” says tour co-leader Pat Forgey of the *McMinnville News-Register*.

“Unlike eastern cities that lost their salmon generations ago,” adds tour co-leader Kristian Foden-Vencil of Oregon Public Broadcasting, “Portland and Seattle are losing theirs at a time when the general public appreciates the link between a healthy environment and a healthy, enjoyable lifestyle.”

(Continued on page 7)



Regional report

Journalism events keep members, staff on the road

How's this for an event kick-off? Attendees of SEJ's 2001 Leadership Retreat in New Orleans spent their first night on an unscheduled stroll down Bourbon Street.

"Nothing like a little depravity to bond a group," observed one board member.

The retreat took place June 27 through July 1, hosted by Loyola University in New Orleans.

The first full day was spent under the guidance of Robert A. Thomas, Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications, who led the group into the swamps of Louisiana, pointing out alligators and banana spiders along the way. SEJ members new to the area were introduced to the loss of New Orleans' wetlands, the Formosan termite that threatens every wooden structure and the enormous, graceful live oaks that shade the streets of the city.

The purpose of the retreat, however, emerged from two days of back-to-back meetings with SEJ leaders quizzing the fellows about the direction of the organization and environmental journalism. Some of the topics included:

- The online frontier and what it means to the future of journalism.
- Diversity in SEJ and environmental journalism.
- Student needs and SEJ's emerging mentoring program.
- SEJ's volunteer base and how to increase and manage it.
- SEJ's publications: newsletter, Web site and brochures.
- Membership recruitment and retention.

The issue for SEJ boiled down to its relevance to the working journalist. "In a world that changes swiftly," Bruggers said after the event, "if SEJ wants to remain a vital organization for working journalists, then it needs to occasionally re-examine its programs and how it delivers them. What's working? What isn't? What needs to be tweaked? What can stay just the way it is?"

To give meeting-wearied attendees a break, SEJ scheduled an evening of humiliation. They took the group bowling. New Orleans' Rock and Bowl is a famous hot-spot where no serious bowling is attempted (or achieved). Some of the balls had lost their spherical identity and the alleys warped toward the gutters. Zeros abounded, and so did the laughs. At the stroke of 10, members of the rock group "The Molly Ringwalds" materialized from the end of the alleys (were they setting up the pins down there?) and proceeded to send everybody with eardrums over 45 home.

Fellows included Dina Cappiello, *Times Union*; Saul Chernos, freelancer; Mike Dunne, Baton Rouge *Advocate*; David Helvarg, TV producer and author; Cheryl Hogue, *Chemical and Engineering News*; Margie Kriz, *National Journal*; Kristen Kusek, University of South Florida's Science Journalism Center;



Richard Milner and Beth Parke prepare to tour Cypress Swamp

Miguel Llanos, MSNBC.com; Shawn Masten, then with *West County Times* (since moved into a teaching career); Robert McClure, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*; Richard P. Milner, producer and director; Susana Guzman Ortega, *To2Mexico*; Karen Dorn Steele, *Spokesman Review*; Mary-Powel Thomas, *Audubon*; Tammy J. Webber, *The Associated Press*; Timothy Wheeler, *Baltimore Sun*; and David Wiwchar, *Ha-Shilth-Sa*.

Board members Perry Beeman, Jim Bruggers, Mark Neuzil, Jacques Rivard, Mark Schleifstein, Peter Thomson and Carolyn Whetzel also attended the event, as well as staff members Beth Parke, Chris Rigel and Amy Simmons.

On the other side of the country two SEJers spoke about covering environmental justice at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists' annual conference in Phoenix on June 23.

The four-day conference included a session, "Environmental Justice: Finding the Stories in Your Backyard." Leading the panel were John McQuaid, Washington bureau reporter for the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, and Jim Schwab, editor of *Zoning News* for the American Planning Association in Chicago and author of "Deeper Shades of Green: The Rise of Blue Collar and Minority Environmentalism in America" (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994).

The conference at the downtown Phoenix Civic Plaza featured a number of prominent Hispanic journalists from both ethnic and mainstream media, speaking on a wide variety of topics.

Schwab, a senior research associate for the planning association, discussed researching and writing a substantial book on the topic of environmental justice just as the issue was gaining prominence within the news media and the environmental movement. He noted that his own background from a blue-collar family in Cleveland, including his experience in earning his way through college working in a chemical plant, influenced much of his perception of the issue. He concluded by suggesting that many of the coming environmental justice stories would be found in "our national backyard," in Mexico and the Caribbean, and showed slides of his own current work in the Dominican Republic.

McQuaid, who prepared an extensive investigative series, "Unwelcome Neighbors," that appeared in the *Times-Picayune* last year, discussed the challenges of developing stories on such a complex subject and the need for thorough research and understanding of the statistical, legal, and scientific issues involved. With the help of maps and PowerPoint slides from his series, McQuaid illustrated some of his points about the geographic proximity of minorities and industry in Louisiana's Mississippi Valley.

Other events include "H2Woes in the 21st Century," a workshop sponsored by the University of South Florida and Poynter Institute, with support from SEJ, Sept. 11-14 in St. Petersburg; the Cape Cod Conference on Environmental Reporting, co-sponsored by SEJ and the Marine Biological Laboratory, Sept. 20-22, Woods Hole, Mass.; a journalism conference focusing on Northeast environmental issues cosponsored by SEJ and the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute, Jan. 18-19, 2002; and a conference on environmental journalism in Vancouver, planned for the spring of 2002. For more information about these and other SEJ events, please visit www.sej.org. ❖



The city's other major river, the Willamette, is not only influenced by the city's ESA status, but is also a Superfund site—with implications for polluted rivers across the nation.

"Such megasites threaten the future of a \$1.5 billion-a-year Superfund program as Congress decides whether to reauthorize its expired revenue source," says Willamette River tour leader Brent Hunsberger of the *Oregonian*.

The health of the Pacific Ocean is critical to salmon, but also to humans. SEJ's Thursday ocean field trip looks at a host of hot research areas in what trip co-leader Richard Hill calls "geologic mayhem": everything from a huge undersea active volcano to the Pacific earthquake zone to the role of the ocean in short-term climate change and in more dramatic global warming.

The tour will also consider what co-leader David Helvarg, author of the "Blue Frontier," calls the "Big Five" of America's oceans: the Navy, offshore oil and gas, the shipping industry, commercial fisheries and coastal real estate."

Another Saturday afternoon mini-tour to the Columbia will offer a rare glimpse of spawning salmon. Tour leader and journalist Carol Craig of the Yakama Nation notes that tribes voluntarily shut down their hatchery runs while non-tribal hatcheries continued.

"The tribal perspective suggests that for humans, the best science will never arrive," says Craig.

Native American fishing, hunting and water rights may be more obvious in the West, but all 560 tribes throughout the United States have legal treaty rights as sovereign nations—at least on paper.

"The sovereignty of tribes, whether we are reporting on the Oneida Nation of New York or the Yakama Nation of Washington, legally and morally underlies contemporary environmental and land use laws," says Yakama journalist and *Oregonian* reporter Kara Briggs, who will lead a panel on tribal sovereignty.

A series of Pacific Rim panels will also explore the clash between First Nations, First World nations and the developing world: from examining the environmental footprint of China in the coming century to cross-border land and air quality issues with Canada and Asia to the resurgence of whaling.

Moderator David Wiwchar of *Ha-Shilth-Sa* will focus on the role of Japan, "international involvement, skewed population estimates, and International Whaling Commission back-room deals," during the recent Makah whale hunt off the northern coast of Washington.

After the conference, there is one more chance to sample the visual delights and environmental disasters of the Pacific



Photo by DAVID WIMCHAR, Ha-Shilth-Sa Newspaper

Makah harpooner Theron Parker adjusts his harpoon on the prow of the Hummingbird before the parade to the whale feast at Neah Bay, WA

Northwest. A three-day tour of the Columbia and Snake rivers will focus on dams and salmon and will include a float trip past the nation's hottest post-Cold War cleanup project, the Hanford Nuclear reservation.

You better believe this affects the people you write for, says tour co-leader Ken Olsen of the *Columbian*.

"Taxpayers across the nation shell out billions a year in failed attempts to truck fish downstream and subsidize floating wheat and wood chips down the Snake and Columbia river systems. And now, at the peak of another energy meltdown, we are discovering that hydropower—the number one enemy of salmon—isn't dependable," says Olsen.

Christy George is Business and Environment Bureau Chief for Oregon Public Radio's "Marketplace."

**For details about SEJ's 11th Annual Conference, visit
<http://www.sej.org>**

Metcalf gives first minority fellowship for environmental reporting

Suzannah Gonzales has been awarded the first Metcalf Institute Environmental Reporting Fellowship. The fellowship provides a \$27,000 stipend for a minority journalist to attend the Metcalf Institute Annual Workshop for Journalists, study independently for four weeks at The University of Rhode Island where the Metcalf Institute is based, and work as an environmental reporter for nine months at NPR-member station WRNI in Providence. Gonzales will begin reporting for WRNI in October.

Since 1999, Gonzales has worked as a general assignment reporter for *The Providence Journal*. Prior to that, she worked for *The Washington Post* and Voice of America. As an environmental reporter for public radio in Rhode Island, Gonzales plans to research and cover environmental justice issues, sprawl and its effect on the environment, and vector-borne diseases, such as West Nile Virus.

The Metcalf Institute Environmental Reporting Fellowship is funded in part by The Rhode Island Foundation. ❖



African environmental journalists form network

By MICHAEL KEATING

A course on environmental journalism for African communicators was held in Cape Town, June 11-12, 2001. The course was organized by the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa (NESDA), based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and held at the University of Cape Town.

The project had two objectives: to build awareness among African journalists about important environmental issues as they head into the 21st century, and to provide a chance to set up a network of African environmental journalists with the goals of creating a directory of resource persons and special curricula for journalists, and implementing projects for raising awareness and advocacy in Africa.

The mini-course was created and led by Michael Keating, an environmental writer and consultant based in Toronto, Canada. The course included sessions on the evolving role of environmental journalism and journalists; the practice of environmental journalism in Africa; climate change; desertification and water; biodiversity; the role of environmental law, including international conventions; the Global Environment Outlook reports of the United Nations Environment Programme; and sustainable development and the Rio process.

Speakers included Keating; Abou Bamba, coordinator, NESDA; Prof. Jan Glazewski, faculty of law, University of Cape Town; and Anantha Krischnan, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi.

The project was successful in that there was an intense discussion of a number of environmental and journalism issues and the group agreed to form a network. The network is being called the African Network for Environmental Communications. The membership is open to a broad range of communicators on environment and sustainable development (journalists, communication practitioners, etc.). It will be hosted by NESDA during the start-up period with the aim of becoming an independent organization.

The Network's mission is to help communicators improve



Participants in the NESDA course, Cape Town

environmental reporting in Africa, raise awareness about environmental and sustainable development issues in Africa through better environmental reporting, stimulate a healthy public debate on environment and sustainable development issues, promote more and better environmental communications for sustainable development in Africa in an African context (through capacity building, information exchange, etc.), promote an environmental ethic and identify communications issues/needs.

The short-term priorities

The group plans to establish an interim working group for network coordination. It will also work toward the refinement of its mission statement, goals, strategies, activities and time lines, further develop its identity and identify target audiences.

The meeting decided to create six working groups with the following tasks:

1. Create a network, e-mail based, for environmental information sharing among communicators. Include member contact information, sources, examples of good stories, tips about stories, meetings, etc. A web page and a newsletter also may be explored.
2. Link existing environmental journalists'/communicators' networks with other journalism or communications networks in Africa and in other countries.
3. Assist African environmental journalists to attend major environmental meetings to provide an African perspective, assist communicators in preparing for meetings and facilitate contacts for journalists with key sources.
4. Foster education and professional development of environmental communicators, including students, organize training courses, etc. and include instructions on using electronic tools: Internet, databases, GIS, etc.
5. Create or stimulate creation of awards (print, radio, TV, Internet, etc.) for environmental and sustainability reporting/communications that would be open to all African communicators.
6. Work to improve African journalistic coverage and communications of preparations for Earth Summit Preparations Johannesburg 2002.

NESDA will lead in organizing a follow-up meeting, trying to link it to an existing environmental meeting that many journalists may cover to help with travel costs. NESDA will also seek funding for the network.

Michael Keating is an environment writer in Toronto. A journalist for 23 years, including a decade as full-time environmental reporter, Keating has created courses on environmental journalism and written a handbook on the subject.



It's a writer's dream—being billed as “Tom Clancy meets Michael Crichton?” That's the moniker being branched by former freelance journalist **Richard Sherbaniuk**, who has made a hero out of an environmental investigator. His first novel, “The Fifth Horseman” published by Forge, tracks the first use by terrorists of a genetically modified organism—of course things go very, very wrong. “Virtually everything in the plot is based on my work with or for environmental reporters and investigators.” Sherbaniuk says the shift to fiction writing was difficult: “It's paralyzing when you can do anything you want, as opposed to having a clear cut journalistic goal or deadline.” He has obviously broken that paralysis and is penning his hero's second adventure and a screenplay based on the first.

Mark Neuzil's third book, called “Views on the Mississippi: The Photographs of Henry Peter Bosse” (University of Minnesota Press), will be on bookshelves this fall. The coffee-table book is the first comprehensive collection of the 19th century Mississippi River photographer and draftsman. As a map-maker, Bosse probably knew the river better than anyone else in his day, says Neuzil, who tried to follow in his footsteps, stomping up and down the river banks seeking the same views Bosse photographed over a century ago. “I learned much more about the ‘natural’ river—the river as it existed before the Army started in on it,” says Neuzil.

Still in the stores is the latest book by **Scott Shalaway** called “Building A Backyard Bird Habitat” (Stackpole). The West Virginia wildlife biologist self-syndicates a nature column to newspapers around the continent and hosts a local weekly talk show about birds, nature and conservation. This is his seventh book on the backyard wildlife.

Frank Clifford has been named science/medicine/environment editor for *The Los Angeles Times*. The former environmental writer will oversee a staff that includes: **Gary Polakovic**, covering air and related issues; **Deborah Schoch**, covering natural resources and public lands; **Elizabeth Shogren**, covering environmental issues in Washington, D.C.; and **Kenneth Weiss**, covering coastal and ocean issues. Polakovic is a former SEJ board member and Schoch is currently vice president and membership chair.

Erik Nelson covers California now for the Natural Resources News Service. The Washington, D.C., based non-profit does the legwork on stories and passes them to reporters at various news outlets. Nelson says it's quite a change from the *Daily News* of Los Angeles, Nelson's last post, where he covered education in-depth and environmental “quick stories on the latest study that caught the editor's eye.”

After 15 years as a reporter at *The Columbus* (Ohio) *Dispatch*, **Randy Edwards** joined the Internet world. After 10 months on-line, Edwards considers himself a survivor. He is still an environmental journalist. Edwards covers Ohio environmental issues for Capitolwire.com, which has survived the dot-com disasters. That means Edwards can continue covering his beat free from the bureaucracy that afflicts

many older organizations. “It's very fresh because we're a new company,” he says. “The philosophy is—you want to try something different? Give it a shot and see what happens.”

Surprisingly, a pair of reporters has found that small papers are the place for in-depth environmental coverage. **Andy Kekacs** is the new special projects reporter for Central Maine Newspapers (the *Kennebec Journal* in Augusta and the *Morning Sentinel* in Waterville). At the small news organization, Kekac says “the publisher has given me a lot of flexibility to report larger, more analytical stories that had been going uncovered because of the reporting time involved.” He digs into stories across all beats, including the environment.

At the same time, **Victoria English** has begun working as an investigative reporter for *The Lake Park Post* in Valdosta, Ga. The weekly is owned and operated by Al Parsons, a retired investigative reporter. “It is so small that I am the only reporter, but there are so many issues in the area that Al needs help covering them,” says English. Before

Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsy

going to work for *The Post*, English worked for the local daily, *The Valdosta Daily Times*. Before that, she was a police officer in Jacksonville, Fla. “I have found this type of reporting to be as exciting as police work although I miss being able to put the bad guys in jail.”

Former *Tomorrow* columnist **Carl Frankel** has also shifted venues. His byline now appears in the magazine *Green-at-Work*. He says he's supposed to tackle connections between business and sustainability and take “a big-picture approach, and a somewhat philosophical one.” However Frankel reports, “I wouldn't rule out the occasional rant.”

In the ‘if somebody's gotta do it, why can't it be me department,’ 12 journalists attended the 2001 National Tropical Botanical Garden Environmental Journalism Fellowship program—in Hawaii. They were: **Tim Batchelder**, MotherNature.com; **Heather Dewar**, *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*; **Jennifer Mapes**, *National Geographic News*; **Kerstin Monk**, *Gefle Dagblad* (Sweden); **Karen Rafinski**, *The Miami Herald*; **Carolyn Shea**, *Audubon Magazine*; and **Bettina Vilmun**, *Berlingske Tidende* (Copenhagen, Denmark). **Angela Swafford**, a 1999 NTBG Fellow, again participated in the Kauai-based course. Past SEJ board member **JoAnn Valenti** coordinates the annual program, which gives journalists an intensive, five-day field training in tropical ecological issues and general understanding of environmental science. Did I mention that it was in Hawaii?

Looking for a different, but no less spectacular, educational climate? Stop in and visit Professor **Garrett O'Keefe**, the new chair of Journalism and Technical Communication at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. O'Keefe moved to the Rocky Mountain State from the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he taught Life Sciences Communication and Environmental Studies.

Also joining the CSU faculty (and also hailing recently from Wisconsin) is **Joseph Champ**. With the ink barely dry

Continued on page 11)

Series exposes asbestos loophole

Poor enforcement in Texas construction results in worker exposure

By KEVIN CARMODY

The tip seemed quite plausible, given what happens when a society believes an old problem like asbestos has been regulated out of existence.

Several state-licensed asbestos consultants insisted that asbestos was being improperly removed from many of the commercial and public buildings under renovation in the high-tech boomtown of Austin, Texas. Further, state health inspectors charged with enforcing asbestos safety laws were missing the improper jobs. They usually visited just the projects in which asbestos removal contractors had filed the required work notices.

My editor, Cory McDonald, and I decided it wouldn't be enough to describe the problem. During the past decade, a half dozen newspapers or TV stations had reported extensively on botched asbestos abatements, fly-by-night contractors or regulatory flaws. What none had done in print—and we set out to do—was to try to quantify what was happening and then convincingly describe the consequences for worker health.

The resulting series, published on Jan. 7-8, reported that nearly 90 percent of the asbestos removal projects in nine central Texas cities, including Austin, were violating state and federal safety laws, repeatedly exposing thousands of construction workers to dangerous levels of the mineral fiber. In Dallas the violation rate was 81 percent; in Houston 63 percent, our analysis showed.

On June 18, Texas Gov. Rick Perry signed the last of three bills designed to plug the holes the series identified in the regulatory system. A state widely maligned for industry-influenced environmental regulation became a national leader in asbestos safety rules.

I'm convinced it's a reporting project that could be replicated anywhere in the United States. The regulatory requirements and the way asbestos abatements are enforced are virtually identical in every state.

We found that of more than 3,000 commercial and public structures renovated or demolished in the prior year in the Austin area, about 2,648 contained enough asbestos to be regulated. But only 290 of those projects filed the mandatory notice for an asbestos abatement

project, which would require safety equipment such as respirators. Most of the complying buildings were operated by schools or local governments.

The problem, it became clear, was more widespread and insidious than a few rogue abatement contractors who take money and do shoddy work.

The vast majority of building owners and construction contractors were, out of real or feigned ignorance, neglecting to even get their buildings inspected for asbestos before starting renovation or demolition, as required under Texas and federal law. So the construction workers—mostly Hispanic day laborers hired to do the dirtiest jobs—were tearing through drywall, floors insulation and ceilings without any idea they were creating clouds of asbestos fibers.

Because the uncontrolled removal was so pervasive, construction workers moving from job to job probably were exposed to enough asbestos to cause asbestos-related diseases, medical experts said.

In 1991, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a federal ban on most asbestos products. So even some new building materials contain asbestos.

To find exposed workers, we visited the city's day laborer center with samples of asbestos-containing materials.

Our statistical analysis required us to determine, for each city, how many commercial and public buildings were renovated or demolished in a one-year period (homes, apartments with four units or fewer and some limited-access industrial sites aren't subject to the regulations).

Most cities issue building permits for such projects and categorize them separately from new construction; the largest cities provided the data via an Excel spreadsheet including a description of each project, which allowed us to efficiently exclude projects exempt from regulation.

To determine the number of asbestos abatement projects using proper methods, we examined the notifications filed with the Texas Department of Health. Again, familiarity with agency forms and procedures was critical. If we hadn't inspected the forms—instead relying on a notification total provided by the health department—we wouldn't have noticed that multiple notices were filed for some projects, reflecting changes in work methods or dates. Thus, we would have inflated the number of legal abatement projects by about 30 percent.

The key element unavailable in the public record was the proportion of commercial and public buildings that contain asbestos in regulated amounts and, more important, the proportion of buildings in which asbestos would be disturbed during a renovation. (All demolition projects must file a notice, but only renovation projects that will disturb asbestos must abate the problem.)

We contacted five licensed asbestos consultants—individuals authorized to inspect buildings for asbestos. They had sterling regulatory records and reputations. They all agreed that about 95 percent of the Central Texas buildings they inspect contain asbestos, and it is likely to get disturbed in 85 to 90 per-

This reporting project could be replicated anywhere in the United States. The regulatory requirements and the way asbestos abatements are enforced are virtually identical in every state.

cent of renovation projects.

We decided to use a more conservative figure—80 percent—to guard against overstating the problem. The percentage may be different state to state and even city to city, depending on the age of the building stock and regional differences in construction practices.

Instead of challenging the newspaper's findings, state health department officials embraced the series as proof their inspectors need extra tools—though not necessarily more money—to do their jobs. A pilot health department project that sent inspectors unannounced to 28 construction sites had identified illegal work at 80 percent. So our findings were not really a surprise to the insiders.

Also, health department inspectors had long believed they could put a dent in the problem if they could convince building department officials in Texas cities to withhold building permits for commercial renovations until the owner presented a copy of the asbestos survey required under state and federal law.

In San Antonio, the only major city in Texas to enforce such a requirement, illegal asbestos removals were virtually nonexistent, our analysis showed.

But other cities fought such enforcement. In Beaumont, the city council decided to pay thousands of dollars in fines for asbestos violations at a city fire station rather than adopt a building-permit check.

In the days after publication, *American-Statesman* Editor

Rich Oppel used his column to challenge state legislators from the Austin area to fix the problems we identified. Three of those legislators co-sponsored the resulting bills that direct officials in every Texas city to withhold commercial renovation and demolition permits until they see an asbestos survey signed by a state-licensed consultant.

The newspaper's top editorial page editors, Arnold Garcia and Maria Henson, kept the pressure on lawmakers with a steady stream of editorials passionately condemning the deadly exploitation of day laborers. The building-permit law became effective Sept. 1, 2001, with enforcement beginning this coming January; the other new laws ban the reinstallation of asbestos in public buildings and tighten rules on the removal of asbestos flooring.

Of course, building owners with an asbestos survey in hand could still opt to send in unprotected workers. But getting caught exposing workers to asbestos, when there is proof the owner knew about it, transforms a civil offense with an average \$14,000 fine into federal felony.

The *American-Statesman* series "Death in the Air" and follow-up reports can be viewed on the Internet at <http://www.statesman.com/asbestos>

Kevin Carmody is environment writer at the Austin American-Statesman.

Media on the move... (from page 9)

on his Ph.D., Dr. Champ has been hired as an instructor at the University's Department of Natural Resource Recreation and Tourism in the College of Natural Resources. Champ earned his Ph.D. at the University of Colorado, but before that he studied at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and spent ten years as a television journalist there. His area of expertise is nature films and how people understand them.

Back on home on solid, if sandy, ground is **David Kaiser**, writer for a weekly newspaper in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. First Kaiser spent 10 days in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, Malaysia, taking photos and interviewing people for several stories. Then he tackled the wilds of Philadelphia attending the annual Wharton Seminars for Business Journalists. While Kaiser does do a lot of environmental writing, it seems his favorite subjects are old news. "Many of the old towns and cities here are 2000 to 3000 years old, so I enjoy touring them, talking to local residents and writing historical stories and encouraging [the communities'] renovation."

Paul Rogers of the San Jose *Mercury News* has started to fill some pretty big shoes. Following in the footsteps of Charles Kuralt, Phil Shabecoff, Michael Grunwald and Robert Semple, Jr., Rogers will be honored this fall with the Sierra Club's David R. Brower Environmental Journalism Award, which recognizes an outstanding journalist for contributing to a better public understanding of environmental issues.

"A fascinating multi-media document" is how the Newspaper Association of America describes Projo.com's award winning series "Rescuing the Right," a report about efforts to save endangered north Atlantic right whales. The web-

site, operated by *The Providence (RI) Journal* won the association's Edgie Award for Most Innovative Use of Digital Media, News Event Coverage. The NAA says the series "raises the bar for all newspaper-affiliated sites." The presentation includes a 15-minute slide show recounting a day-long effort to cut fishing line off a young right whale in the Bay of Fundy. The series was written by **Peter B. Lord** and photographed by **Andrew Dickerman**. **Tom Murphy** provided the artwork and the series was brought to life on-line by **Mike Foran** and **Sean Polay**.

Down under, **Claire Miller** has won the United Nations Association of Australia's World Environment Day 2001 award for print media—for the second year in a row. This time, the reporter for *The Age*, a daily newspaper in Melbourne, Australia wrote six articles linking the every day activities of the readers to environmental degradation. The series included a self-exposé in which Miller calculated her own ecological footprint, described why it was so high and the implications for the environment. "Readers seemed especially to like it because I 'fessed up that I wasn't exactly a paragon of virtue." Last year Miller won the national JD Pringle Award from the British High Commission and National Press Club, for a study of trade and environment issues in the United Kingdom.

If you are an award-winning reporter—toot your horn. If you just finished a book—market it here. If you've got a new job, let your colleagues know where you've landed. Send all professional news to George Homsy at ghomsy@world.std.com or fax to him at: 253-322-5176.

Making LUST into an A1 story

By MARYJO SYLWESTER

The world of underground fuel storage tanks has largely gone unnoticed by the media and environmental groups in the two decades since Congress first authorized environmental regulations for tanks.

At the same time, vast changes in the industry brought about by these new regulations have yielded numerous problems that should be brought to the public's attention. Computer-assisted reporting can make that investigation a little easier.

With the help of CAR, *The Kansas City Star's* environment writer, Michael Mansur, and I uncovered this spring that thousands of leaking underground storage tanks continue to pollute water and soil, despite the new regulations and billions of dollars spent on prevention. Our story came a month before a General Accounting Office report that called for a congressional review of these problems.

We found that the regulations and problems vary from state to state, with some shining brighter than EPA and many lagging behind.

Underground storage tanks (USTs) are primarily used by gasoline stations, but they have also been used by farmers, businesses that operate a fleet of vehicles and others. Be sure to check on your own company's ownership of tanks.

Congress authorized the first environmental regulations for USTs in 1984, requiring owners to register their tanks with the state. In 1988, Congress approved a series of regulations that took effect gradually over the next decade. By December 1998, all tanks were required to have leak detection, corrosion protection and overflow protection. The law also banned the use of bare steel tanks.

States were required to either adopt the federal laws or enact their own, more stringent regulations. Idaho is the only state that has not done this. Most states essentially adopted the federal regulations. But a few, such as Florida and California, have more stringent laws. For example, Florida also requires tanks to be in an outer container—called secondary containment. Others ban fuel delivery to tanks that don't meet the state regulations.

We wanted to determine whether the new regulations were effective. But we discovered that it was difficult to assess the effectiveness of the newest regulations (overspill and corrosion protection) since the rules went into effect less than two years earlier.

But a much more important piece of the environmental laws—leak detection—had been in place since 1993. It was easy to check its effectiveness.

Through the data work and by searching government inspection records we found leak detection was not working. Even those leaks discovered after all tanks were required to be fully "upgraded" in late 1998 were primarily found when the owner took the tanks out of the ground, sometimes months or years after the leak first started.

We started with the Missouri and Kansas databases of tank registrations and leaks. Generally this information is kept in separate tables—and possibly separate databases.

All states should have a database of tank/facility registrations. It may include both underground and above-ground tanks, depending on how your state program is set up. Most states don't have regulations for above-ground tanks, but they collect information from those who volunteer it. Federal law requires leaks from above-ground tanks to be reported.

Both states required payment for copying the data, but it was less than \$50 and they were prompt in responding. In both cases we received the information either in database format (dbf) tables or an Access database.

The first request was a little tricky in both states because we found neither agency was accustomed to giving out this information. At first, Kansas gave us their "public" version that doesn't include all of the information. Missouri, on the other hand, gave us everything the first couple times, then suddenly decided the comments field in the leaking tanks data wasn't public.

Many states offer a "public" version on their Web sites that would be worth checking out before making a request. Links to state Web sites are available at www.epa.gov/swerst1/states/sta-teurl.htm The full databases should consist of multiple files: one listing each facility/site that has underground and/or above-ground tanks; another listing each tank located at those facilities; owner information; a leaking sites database; enforcement actions data; and possibly inspections.

Reading facility/tank data

The facility portion will identify the particular gas station and its location. It might include geographical locators such as latitudes and longitudes that could be used to map the data.

The tank portion will provide details about each tank: whether it is steel or fiberglass, when it was installed, the type of leak detection used, whether it meets the regulations, and many other details. The data may also include those tanks that have been "closed" or removed from the ground, and the date removed from service. The Kansas data kept a separate record on each tank for each year (Missouri didn't). As a result, you could easily track changes in the tank status or compliance with the laws over several years.

Owner information might be included with the facility or tank data, but it might also be kept separately. This should include the name of the company, a contact person, phone numbers and addresses.

We also obtained enforcement and inspection data for Missouri. The state only provided data on "closed" enforcement cases and said the open cases were exempt from the state's open records law. Since most of the tank laws had just gone into effect a year or two earlier, most of the enforcement cases were still open.

The inspections data was useful to assess state oversight. By comparing the inspections data to the facility data in a database manager program, I was able to identify those sites that had not been inspected in the past three years. That list accounted for 30 percent of all active sites in Missouri.



Useful Web sites:

- EPA Storage Tanks Web site:
<http://www.epa.gov/swerust1/>
- Links to state tank agency Web sites:
<http://www.epa.gov/swerust1/states/stateurl.htm>
- Corrective Action Measures reports (semi-annual) to the EPA: See some of the basic data in PDF tables at the EPA Web site: <http://www.epa.gov/swerust1/cat/camarchv.htm>
- GAO Report, May 4, 2001, GAO-01-464:
<http://www.gao.gov> (search the GAO archives for the above report number)
- The Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials: <http://www.astswmo.org/tanks.htm>
- Look for the survey of insurance funds conducted each year by the Vermont tanks agency and other ASTSWMO publications: <http://www.astswmo.org/Publications/Revbkshlf.htm#Tanks>
- EPA Report to Congress and other reports:
<http://www.epa.gov/swerust1/pubs/index.htm#rtc>
- EPA-funded study by the University of California-Davis:
<http://cee.engr.ucdavis.edu/faculty/young/ldstudy/ld-study.htm>

The leak database should list one record for each facility that has reported contamination from a leaky tank. Sometimes it's called the "remediation" or LUST data. The term LUST is the one spot of humor in an otherwise serious industry. Instead of what you might think, LUST stands for Leaking Underground Storage Tank.

The Kansas data made it easy to find out how many leaks were discovered by leak detection because they had a field identifying that information in the LUST data. In Missouri, we pulled that information from paper records and created a new field for it in the database.

The most difficult part of the analysis was determining the status of the tanks at the time the leak occurred. We wanted to know if the tanks had been replaced or "upgraded" to meet the new laws prior to the leak, or if the contamination occurred before the regulations took effect but didn't get reported until later. Missouri and Kansas didn't directly document this information. Generally, we found it was available indirectly either in

other parts of the database or in paper records.

Within the database, we used the tank installation and "out of service" dates for the tanks and compared those to the date the leak was discovered. Sometimes we were able to do this in queries, but most often we had to go through each record by hand.

We used paper records to fill gaps in the database. Both Missouri and Kansas were terrible about consistently filling in fields. The Kansas database could be a gold mine for a reporter because they have fields to track every little thing—but the field agents responsible for entering the information do so haphazardly.

This is one of those occasions where the federal level collects very little data. States submit two reports to the EPA each year—called Corrective Action Measures—and these include the number of leaks reported, active tanks, closed tanks, sites that started clean-up, sites that finished clean-up and number of emergency responses made by the agency. These numbers are then compiled into a list that is posted on the EPA's Web site in PDFs.

The paper reports include other details that provide a good overview of the state program and what things they are working on. You should be able to obtain the reports from either the state agency or the regional EPA office in your area. (In Missouri, their records department kept all of the EPA reports in one file that you could request).

We put the numbers for end-of-the-year reports 1995-2000 from the PDFs into Excel and did some basic calculations. The numbers of leaks and closed tanks in these reports are cumulative, so the first task was some subtraction to determine yearly figures. Then it was possible to study year-to-year changes for all of the states.

You might check the EPA reports first to get an idea of how your state ranks compared to others.

The Kansas City Star story is available from the IRE Resource Center, story #17723, by calling (573) 882-3364.

Maryjo Sylwester is a database editor at the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C.

Industry trade group name change causes confusion

It's a reporter's nightmare. Due to a recent industry "repositioning"—what some have termed a "greenwashing"—a venerable scientific society is regularly confused with a powerful industry trade group.

The Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) for years had a name that described what it is: a lobbying organization for the chemical industry. CMA found through surveys that the public holds a dim view of the word "chemical." But the word "chemistry" carries positive connotation, the group discovered. So CMA last year remade itself into the trade group that represents "the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry," renaming itself the American Chemistry Council (ACC).

The new appellation has led to confusion between the industry group and the American Chemical Society (ACS), the scientific professional organization for chemists and chemistry educators. ACS plans to keep the name it's had for the past

125 years. Many SEJ members are familiar with ACS in large part because of its two national meetings each year where a number of scientific papers with environmental significance are presented.

Increasingly, ACC officials are incorrectly described in the media as working for ACS, especially in the wake of Bill Moyer's PBS show on the chemical industry, "Trade Secrets." It even happened in the *SEJournal*.

So, for factual correctness—and to help your fellow environmental journalists working at ACS in their unexpected battle against being labeled as industry lobbyists—here's the crib sheet to paste on your terminal:

American Chemistry Council = chemical industry group
American Chemical Society = scientific professional organization

—Cheryl Hogue

Explaining the climate/ocean connection

By CHERYL HOGUE

Just how could global warming slow down the Gulf Stream?

Many of us have reported the prediction handed down from some scientists: Modern society's appetite for fossil fuels could pump enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to slow down the Gulf Stream. Flowing from the tropics past Florida and North Carolina then northeast across the Atlantic, the Gulf Stream then would no longer bring its warmth to the shores of northern European countries.

This prediction is based on an understanding of what is often called the "ocean conveyor belt."

Think of a central heating system in a house that circulates hot water. A furnace in the basement heats the water, which moves through pipes to radiators in the upper floors, heating the rooms.

In the ocean, a slow-moving conveyor belt arcs beneath the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans, carrying cold water that eventually gets reheated by the sun. Although the conveyor belt circles the globe, its function is vertical. Warm water from the tropics runs to the poles near the surface and cold water moves toward the equator at great depth.

Scientists refer to this ocean conveyor belt as thermohaline circulation. Movement depends on the temperature of the water (the thermo) and its salinity (the haline). Colder or saltier water is denser than—and thus sinks beneath—warmer or less saline water.

Warning: This explanation is simplified.

The warmth of the Gulf Stream comes from the sunny tropics. This current loses heat the farther north it flows. When it reaches the frigid but less salty Greenland and Norwegian Seas, Gulf Stream water is cooled substantially. It gets even saltier as sea ice forms because ice crystals float on the surface and salt molecules stay in the liquid water. This chilly, salty water sinks deep into the Atlantic forming a mass called the North Atlantic Deep Water. This water slowly—over many decades—moves south, past South American and Africa, to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. In far south, it mixes with dense, cold, salty water that forms off Antarctica in the Weddell Sea on its way east.

Scientific information:

- <http://www.clivar.org> (click on "Could climate make a sudden switch?" then click on "D3: Atlantic Thermohaline Circulation")
- The middle of this page has a very good (but copyrighted) illustration of the global conveyor belt: <http://storm.uchicago.edu/~gidon/geosci245/thermohal/thermohaline.html>
- World Wildlife Fund's views: <http://www.panda.org/resources/publications/climate/xweather/risks.html>
- Heartland Institute provides the perspective of climate change skeptics: www.heartland.org (search on "ocean conveyor").

Most of this cold current continues to travel east around Antarctica, passing south of Australia and New Zealand then heading north through the Pacific. Throughout this part of its journey, the water "upwells" or moves toward the surface of the ocean. There it begins to move south and warm up along the west coast of North America

The return path of the warmer water from the Pacific and Indian oceans to the Atlantic can take two routes. One passes the southern tip of Africa and the other is through the Drake Passage between South America and Antarctica.

The water then joins the upper ocean, where circulation is driven by wind, crosses the equator and picks up more and more heat on its way northward. In the equatorial region, the current is warmed further and evaporation increases the salinity. The part of this current moving up the southeast coast of the United States is called the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream moves to the northern seas and the sequence begins anew.

This cycle takes a long time to complete—an estimated 1,000 years.

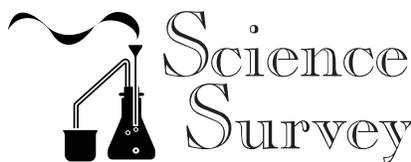
Most physical oceanographers agree that one critical element of the ocean conveyor belt is the sinking of cold dense water in the North Atlantic. Such sinking does not occur in the Pacific. North Atlantic water has a higher salt concentration—and thus is denser—than North Pacific water.

If temperatures in the North Atlantic—specifically, in the Norwegian and Greenland seas—rise because of human-induced climate change, less and less cold dense water would be formed. Eventually, the conveyor belt could slow down, some climate scientists predict.

There is evidence that the conveyor belt has slowed down in the past. The Younger Dryas event was a cold period that occurred 12,800-11,500 years ago, as the world was warming up from the last Ice Age. Thermohaline circulation is believed to have reduced greatly during Younger Dryas due to a huge influx of fresh water to the North Atlantic from melting glaciers through the newly formed St. Lawrence River. The fresh water stopped the formation of North Atlantic Deep Water, the driver of the conveyor belt. Western Europe and eastern North America became colder and drier.

The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says alterations of ocean flows due to global warming "cannot be predicted with confidence at present." This is because at least two climate change prediction models do not show a slow-down of thermohaline circulation. Scientists say they need better understanding of the ocean conveyor belt and an ocean-observing system that can give real-time information about thermohaline circulation.

Cheryl Hogue is senior reporter for Chemical and Engineering News. Martin Visbeck, associate professor in the Earth and Environmental Sciences Department at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, contributed to this article.



Water: The coming crisis story

By TOM HENRY

Water. In its purest form, it seems so dull—just a clear, tasteless liquid. But when my city editor asked me to do a project on how 40 million people in the Great Lakes region could be affected by global water shortages, I quickly learned that water is an emotional issue.

Judging by the recent flap over the potential for international bulk water shipments, this is a story that is not going away soon. It's a story with numerous local angles, both for places with plenty of water and those in dire need. My four-day series June 10-13, "The Future of the Great Lakes: Who Will Control the Water?" provided an historical perspective on water withdrawals and exports, making a case for why they're not as far-fetched as people might believe.

It showed why global water shortages have caught the attention of many, including the CIA, and how the Great Lakes are vital to the region's water-based economy. Yet the lakes are vulnerable because of recent changes in international trade law. The final installment explored how North America might not be too far away from embracing desalination.

Consider that the Earth's temperatures are on the rise, its population is expected to double again within decades and that—even now—there isn't enough drinking water on the planet for everyone living today. Make that message hit home. It can be an overwhelming task, but water is going to be one of the biggest stories of the century.

Going back over notes and tapes from last fall's SEJ conference at Michigan State University helped. One break-out session on "Water Wars" proved particularly valuable. It featured Dr. Peter Gleick of the Oakland-based Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment and Security, author of two books that examine global water inventories; and Dr. Aaron Wolf of Oregon State University, an expert on water-related tensions in the Middle East. I went back to them right away for follow-up interviews and, sure enough, they got me started on the right path.

For many reporters in the U.S. and Canada, one obvious place to start tapping resources is the International Joint Commission, a U.S.-Canada government agency that has been around since 1909. Its primary purpose is to advise the two countries about shared water resources; hence, the majority of its work—but not all—is focused on the Great Lakes. The IJC's Web site is at www.ijc.org.

For a global perspective, get familiar with the web site of Gleick's think tank, www.pacinst.org. Also check out the comprehensive overview provided in the September 2000 edition of *Population Reports*, published by Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, entitled "Solutions for a Water-Short World," at www.jhuccp.org/pr/m14edsum.stm.

Numerous groups have active links on this issue, including the National Wildlife Federation, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Great Lakes United. Some congressional sites are more helpful than you might think. Listen to the ship-

ping industry: The Cleveland-based Lake Carriers Association (www.lcships.com) has compiled tons of information about Great Lakes water levels from an industry perspective, as have various boating groups.

Many books provide a wealth of information. Those on my short list include Gleick's "The World's Water: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources (two editions, 1998-1999 and 2000-2001); Marc Reisner's classic "Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water," and former U.S. Sen. Paul Simon's "Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It."

Some of my highest praise, though, goes to an absolutely wonderful article, "Running Dry," in the July 2000 edition of *Harper's* magazine by Jacques Leslie. It is must reading for anyone who wants to get a global perspective of the issue. Definitely also look up the February 2001 edition of *Scientific American* for a similar article, written by Gleick, "Making Every Drop Count."

It was not too long after my series appeared that a story in a Canadian newspaper sent shock waves throughout water-watching circles in the U.S. and Canada. It was President Bush's acknowledgment that, yes, his home state of Texas, as well as Nevada, Arizona, California and others, are running short of water and, yes, he sure would be interested in all that water Canada has if it ever is willing to sell some to the United States.

The *Globe and Mail* broke a story saying that Bush wanted to immediately start negotiating for Canadian water. The story spread like a torrent from a fire hydrant, getting picked up by the wire services and prominently displayed in newspapers from Vancouver to eastern Canada, as well as many in the United States. The second-day coverage included a *Globe and Mail* editorial that essentially said George W. Bush—the man who nixed the Kyoto climate-change agreement and would displace caribou in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—is now at Canada's front door and wants its water.

The reality? That's hard to say. A transcript of the round-table discussion in which Bush made his remark, posted at www.whitehouse.gov, doesn't seem to quite jibe with how the story was presented.

It seems fair to say that Canadians are more than just a little suspicious of U.S. motives when it comes to three of their biggest resources—water, lumber, and natural gas. George Bush might have not known he was lighting a powder keg by acknowledging that he's envious of Canada's water. Or, if you believe the conspiracy theorists, maybe he did.

Tom Henry has written about the Great Lakes throughout much of his 20-year career. He has been The (Toledo) Blade's environmental writer since 1993 and is the recipient of several awards, including the Ohio Newspaper Women Association's 1999 top award for all-around writing versatility.

Survey confirms editors play bigger role on E-beat

By DEBRA A. SCHWARTZ

Believe it or not, New England environment reporters are satisfied with their jobs even though they have less freedom to decide which aspects of a news story should be emphasized.

That was one of the findings of the first comprehensive study of daily newspaper and television reporters covering the environment in New England.

But Gary Lee, reporter for *The Washington Post* and former SEJ board member, has his doubts about all those satisfied reporters. "I think they're being too polite," he said.

Lee was among panelists discussing the study, "The Environment Reporters of New England," at the Association for Educators in Journalism & Mass Communication (AEJMC) conference in August.

SEJ academic members David Sachsman, James Simon and JoAnn Myer Valenti are co-authors of the new study.

"It's truly surprising that the environment reporters felt they had less autonomy, because these are older, better educated journalists in general, and they are on a specialty beat," Sachsman said.

"Yet they feel they have less autonomy than a regular reporter in a regular newspaper job. That means that when they come to pitch a story, the editor says no, I want you to cover something else."

The study also confirmed that, in many ways, the environment beat is a government beat.

The authors also expected reporters to cite editors as a major obstacle to getting environment stories to audiences. They said they were surprised to learn the stuff of everyday journalism posed the greatest hurdles—time and space constraints, as well as financial and other resource limitations.

Further, nearly half of the environment reporters spent less than 30 percent of their time covering the environment and only about a third had titles reflecting their specialty.

"One thing we found striking was the greater number of master's degrees among this group than other groups of journalists," Sachsman said.

The lesson for journalism academics is that reporters doing regular news—whether national or international, political or business—probably would benefit from some environment training.

The lesson for journalism academics is that reporters doing regular news—whether national or international, political or business—probably would benefit from some environmental training.

Among the study's findings:

- Environment reporters rated job satisfaction high.
- About 29 percent have almost complete freedom in deciding which aspects of a news story should be emphasized. In 1992, 51 percent of all journalists reported complete autonomy, and in 1983, 66 percent had almost complete control over the content of their stories.
- Many environment reporters in spring of 2000—30.9 percent—held master's degrees compared with 11.4 percent of journalists in general in 1992.
- Of 33 television stations surveyed, four had an environment reporter, 29 did not. Of 82 newspapers surveyed, 42 had environment reporters, 40 did not.
- Of 55 reporters covering the environment in New England, 43.6 percent were general assignment reporters, while 32.8 percent were designated science, technology or environment writers.
- Environment reporters tend to be "too green," meaning slanted in favor of environmentalism, said 46.5 percent of respondents.

"It's an issue on all of these beats, and it should be built into our journalism education," Sachsman said.

Geographic differences between environment reporters are expected to turn up in the second leg of the study, which Valenti started this year. It will cover the Western states. A third study is expected to cover another region, perhaps the Midwest or South. Additional differences are expected due to the change in political climate between the Clinton era and the current Bush administration.

Fifty-five environment reporters in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts participated in the study.

"I think the hope and the future lies with editors playing a bigger role in dictating environmental coverage as well as other coverage," said Tim Wheeler, who supervises a staff of three environmental reporters (one a columnist) for the *Baltimore Sun*.

The lack of autonomy is not unique to environment coverage, he added. "Any reporter you talk to—police, feature or science reporter—will tell you that editors these days are much more assertive in dictating what stories you'll work on, how they'll be written and when they'll run. Part of it is that in this era of downsizing you have to do more with less. One solution is to get more out of the existing people. So you push them harder, you program them more."

But MariAn Brown Milchman doesn't like to be "programmed."

Although the tightening economy has reduced advertising revenues and shrunk the news hole at her paper, the investiga-

(Continued on page 23)

Green rights cases...(from page 1)

Photos courtesy of COURIER-POST CHERRY HILL



Camden's cement plant is the center of environmental justice controversy. Then N.J. Gov. Christy Whitman (right) shows her support at the plant's opening ceremony.

year. Those petitions were filed under an EPA program that empowers the agency as a civil rights watchdog over government offices and private contractors that receive federal money. Whitman is creating a 15-person task force to tackle 66 pending environmental justice petitions, a backlog she hopes to clear up by 2003.

What's more, environmental justice cases are heating up on several other fronts:

- In April, the Supreme Court issued a controversial, potentially far-reaching civil rights decision that prevents private citizens from using Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to legally challenge state and local environmental agencies when their policies inadvertently result in discrimination.

- In May, a federal district court ruled that New Jersey state environmental regulators violated the civil rights of Camden residents by allowing a cement plant to open in a highly polluted neighborhood. The state and the cement company are appealing the Camden decision, which used new legal arguments designed to circumvent the April Supreme Court decision. As New Jersey governor, Whitman supported construction of the factory.

- In July, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) threatened to sue the manufacturers of lead paint, charging that poor, minority children are most likely to be exposed to toxic lead dust from old paint.

The issue of environmental justice first caught public

attention in the late 1980s as civil rights groups increasingly accused state and local regulators of steering the dirtiest industries to poor, minority neighborhoods. In 1994, President Clinton issued an executive order directing federal agencies to consider civil rights issues. Soon community groups began filing petitions asking the EPA to police local cases of alleged environmental racism. The agency's efforts to handle those environmental justice petitions were immediately challenged by business groups and some in Congress who argued that new factories are needed to provide much-needed jobs. Stymied by such politics and the congressional rider, the EPA was slow to take action; some environmental justice petitions have languished for more than five years.

Rather than waiting for the federal government to solve their environmental justice problems, some community activists took their cases to federal court. They used Title VI to challenge state agencies for policies that the activists said had an unfair impact on minority and poor neighborhoods.

(Continued next page)

Cover Story

South Camden Citizens in Action challenged the EPA in February, saying the agency failed to act on the group's petition to stop a new cement plant from opening in their waterfront neighborhood. That \$50 million factory, built by the St. Lawrence Cement Group of Montreal, recycles old cement, grinding it into a fine powder for use as an additive to new cement.

The cement plant is anticipated to emit 60 tons of soot each year into Camden's already-polluted air. Nonetheless, New Jersey state environmental regulators ruled that the facility met all state air pollution standards.

State officials didn't consider the cumulative impact that the plant's pollution would have on the community's residents, 90 percent of whom are black or Hispanic. The neighborhood is already the home to a regional sewage treatment plant, a county trash incinerator, and two federal Superfund sites. Regulators also didn't weigh the potential health impacts that would be caused by the 77,000 trucks that are expected to travel through the neighborhood each year.

Despite those concerns, in March 2000 then-Gov. Whitman portrayed the new facility as part of the state's urban revitalization efforts to provide much-needed jobs for city residents, who have traditionally suffered from one of the state's highest rates of unemployment. At a ground breaking ceremony for the plant, Whitman boasted that her administration "is working hard to get other industries to follow St. Lawrence's lead—not just here in Camden, but in other New Jersey cities," according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*.

On April 19, U.S. District Court Judge Stephen Orlofsky issued a temporary injunction preventing the Camden facility from opening. In one of the nation's clearest environmental justice court victories, Orlofsky said that New Jersey's environmental policies violated the civil rights of Camden's minority residents. He ruled that state officials should have considered the impacts of the cement plant's pollution together with existing industrial sources and the new truck traffic.

Four days later, however, the Supreme Court pulled the rug out from under Orlofsky and the Camden citizens group. In a case called *Alexander v. Sandoval*, conservative Justice Anthony Scalia ruled that private citizens cannot use Title VI to sue state and local agencies whose policies or regulations unintentionally have a harsher impact on minorities. Instead, the court required communities to prove that the agencies intentionally discriminated—a far more difficult standard to meet.

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision, Orlofsky

allowed both sides in the Camden case to file new briefs. In May, he surprised everyone by once again siding with the Camden community group and ordering the cement factory not to open. Orlofsky based his new decision on an obscure section of the civil rights code enacted in the years after the Civil War—Section 1983—which allows citizens to file suit in federal court to force state agencies to comply with federal civil rights laws. Orlofsky apparently zeroed in on Section 1983 after Supreme Court Justice Stevens cited the provision in his dissenting opinion in the *Sandoval* case. As expected, the state immediately appealed Orlofsky's decision and, in late May, the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals allowed the cement plant to open. Oral arguments on the appeal to Orlofsky's decision are scheduled for September.

The Camden case has become a rallying point for national civil rights advocates and business groups who have a stake in the legal future of the environmental justice movement. Several national civil rights and environmental groups have filed amicus briefs backing up Orlofsky's decision. In its brief, the American Civil Liberties Union described the state's handling of the Camden case as "state-sponsored discrimination."

National business and industry groups are joining forces to support the St. Lawrence cement company, filing briefs arguing that Orlofsky's decision will have a chilling effect on urban redevelopment programs throughout the country.

Meanwhile, civil rights groups also are considering fresh forays into the environmental justice legal arena. At the NAACP's annual meeting in early July, association president Kweisi Mfume announced plans to sue the lead paint industry. Mfume argued that exposure to lead-based paint is a "civil rights issue" because low-income and black children are more likely to live in homes and apartments where they're exposed to lead-based paint dust, which can cause developmental problems in children.

While environmental justice cases are getting increased attention throughout the nation, the Bush Administration's environmental team is sorting through EPA's backlog of civil rights cases. Regulators say that little work has been done on 25 of the pending cases, which were directly targeted by Knollenberg's rider. Those petitions challenge state or local agency decisions to grant an air or water pollution permit to a new facility in a minority neighborhood. EPA has also received petitions charging that state or local agencies have violated a local community's civil rights by conducting biased public hearings or by failing to enforce environmental violations in minority communities.

Along with handling existing civil right claims, EPA could soon see a flood of new environmental justice petitions as a result of the Supreme Court's April decision. That ruling barred individuals from suing state or local agencies for unintentionally discriminating against minority communities, but didn't limit EPA's legal right to handle such cases.

However, some legal scholars are concerned that EPA may not have the money or the political stomach to take on the most controversial, long-term environmental justice cases. "No federal agency, including EPA has shown any proclivity toward vigorous enforcement of these regulations," said Georgetown University professor Richard Lazarus. Even if federal regulators are willing to challenge state actions, "the remedies available to an agency in

In an amicus brief backing Orlofsky's decision, the ACLU described the state's handling of the Camden case as "state sponsored discrimination."

an administrative enforcement proceeding are limited,” he said.

EPA has few legal weapons to handle such claims. It can overturn a state’s decision to grant an air or water permit to the facility in a minority neighborhood. Or it can cut off federal funding, a dramatic step that would be politically unpopular.

The environmental justice battle could wind up in Congress. An increasing number of civil rights and environmental activists are arguing for new legislation to overturn the Supreme Court decision. Theodore M. Shaw of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund recently acknowledged that civil rights groups would be best served by a “statutory fix” that gives minority groups more access to the courts. However, many are reluctant to reopen national civil rights laws at a time when conservative Republican leaders are in control in the

White House and the House of Representatives. And so far civil rights activists in Congress have not begun to draft legislation.

“We have to take into account the political climate right now,” Shaw said at The George Washington University environmental justice conference. “But one way or another, we’re not going to walk away from these issues. If not now, then possibly later.”

For more information on EPA’s environmental justice program, see the agency’s web site at <http://www.epa.gov/ocr>. A list of the pending petitions is available at <http://www.epa.gov/ocr/recdecsn.htm>.

Margie Kriz is a reporter for the National Journal.

History of lead..(from page 1)

A: I actually like cars and write for car magazines, and have read car magazines since I have been a little kid. That’s where I got a lot of my information about a lot of things. I believe I am in the “lunatic fringe” of automotive writers because I believe in clean air and safe cars and I wrote the first anti-sports utility (vehicle) op-ed piece for the *New York Times* nine years ago.

When they first started talking about taking the lead out of gasoline, they didn’t talk about the safety issue. They talked about damaging catalytic converters (which are designed to reduce vehicle pollution). Like everybody else who read the popular press, I had no idea there was a safety or health issue involved. Like a lot of those people who read those magazines, I was sad about lead going away. There were increasing numbers of reports that said if they took the lead out of gasoline it was going to really limit performance and it was also going to damage engines of old cars, which did not have hardened valve seats.

When lead was finally banned, I was running around trying to find lead substitutes. You could buy lead additives to add to your own gas. I own and drive old cars. I have some 1960s cars. I kept waiting for something terrible to happen ... and nothing ever did. They ran fine. I had no problems with the engines. I sort of forgot about it.

I also write for English car magazines and I started reading in the magazines there in the mid-’90s the same scare stories that had been floating in the early ’80s in America. I was like “this really doesn’t make sense because I know this doesn’t happen” and yet here were the Rolls Royce and Bentley car owners clubs marching on Parliament to demand that they not phase out lead in fuel, which was to happen in the year 2000.

In any event, several countries in the European Community got waivers from the obligation to remove lead from gasoline on that sort of backhanded populist argument that “Oh well, if you take the lead out of gasoline, it is going to destroy the engines of the poor people’s cars because they drive old cars.” That turned out to be completely Orwellian.

I said “this is really weird. Those guys are really not telling the truth about this,” and then I began poking around on the history. Probably the most illuminating thing that I found was a historical paper published in the *Society of Automotive Historians Review*, which I am a member of, by a guy named Bill Kovarik

who is a professor at Radford University in Virginia.

His paper was really about the history of ethanol but it touched on where lead and ethanol’s paths crossed. They are both octane boosters (designed to improve performance and reduce engine “knock,” or pinging in internal combustion engines). He had done a lot of research of the events of the 1920’s. On the public health side, people in the late 80’s, particularly David Rosner and Jerome Markowitz, public health historians, had examined the initial debate over lead’s introduction in gasoline in the 20’s. So what I did was combined several seams of research and started researching as well, going back over the stuff they had done but also researching what had happened in the 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s with these companies.

When I laid what these separate communities—the anti-lead public health and the ethanol people—knew together, a timeline nobody had ever thought out emerged, which basically proved that not only was lead dangerous and they had covered that up, but there were alternatives that they knew about at the time and they had covered that up. As a matter of fact, GM was at the forefront of an alternative they use today, that being ethanol.

You see this throughout the history of debate about it—really all fuel additives and a lot of environmental issues generally as they relate to businesses—that people feel like they are out of their depths and put off by blanket statements by industry that “Oh, you wouldn’t understand. It is impossible.” But I had a pretty healthy cynicism about the automobile industry based on just the events of my life.

I remember in the 1970’s, when all the American car companies were saying it was impossible to meet some clean air regulations, Honda drove some car up the steps of Congress that did, right at the same day they were testifying it was impossible. It is always worth taking their statements of impossibility with a grain of salt.

Q. Your story relied a lot on documents. What kinds did you use? Were you able to get internal company documents? If so, how?

A. There are a lot of internal documents in archives and there are a lot that have been written about in separate contexts in books and doctoral theses and papers. Aggressive use of the Internet to

(Continued next page)

find papers and contacts with academics was very helpful in turning up a lot of this stuff as well as the archival materials. I was assisted by the fact that there were academics who had plugged through some of this before and were actually able to give me copies of documents.

Had I undertaken this story 10 years ago, it probably would have been impossible. I think because of the Internet, a lot of this came out as people went back and examined this stuff more closely. A lot of this had been noted, but not contextualized.

I did a lot of the Internet work on my own but I had a grant from The Nation Institute that allowed me to hire a researcher, Bill Kraus, who did a lot of blind Internet searches. I would find something and tell him to go chase this down for me. He came up with a lot of stuff.

We were quite fortunate in getting people to send us stuff through the mail or in some cases we had to go to specialized libraries for the public health stuff, you know, medical libraries. Since I have, in effect, three other real jobs, to have somebody who was able to do some legwork for me helped. I spent a lot of nights staying up late doing the work, weekends, combining it with other business trips to places. And I was also fortunate that I write a column every month for *Automobile* magazine and *CAR* magazine in England, so I was able to get paid to examine chunks of the story because there is a huge amount of inter-related issues. Certainly the MMT story, the MTBE story (both gasoline additives) as you examine the history of gasoline.

Q. Once you had this massive amount of research, how did you organize it?

A. I kept timelines and I found that worked. I had many, many computer files but one of them was a timeline and I made some of the most interesting discoveries by laying down every single fact. I had well over 100,000 words of my own writing but every fact that I knew was in chronological order. Some of them I almost got down to the hour of the day. But the days, months and years certainly made fascinating what was happening. I then also kept separate files about subjects.

I was so immersed in it I could start telling the story at any

When I laid the anti-lead public health and the ethanol people's research together, a timeline emerged, proving that not only was lead dangerous and they had covered that up, but there were alternatives that they knew about at the time and they had covered that up.

point chronologically, in my sleep. Total immersion in the material was essential in being able to tell it. If there were even more space, I think you could have told that story in a less dry fashion than (what was in *The Nation*). It was not the traditional presentation.

It had 450 footnotes and it was well researched and a straightforward piece of writing. The story is so complicated, and so long, to really make your case in a consumer magazine would be impossible. I think *The Nation* gave me an outlet for that. It is conceivable that it could have been a story for someone like *The New Yorker*. I think it would have helped more to be written as my personal odyssey through this subject rather than a historical tale, a cautionary tale.

Q. Well, it had some fascinating characters that made the story more interesting.

A. Certainly, (Thomas) Midgley. He not only invented tetraethyl lead but also Freon and the whole family of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) now banned. It is an Olympian type of tale with Alfred Sloan and Charles Kettering and the Dupont family and these great Americans of the early 20th century and the new industrial age. I think this is the granddaddy of environmental stories of the 20th century. I hope people will tell it to their children.

Q. Your story strongly makes the case that the self-regulation that was supposed to occur did not. Do you see any parallels with what is happening today?

A. The parallels are scary. The first parallel that I draw is the whole idea of "let's study it some more." Here were people who had pretty much outlined clearly at the time what was going to be the problem with this thing but because [their opponents] couldn't point to science that anyone was willing to accept as definitive [that lead would be harmful,] these people were allowed to sell lead in petrol until... well, they are still doing it. It is almost 80 years later. We have known since the 1960s exactly why it was bad. We knew in the 1920s pretty much why it was bad. So, I suggest that is the central paradigm for the way corporations deal with possible public health concerns. They say, "Well let's study it a few years and we'll study it some more while they keep selling it." That is one point to be learned and one parallel. I would suggest several industries followed directly in the footsteps of lead in gasoline—certainly asbestos, nuclear power, tobacco, and things like that. They really latch on to "You know, we are reasonable people and let's study this some more" and nothing proves anything. That was fascinating. To read public health people, that is why you can't ever win. You can't ban anything. You have given all these mice cancer and they go, "Well, but mice aren't people."

I see a lot of significance in letting industries regulate themselves and conduct and fund their own science. We can see all of the science the Ethyl Corp., General Motors, Dupont, Standard Oil of New Jersey, the interested parties underwrote, was shockingly flawed and yet accepted as the only truth probably for 40 years. That is extremely alarming. I think it has specific application to some of the other issues of our day. There are people suggesting possible ways it will go wrong but they can't prove it and there is a veritable army of people with industry funding saying it is probably safe, or it is more safe than not, or we can't prove it is not safe. Genetically modified foods come to mind, but a lot of other chemicals that are under suspi-

cion as well. That's scary.

My perception, after years of study, is the oil industry has run roughshod over the entire planet. When they took lead out of gasoline, there were several examples of them using additives equally terrible or almost as terrible when again they don't have to. I refer specifically to benzene, which is used often and in much greater quantities than needed and MTBE, which was the industries' way of oxygenating gasoline when there was a cleaner, safer way, also known as ethanol. Some of this is the history of Big Oil versus Big Agriculture—another fascinating dimension of the whole tale.

It is still going on, isn't it? I feel ethanol has gotten a bad rap from the liberal media as well as the conservative media on the grounds that it is a subsidy to Archer Daniels Midland. I think (a) you have to separate the issues of whether or not ethanol equals Archer Daniels Midland, which I don't think it has to. But (b), everything is subsidized. And anybody who wants to argue the oil industry isn't subsidized, as it is to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars a year, is ignoring the facts. Ignoring all the subsidies to highways and road and the automobile industry, just the fact that the U.S. government keeps the Seventh Fleet in the Persian Gulf to keep oil lanes open costs billions. And then, of course, you have to consider the health costs of burning these carbon-based fuels, which are significant. I don't think it is any coincidence that asthma levels are rising, [that you see] the global warming issues, the skins cancers and lung cancers and other types of problems people have because of gasoline and various additives.

Q. Your piece ended with a real strong point of view, which I guess is not traditional journalism. It may be something you'd see in *The Nation* quite frequently but not something you'd see in general journalism.

A. I felt like it was absolutely warranted by the facts. I understand that is not the convention in mainstream journalism—to have a strong point of view—but I felt it was inescapable. Being in *The Nation*, you are allowed to express a strong point of view. Frankly, if it had a milder point of view, I don't think it would have bought the story any more national recognition than it got. It is in *The Nation*, which is an impediment to getting it covered elsewhere. But I think the facts are clear and looking back on 100 years, I don't think there is any reason to be equivocating after 100 years. Somebody else may disagree. It would have been dishonest to do that.

Q. What has been the response to “The Secret History of Lead?”

A. I was on every public program that they've got. They said they got tremendous response. The letters editors (of *The Nation*) said they had gotten more letters than they had got in the past 25 years they could remember. I ran a version of it in the English magazine, *CAR*, which was much abridged, and they said they had gotten more mail than they had gotten about anything since the magazine was founded in 1964. The radio program “Connections” (National Public Radio), said they got more phone calls about it than anything and they ran it several times. I did “All Things Considered” and I did radio here, WNYC, and I got a lot of letters about it.

However, the newspapers, with the exception of the Richmond (Va.) paper, which is where Ethyl is, heard me on

NPR and they wrote it with a very tepid denial from Ethyl. *The Guardian* newspaper in England covered it. But with the exception of those two newspapers, no other newspaper in the United States carried it at all. It was very strange. *The Washington Post* has said they were going to run a story on their front page as the issue came out, but it didn't happen.

Several other reporters I talked to said “I am so busy, it's a great story but I couldn't get to it.” *USA Today* specifically passed. They said it was old news, albeit unreported old news. I was contacted by people from “Nightline,” but the fact that there was no one dying from it in the United States was a problem. Also it was too complicated....

I was once banned from the Saturn factory based on a story I had written in England. I was down in Tennessee and they canceled all my interviews. They said “You are not a friend of ours.” I guess that is the sort of risk you run into eventually. I had a literary agent send it around to a bunch of publishers with absolutely no interest. They said, “I thought we already had gotten out of gasoline.” That was someone who had obviously read it carefully. Then somebody else said, “That says it all, doesn't it.”

I was approached by seven documentarians from the BBC or English television, who have all been shot down so far, even though this (tetraethyl lead) plant is in England and is making 80 percent of the world's lead and has been identified by the European Union as one of the three most polluting factories in Europe. Their concern, again, is where are the people with the blood coming out of their ear and eyes. That is really what they need. They need a baby that is dying to make it tele-visual. Otherwise they think this is dry history, which in the Ken Burns-world seems absurd to me. Also, you could go on a plane to Africa or South America and find babies who are sick from lead. As the story points out, there are 73 percent or something like that of Venezuelan babies born with elevated lead levels.

Q. What's next?

A. I am monitoring the story. I have actually been contacted by some people in South Jersey who used to work in the (DuPont) Deepwater Port plant and are dying or have some cancers and they are trying to resurrect some lawsuit against DuPont. There are lawsuits winding their ways through the courts in Maryland and Rhode Island, although I am not too optimistic about it if they are like the tobacco or asbestos industries settlements. You know, there is no punishment for these people. You can compensate victims of it, but you don't really ever see anybody going to jail, which I think is a shame, because I think the people who are selling it now with all that they know really might be brought up on charges.

One day, if I could find the time, I would like to write a book about it. I would like it to be a movie. I think it would be a great movie about Thomas Midgley. Frankly, I think you could make a musical out of Midgley. Here is the guy who invented lead in petrol and the entire CFC family, so Freon to Styrofoam pellets, DDT, all of it, you could go back to him.

Mike Dunne is environment reporter at The (Baton Rouge) Advocate.

Becoming your own publisher...(from page 1)



John Palen

broke a third-grader's arm.

I'm happy as a clam at high tide.

After 16 years away from newspapering, I'm back doing some of my favorite things—covering local government for people in this mid-Michigan town who care about such things.

I'm adding to the stream of information and debate, and I'm doing it at no cost but my time and interest. It's a pattern that could work as well for the

environmental niche as for my readers.

They give me \$35 a year. First of each month, I give them a 24-page, digest-size newsletter with 15 to 20 stories and one to three editorials.

Circulation is pretty small so far, at 140 subscribers. But I estimate 2.5 readers per subscriber, pegging readership at 350. In a town where a turnout of 2,000 is great for a school election, that's significant.

In addition, circulation is growing, the renewal rate is 85 percent, and I get comments like this:

"Wouldn't miss *Midland Issues* for a minute. It is the only place I can truly hear what is happening—and in depth. Keep up the good work."

Who could resist?

The concept of an independent niche publication isn't new. Variations on the theme range from I.F. Stone's *Weekly*, to a crowd of alternative weeklies focused on entertainment, ideologically driven political coverage and singles ads.

Other variants include state capital news services like *Gongwer* in Michigan, and upstart local news weeklies like *The Zephyr* in Galesburg, Ill., which bills itself as "the world's first public access newspaper."

But my take on the idea may be different. Startup was dirt cheap, financial risk is low, and the project can be sustained by a lone, independent journalist working in his or her spare time.

Here are some basic principles that are working so far for me.

- Keep the business simple. *Midland Issues* is a sole proprietorship. Except for an occasional freelance article, I do it all. It is supported wholly by annual subscriptions. No ads, no plan to sell any. Delivery is by first-class mail—no newsstand sales.

- Keep the product focused. *Midland Issues* covers city government and the public schools in Midland, Mich. It doesn't cover the county, the cops, obits, the courts, entertainment or religion. Do I have to ignore stories in those areas that I'd love to do? You bet. But I've had to cut the task to fit the size of my hand.

- Keep the graphics simple. *Midland Issues* stays away

from hard-to-read typographical gimmicks like variable column widths, odd type sizes, funny-looking headline fonts and tint blocks. Design is meant to be a clear window for content. Readers say they like it.

- Try to write well. It may be old-fashioned of readers, but they don't like misspellings, poor grammar, factual inaccuracies, jargon, alphabet soup and stories that don't explain themselves. They're tired of features with no newspeg other than "human interest." They're tired of label heads that only a TV addict under 30 could understand.

Within those limits, though, my advice is to go for it. Early on, *Midland Issues* established a reputation for feistiness. In a little over a year and a half, it uncovered administrative mismanagement at the library, conflict of interest on the planning commission, and city-state rifts over sewer design. It prints what it finds and says what it thinks.

After all, there are no advertisers to worry about, only readers. And if someone calls to complain to the publisher about the editor, they're talking to the same guy.

Production mechanics are simplified, too. *Midland Issues* is produced camera-ready at home on a six-year-old Mac, and printed at Staples. There are charts, graphs, maps and pull-quotes, but so far no photos. I affix mailing labels and stamps myself.

The city has 40,000 residents and is served by a local daily paper, owned by Hearst, and several other regional papers and broadcast outlets. *Midland Issues* is a supplement for readers in its niche, not an alternative.

As such, it can afford to do what the others can't—pick and choose, throw routine stories overboard to go in-depth, cover the lesser boards and commissions—the "ricky-ticks," I call them affectionately. That's where issues emerge raw, months before they reach the council or school board, by which time all the controversy has been squeezed out of them.

For example, I first wrote 17 months ago about the city's lack of coherent regulation of wireless communications towers, an issue that erupted at the zoning appeals and airport boards. Now an ordinance is being drafted. When it arrives on the table, it won't be a surprise to my readers.

Midland Issues isn't focused per se on the environment. Still, environmental stories come up frequently. One was a fierce controversy over whether and how to clean brush and trees out of Snake Creek.

The city viewed the creek as a drain, part of the storm water system that "dewaters" a community. It needed to be stripped out, engineers said, so the system capacity could be accurately evaluated.

Residents, on the other hand, looked on it as a lovely, meandering stream behind their expensive homes. They screamed, got the program delayed and to some extent modified, although in the end Snake Creek was pretty well stripped out.

It all made a long-running story for *Midland Issues*—and one that made me glad I was an SEJ member and attended all those conventions.

One word of caution. Don't quit your day job. I'm a jour-

nalism professor at Central Michigan University. Those responsibilities come first, always. I put *Midland Issues* out in my spare time, spending eight to 10 hours a week. I don't watch TV or play golf, and I'm plenty tired after the month's press run goes into the mail slot.

Midland Issues is no great money maker. It has paid for some computer equipment, and there's more than enough in reserve to give pro-rated refunds if, God forbid, it were to fold. On the positive side, I haven't lost a dime on it, and it's great for my teaching.

I plan to keep it going another 10 years or so, into retire-

ment. By then I'm hoping for a circulation breakthrough sufficient to attract a buyer to continue it—a retired journalist, maybe, or another college prof.

On the other hand, if circulation really took off—who knows, maybe a JOA . . . ?

John Palen teaches journalism at Central Michigan University. He is a charter academic member of SEJ and wrote a history of the founding of the organization that has been used as part of orientation for new board members.



EXPLOSION

By Stephen R. Palumbi

W.W. Norton, 288 pp., 2001.

Journalists seeking an eloquent explanation of recent evolution as it relates to human impact—from the use of herbicides, pesticides and antibiotics to AIDS treatment and genetic manipulation—should find “The Evolution Explosion” a worthwhile read.

Harvard University biology professor Dr. Stephen R. Palumbi has written what is essentially a text on fast-paced evolution, in a style more akin to travel and adventure books, yet packed with scientific detail.

From the start, he explains that the task is “to bring home the equally common impact of evolution on daily life—and not through eclectic recourse to scientific theory or historical anecdote. Instead, I need to do it through examples about how evolution in the world around us matters.”

To make his point, Palumbi refers to the fertile soils of Kansas that “are part of the everyday life of millions of people—and billions of insects and weeds. And evolution lives among the fields and stalks the check-books of struggling farmers—here, like everywhere else, living in the many weed and insect species that have evolved resistance to pesticides.”

Palumbi notes that as long ago as 1954, a young Paul Ehrlich studied the impact of DDT and evolution of flies that would survive and resist the deadly chemical. As the author explains, Ehrlich's famous work, “The Population Bomb,” is partially a result of “the DDT dustings (Ehrlich) and his future wife endured at drive-in movie theaters during Kansas' aborted attempt at mosquito eradication.”

Consider this: American troops during World War II dusted themselves and civilians with a white powder. In 1944, entire neighborhoods of Italian villages were coated to keep typhus-bearing lice in check. The epidemic was soon declared dead.

THE EVOLUTION

“But complete victory was short-lived, and only a year later, DDT-resistant insects were reported,” Palumbi writes. “By 1946, houseflies in Sweden were resistant, and by 1951, mosquitoes and flies in Italy were resistant not only to DDT but also to a wide range of the new pesticidal chemicals like chlordane, methoxychlor, and heptachlor.”

The author adds that both Egypt and the United States used DDT to control mosquito-borne malaria from 1947-52, even though the disease was already on the decline because of extensive dredging. It is yet another example of attempts by human to intervene and, ultimately, speed up the natural evolutionary process.

Palumbi, 44, who in 1996 relocated his laboratory to Harvard after 11 years at the University of Hawaii, articulately lays out the issues surrounding AIDS treatment, the use of antibiotics, and the genetic “tinkering” linked to the fight against crop-destroying diseases, all framed in terms of evolutionary speed.

The researcher most recently caused a stir in the scientific community by using molecular genetics to show that the meat of a certain whale species was contained in fish products sold by Japanese commercial markets. Although the product was marked as containing whale, Palumbi's technique showed that the type of whale was an endangered species.

The book publicist quotes Harvard University's Edward O. Wilson as commenting that Palumbi “has hit upon and clearly explains one of the most important but widely neglected issues of our time in biology, medicine and agriculture: the potential for the swift evolution of our organisms when accelerated by human activity.”

Bottom line: Evolution is generally thought of as slow, with significant change requiring millions of years, yet human intervention can dramatically speed up the process through efforts to improve the quality of life. The benefits and risks of such intervention must not be ignored.



Survey... (from page 16)

tive reporter for *The Connecticut Post* offered advice on how to control editors.

"I try to bombard my editor with as many great stories I can so she doesn't have a chance to do any of hers," said Milchman, who was interviewed for the study.

The study determined reporters on the beat tend to be older and better educated than their counterparts, with nearly 44 percent between the ages of 45 and 54; a 1992 study showed about 37 percent of U.S. journalists between ages 25 and 34.

According to the new study, almost 22 percent of reporters in the 45-54 age group called themselves environment reporters. Close to 31 percent of New England environment reporters surveyed said they had a master's degree or more, compared to more than 11 percent of all journalists in 1992. More than 56 percent declared themselves Democrats, while about 7 percent aligned themselves with Republicans.

Many will find this finding to be disheartening: Only four out of 33 television stations with news departments in New England had reporters covering the environment. "It's probably the same as 10 years ago," Sachsman said. "We just didn't know how small it was. We thought it might be a quarter or double that."

Peter Dykstra, senior news editor for CNN Network Earth in Atlanta and former SEJ board member, reminded that television news stories "cast everything in black and white, good and evil, right and wrong." With environment stories rarely that well defined, upper management tends to be "very wary of environment stories that are potentially loaded with hype and obfuscation."

Trust is the main factor, he said. Since much of the science behind environment stories depends on theories, television news executives rarely are comfortable with trusting reporters to weigh what science or political perspective is

right, Dykstra explained.

Almost 44 percent of environment reporters at daily newspapers and television stations in New England have the title of general assignment, compared with nearly 33 percent who are called environmental, science, environmental/science, science, science/technology reporter. The shift, Sachsman said, reflects recognition that the environment is an issue more than a beat. It's broadening reach puts it into arenas outside of strict science, where he said the beat shifted after Rachel Carson wrote "Silent Spring" in 1962.

For *Dallas Morning News* environment reporter and SEJ member Randy Loftis, the study's value lies in the larger than expected number of environment reporters found in New England. "It's helpful because it lets us craft our coverage decisions in a broader, better informed context. For one thing, the more competitors I have on a story, the better the story's going to be and the more likely an editor will go for it.

"Nothing kills the initiative on a story more than that you're on the story alone," Loftis said. "It's also useful for editors to know that there is wider interest in these things than they had realized."

Debra Schwartz covers the environment, science and writes features from the Washington, D.C. area, where she is a second-year journalism doctoral student at the University of Maryland-College Park.

Have you read or done research within SEJ's purview? Have you come across an interesting class to recommend to SEJers? Send it to "From Academe" editor Debra Schwartz at DebinMld@aol.com. The time has come to share our knowledge, not just information.

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Mexico—Susana Guzman, *To2 Mexico*, 52-56-31-83-83

ALASKA

► Whale death (from SEJ-BEAT):

The Anchorage *Daily News*' Doug O'Harra has written a story about chemical pollutants found in Alaskan whales. In a story published July 22, the headline suggests poisons in orcas may be driving a unique family to extinction. Chemicals may now be another factor pushing a genetically unique family of Prince William Sound whales, known as the AT1 group, closer to extinction, according to local whale biologists and environmentalists. "It's more of the same bad news," said biologist Craig Matkin, of the North Gulf Oceanic Society and the region's leading killer whale researcher. Found in the dead whale: PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, and the pesticide DDT. Though banned or restricted in the United States, they are still produced in some Asian and Third World countries. Doug O'Harra can be reached at do'harra@adn.com and 907 257-4334. <http://adn-proxy.nandomedia.com/front/story/635937p-679928c.html>

ARIZONA

► **Whaling saga:** As part of the Phoenix-based *New Times* chain's first major national reporting venture, the

flagship paper's John Dougherty penned "Resurrection," an epic tale of the Makah tribe of Neah Bay, Wash., resuming the hunting of Eastern Pacific gray whales, and the intense, emotional and, at times, virulent opposition the tribe encountered from animal rights activists. It's part of a *New Times* series on the plight of and struggles to revive the gray whales. Contact Dougherty at john.dougherty@newtimes.com.

► **Pesticide spraying:** The paper's Jennifer Markley recently exposed the state Agriculture Department's failure to enforce laws against aerial pesticide spraying that strays from cottonfields into neighboring homes. She also painted a complex portrait of the difficulties of protecting a large colony of endangered southwestern willow flycatchers living along Roosevelt Lake outside Phoenix, which is due to be elevated at some unknown future date to store more water for the thirsty, growing city. Contact Markley at jennifer.markley@newtimes.com.

► **Development dilemma:** The *Arizona Daily Star's* Mitch Tobin wrote about State Parks Department's concern over a proposed new, 180-acre resort of 128 casitas, 216 luxury villas, stores, swimming pools, a lodge, a restaurant and a helicopter pad near Kartchner Caverns. The development could leak contaminants through the ground and into the caverns' delicate limestone cave formations, which some authorities say are more spectacular than those of Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico. The articles ran in July. Contact Tobin at mtobin@azstarnet.com or (520) 573-4185.

► **Eco-Arsons?:** Tobin and the *Star's* Tony Davis combined to cover the aftermath of the latest in the wave of luxury home arsons that may or may not come from eco-terrorism—the torching of four homes in the Pima Canyon Estates development in the Catalina Foothills north of the city. Environmentalists were joining all other public figures in condemning the arsons, but a month after the fire, authorities still had no suspects or known motive. Contact Tobin at mtobin@azstarnet.com or (520) 573-4185 and Davis at (520) 807-7790 or

at tdavis789@yahoo.com..

► **Sonoran Plan:** Davis and the Tucson *Citizen's* Blake Morlock continue to cover the conflict over Pima County's 1.2-million-acre proposed Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan. For now, other more development-friendly state and local government agencies are shunning the county's efforts. The other agencies and the county are locked in verbal debate over whether the county has given outsiders a real shot at public involvement in the plan. Developers are irate that the County Board of Supervisors has imposed guidelines calling for homebuilders to set aside up to 80 percent of their land to protect 56 vulnerable species, and requiring developers to study the effects of proposed projects on endangered and threatened species. Contact Morlock at (520) 573-4692. Contact Davis at (520) 807-7790 or at tdavis789@yahoo.com.

► **Reptile Poaching:** Tobin also reported poachers from around the globe are descending on Southern Arizona to steal snakes, toads and Gila monsters from the desert, and then sell them live on the black market. The lucrative, yet low-risk, crime of poaching peaks during the monsoon season, when heat and humidity stimulates the activity of reptiles and amphibians, and those who capture them for pets and profit. An undercover agent says Southern Arizona ties Texas' Big Bend area as the hottest reptile collecting area in the United States. There isn't much evidence that protected reptiles and amphibians are disappearing due to poaching. But biologists say the true impact of the crime may never be known due to the clandestine nature of both poachers and their prey. Contact Tobin at mtobin@azstarnet.com or (520) 573-4185.

► **Solar Solutions?:** A team of Tucson *Citizen* reporters wrote a five-part series examining why Arizona has never become a hotbed for solar energy despite its searing heat and 360-day sunshine years. Business writers Teya Vitu and Oscar Abeyta wrote that one possibility is Tucson may be too hot for its own good. High temperatures can reduce the efficiency of photovoltaic solar panels. The

region's heavy air conditioning use also outweighs the sun's ability to provide power, they wrote. Other reporters working on the story: C.T. Revere, Lorrie Cohen, Irwin Goldberg and Mary Bustamante. Contact the *Citizen* city desk at (520) 573-4560 or the business department at (520) 573-4608.

► **Desert preservation:** The *Arizona Republic's* editorial page has gone on a seven-part crusade this year in an as-yet-unsuccessful effort to persuade State Land Commissioner Mike Anable to reclassify 16,000 acres of state-owned Sonoran Desert outside Scottsdale to preserve it rather than develop it. Besides the environmental benefits, the *Republic* has asserted that the preservation would also help the area's tourism industry. If the state sells the land for development to fulfill its constitutional mission to raise money for public schools, the *Republic* quotes a Scottsdale planner as saying a developer could carve more than 6,000 lavish homes into the land with 42 million square feet of rooftops, or 2,200 hotel rooms and 653,000 square feet of shopping, plus 23 acres of asphalt parking lots, "slathered over fast-disappearing land that exists nowhere else on earth." Contact editorial page writers at opinions@arizonarepublic.com.

► **Football vs. flying:** The *Republic* kept a half-dozen reporters busy through mid-summer because of a Federal Aviation Administration report warning that a new, 198-foot-high football stadium in Tempe will be a "hazard to navigation" at Sky Harbor Airport. Its north runway lies 1.8 miles from the stadium site. FAA says the stadium could distract pilots, interfere with navigational equipment and detract from pilots' ability to react during an emergency. More concern has sprung from the stadium's spin-off development plans: 15-story hotel and office buildings that are part of a total of eight buildings containing 1.6 million square feet of office space, 215,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, and four parking structures. Contact the *Republic's* Shaun McKinnon, (602) 444-8632 or shaun.mckinnon@arizonarepublic.com, Hal Mattern, at (602) 444-8652 or hal.mattern@arizonarepublic.com, Paul

Mathews, at (602) 444-7946 or paul.matthews@arizonarepublic.com, Elvia Diaz, at (602) 444-8948 or elvia.diaz@arizonarepublic.com, and Peter Corbett, at (602) 444-4815 or peter.corbett@arizonarepublic.com

► **Mold costs:** The *Republic's* Kerry Fehr-Snyder wrote "Mold Removal Costs Soar," recounting how "mold, once thought of as a common bathroom scourge, is being attacked in public buildings across Arizona at a cost of millions of dollars." The cleanup costs and public worries about health effects are mounting, although the health effects aren't clear. In Phoenix alone, mold has turned up inside the Orpheum Theatre, the Deer Valley Airport, the Deer Valley water treatment plant and the city's old municipal courts. The U.S. Geological Survey's field center in Flagstaff had to be destroyed and replaced for \$4.7 million because of a severe mold infestation. Contact the writer at (602) 444-8975 or kerry.fehr-snyder@arizonarepublic.com.

► **Disappearing farms:** The *Republic's* Edythe Jensen used a play on the old chicken-egg cliché as a lead-in to "Adios, Agriculture," a story about subdivisions overrunning Maricopa County's once nationally ranked agriculture industry. With population having risen from 1 million to 3 million in 30 years, the county has dropped from one of the nation's top five agricultural counties in the 1970s to not even in the top 10 today. "Ask chicken farmer Glenn Hickman which came first—the rooftops or the egg ranch, and he laughs," Jensen wrote. "The fact that we were here first is lost on most people," said the third-generation egg producer from suburban Glendale. Reach the writer at (602) 444-7939 or Edythe.Jensen@arizona.republic.com.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► **Bad air summer:** Facing potential cut-off of federal transportation money because of its increasingly bad summer air quality, officials in Washington, D.C., region are seeking the advice of a city that lost its funding because of pollution—Atlanta. *Washington Post* Metro staff writers Lyndsey Layton and Katherine Shaver

explored the issue in an A-1 story July 23, which is available online at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>.

► **Free-market environmentalism:** A conservative stance based on private ownership of natural resources and competition between environmental and business interest for control of those resources is gaining status in the federal government. *The Washington Post's* environment reporter, Eric Pianin, wrote on Bush Administration officials who subscribe to this position on June 4. The story can be downloaded through <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm>.

► **National forest roads:** "It's not about the trees. It's about the roads," wrote *Washington Post* national desk reporter William Booth in an A-1 story Aug. 15 that probed the political and economic forces for and against building roads in national forests. Using Alaska's Gravina Island as a setting, Booth laid out the strategy of those who want roads built so development can follow tree-cutting. The story is available through <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/searches/mainsrch.htm> and the *Post's* national desk can be reached at (202) 334-7410.

FLORIDA

► **Offshore drilling:** The *Florida Times-Union* reported on July 13 that the state Senate had voted in support of President Bush's energy development plan by rejecting an attempt to delay oil and gas drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. The House had already voted to delay the lease sales off Florida and Alabama, so the conflict in the Interior Department's spending bill will have to be worked out between the two chambers. Bill Nelson, whose counter-amendment had been rejected, called the leases "the camel's nose under the tent" for broader oil and gas development in the currently off-limits eastern gulf. Contact staff writer Alexa Jaworski at (904) 359-4280.

► **Manatee protection:** A July 13 *Times-Union* story reported that a new government report suggests that the

Florida manatee could be removed from the federal list of endangered species in 2003 if its numbers continue to grow. The reclassification from endangered to threatened would not mean less protection for the manatee, but environmentalists fear it could erode existing protections, such as boat speed zones and waterfront development rules. Contact Diana Marrero, staff writer, at (904) 359-4280.

► **Water conservation:** On Aug. 1, the *Times-Union* reported that the St. Johns Water Management District plans to launch a \$2 million advertising campaign to promote frugal water consumption. The district will dedicate \$1 million to the campaign and hopes to raise \$1 million from utilities and cities within its boundaries. Contact staff writer Diana Marrero at (904) 359-4280.

GEORGIA

► **Sewage spills:** The Georgia Environmental Protection Division adopted a new rule in late May requiring municipal sewage-system operators to report all spills, no matter how small. Previously, the EPD and the media had to be notified only if a spill was larger than 10,000 gallons. Operators will also have to post warning signs immediately at the site of the spill and along affected waterways. Some officials complained that this requirement would place too much of a burden on their employees and desensitize the public to the impact of sewage spills. Debbie Gilbert reported this story in *The Times of Gainesville, Ga.*, on May 26. She can be reached at dgilbert@gainesvilletimes.com or (770) 532-1234, ext. 254.

► **Fish advisories:** Since 1994, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has issued guidelines on the consumption of fish caught in the state's rivers and lakes. In some areas, certain species should be eaten seldom or never because they may be contaminated with pollutants such as PCBs, chlordane or mercury. But the guidelines aren't widely publicized, and they are written only in English. Most of the people in Georgia who fish for subsistence rather than for sport are minorities, and many cannot read English. The state acknowledges that this is a problem

but doesn't have the funds to do anything about it. Debbie Gilbert reported this story in *The Times* June 5.

IDAHO

► **Vote of open space:** In Idaho, a state where politicians joke about the lack of Democrats, efforts to deal with sprawl have run head on into conservative politics. But on May 22, Boise residents did something unprecedented: They voted to tax themselves \$10 million over the next two years in order to preserve public open space and stave off housing developments on the outskirts of town. Ali Macalady wrote about the vote in the June 18 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, write to editor@hcn.org or check the HCN archives at www.hcn.org.

KENTUCKY

► **Houseboat sewage** (from SEJ-BEAT): For the first time, state wildlife officials will enforce laws prohibiting houseboat owners from dumping raw sewage into Kentucky lakes and rivers. Staff writer Megan Woolhouse of *The* (Louisville) *Courier-Journal* wrote on May 28 that, although such dumping has been illegal for the past decade, the state agency that had enforcement responsibility did not have the authority to board and inspect boats for discharges unless officers observed another infraction. As a result, there was no check on houseboat sewage disposal. Many older houseboats were built without waste holding tanks, and owners of newer models that have such tanks often found there were no marina facilities for getting the waste pumped out. "Nobody wants to be the potty police," said Steve Riggs, a flotilla commander with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, which is trying to increase awareness of houseboat sewage regulations. Yet swimmers were getting sick. Contact Meg at mwoolhouse@courier-journal.com. Find the story at <http://www.courier-journal.com/local/news/2001/05/28/ke052801s29648.htm>

NEW MEXICO

► **Fire recovery:** The Santa Fe *New Mexican* prepared a May 7 anniversary package, looking at the after-effects of

the May 2000 Cerro Grande fire that burned 402 Los Alamos homes, caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage to Los Alamos National Laboratory and forced evacuation of the entire town for several days. A year later, Los Alamos County had issued permits for only 35 replacement homes. Only four homes were fully rebuilt. The lab had received \$200 million in federal funds for rehab work. But the Federal Emergency Management Agency had made full disaster relief payments to only 8 percent of owners of burned homes. Fire officials were warning that the city's homes near the forests remained at risk, and county government planned to thin out 600 acres of trees to reduce the fuel load. And the Santa Clara Pueblo, which lost nearly 20 percent of its total lands in fires in 1998 and 2000, was still closing off its main canyon area to fishing and other recreation activity, and planning to log more than 7 million board-feet of charred timber to control bug infestations and clear out dry fuel before the next fire season. Contact Ben Neary at (505) 986-3036, or at bneary@sfnewmexican.com, or Kristin Davenport at (505) 986-3017, or at kdavenport@sfnewmexican.com.

► **Fire follow-up:** In an interview with Neary, retired Bandelier National Monument Superintendent Roy Weaver denied previous claims from Forest Service and national lab officials that they last year had warned the National Park Service not to ignite the prescribed burn that eventually got away and sparked the Los Alamos conflagration. It was Weaver's first substantive interview on the fire since his retirement shortly after the blaze. Voice cracking, he said of the homeowners who lost their homes, "I just can't tell them how sorry I am." Contact Ben Neary at (505) 986-3036, or at bneary@sfnewmexican.com.

► **Fire report fireworks:** In June, the park service released its investigative report, recommending no disciplinary action against the park service employees involved in setting the controlled burn. The park service unequivocally accepted responsibility for the fire, but Karen Wade, director of the NPS eight-state Intermountain Region, said no single person or decision could be blamed. In an

accompanying memo written one day before he left office, then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt disputed the findings, saying "The Park Service should set this draft aside and start over with a comprehensive investigation that calls on the best fire professionals, including experts outside the federal land management agencies, for a more probing inquiry." Contact the *Albuquerque Journal's* Brendan Smith at (505) 988-8881 or bsmith@abqjournal.com.

► **Mine controversy:** Ben Neary is covering the proposed Fence Lake Mine in west central New Mexico, from which the Salt River Project utility in Phoenix plans to take the coal to its St. John's Arizona generating station and ship the power to Phoenix. The neighboring Zuni Pueblo opposes the proposed mine, on the grounds that it threatens to dry up a sacred salt lake on their property nearby. Neary broke a story that a Bureau of Indian Affairs official in Washington, D.C., had filed a complaint with his agency's EEO office, saying that he believes he has been retaliated against by his supervisor since retaining an independent hydrologist to look at the pueblo's concerns. The hydrologist reported early this year that the mine threatens to dry up the lake if it's built, which the utility's hydrologist disputes. Contact Ben Neary at bneary@sfnewmexican.com or (505) 986-3036.

► **Suburban sprawl:** The *Journal's* Tania Soussan reported on a study from the Center for the American West at the University of Colorado in Boulder that said in 50 years development will stretch almost nonstop from Albuquerque to Santa Fe. The study said suburban sprawl will cut through the landscape from Las Cruces to Texas and New Mexico, and that Deming, Alamogordo, Clovis, Gallup, Farmington and the area north of Truth or Consequences will be growth hot spots. Contact Soussan at (505) 823-3833 or at tsoussan@abqjournal.com.

► **Growth problems:** The *Albuquerque Tribune* reported how the city's West Side, "once a swath of isolated communities on the wrong side of the Rio Grande," has evolved into "the latest chapter of Albuquerque's long-running

story of exponential growth that outpaces city services, community attention and, perhaps most important, political power.” The parks, roads and fire stations that developers promised never kept up with the growth, residents say, but with 110,000 people living there now, west siders believe that their numbers will eventually give them more clout. Contact the Trib’s Gilbert Gallegos at (505) 823-3670.

► **Flow management controversy:**

Soussan also wrote how anglers, farmers and other water users along the San Juan River in northwest New Mexico are battling the federal government over water management. To maximize habitat for two endangered fish downstream, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is considering a plan to cut releases of water from Navajo Reservoir into the San Juan River by half for weeks at a time, the *Journal* reported in July. The cool, clean waters below the dam are home to a world-class trout fishery that has become an important part of the area economy. The bureau conducted a six-day test in July to gauge the impacts of lower flows on fish, irrigators, local cities and others who rely on river water.

NEW YORK

► **Crumbling sewers:** Over the last century, cities across the nation have built an intricate web of underground sewers. These sewers originally channeled waste directly into nearby streams, but with the advent of the environmental movement, and along with it, the Clean Water Act, treatment plants were built to clean the sewage before it reached the streams. Today, a growing population and a continuing boom in development has placed increasing pressure on the underground network of pipes. The story aired June 25. Contact Mark Brush, Great Lakes Radio Consortium, brush@glrc.org.

► **Brownfields bill:** As in many states, New York politicians struggle with the issue of brownfields—how to finance their redevelopment, how to encourage private and local government participation, how to protect willing developers from long-term liability and how to keep

environmentalists happy. The Democrat-controlled New York Assembly has crafted a brownfields bill that represents a small step toward compromise on the liability question, but there’s a long way to go for a deal that would be acceptable to Republican Gov. George E. Pataki or Senate Republicans, who insist that legislation tackle all hazardous waste sites. The story ran May 2001. Contact Chuck Bassett, *New York Business Environment*, at nybe@nybeenvironment.com.

► **West Nile spraying:**

Significantly more people reported being sick from the pesticides used to combat West Nile virus in New York last year those infected with the illness, according to figures from the state Department of Health. In the summer of 2000, 22 people were added to the state’s pesticide poisoning registry by healthcare professionals for symptoms such as headaches and nausea—symptoms believed connected to spraying for mosquitoes that carry the West Nile virus. Overall, more than 200 people reported symptoms, most often after the pesticide Anvil was sprayed. By comparison, only 14 people were sickened in 2000 from a bite from an infected mosquito, according to the DOH. The story ran June 15. Contact Sylvia Wood, *Times Union* (Albany), at swood@timesunion.com.

► **Hudson River cleanup:** EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman is considering a scaled-back proposal for the cleanup of the Hudson River, one of the nation’s largest Superfund sites because of PCB contamination from two General Electric Co. capacitor plants in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward. In December, under the Clinton Administration, the EPA proposed a \$460 million cleanup, which called for the dredging of 2.65 million cubic yards of sediment from a 37-mile-stretch of the river north of Albany. According to Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, the proposal being weighed in Washington would cost \$100 million and test if dredging works on a six-mile-stretch of river before moving forward with a widespread cleanup. Republican Gov. George E. Pataki has backed the EPA’s original proposal, while calling for protections for communities along the river. The story ran July 25-27. Contact

Dina Cappiello, *Times Union* (Albany), at dcappiello@timesunion.com.

NORTH CAROLINA

► **Mountain air:** Three governors pledged to work together to curb air pollution that’s choking the southern Appalachian Mountains, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reported in June. Gov. Mike Easley of North Carolina, Gov. Roy Barnes of Georgia and Gov. Don Sundquist of Tennessee sat side-by-side in Gatlinburg, Tenn., and signed a pledge for regional cooperation in reducing acid rain and ground-level ozone. The agreement, which was reached at the annual summit on southeastern mountain air quality, calls for the three states to develop a specific pollution strategy by March 2002. Momentum is building in North Carolina for tough restrictions on coal-fired power plants, now that business leaders have decided the bad air alerts and hazy vistas could threaten the tourist industry in the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountains. Stories are available at www.newsobserver.com or by contacting *N&O* staff writer James Eli Shiffer at jshiffer@newsobserver.com or (919) 836-5701.

OHIO

► **Great Lakes water** (from SEJ-Beat): A four-day series in the *Toledo Blade* explains the future of the Great Lakes in the context of global water shortages that are expected to become more acute this century as the population swells and global warming sets in. The series, written by SEJ member Tom Henry, shows readers why governors of eight Great Lakes states and premiers of two Canadian provinces are taking the threat of possible water diversions and exports seriously, in light of changes in international law under NAFTA and GATT. Among those interviewed are the president of a Canadian company which caused an international uproar in 1998 by trying to export Lake Superior water to Asia, and the president of a southern California company using NAFTA to sue British Columbia for up to \$10.5 billion over an unprecedented water-export deal that was nixed. The issue of global water shortages has caught the attention

of many—including the CIA and the State Department. For more information, contact Tom Henry at (419) 724-6079 or thenry@theblade.com, or find the story at www.toledoblade.com.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

► **Salmon vs. power:** The Bonneville Power Administration, which operates the dams on the Columbia River, is scrambling to avoid California-style blackouts and financial disaster. The crisis is revealing, as never before, the complex political and economic relationships that for so long have held together the public power system at the expense of salmon. Rocky Barker and Paul Larmer reported on this issue in the June 18 cover story of *High Country News*. For more information, write to plarmer@hcn.org or check the HCN archives at www.hcn.org.

TENNESSEE

► **Replumbing Reelfoot:** Congress has authorized \$30 million to save Reelfoot Lake in northwest Tennessee. The state's largest natural lake was formed by the New Madrid earthquake of 1811-12. But it is rapidly filling with sediment and water quality is deteriorating. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wants to build a spillway to allow the water levels to fluctuate, reducing stagnation. They also want to construct a basin to catch sediment before it enters the lake. But Kentucky senators, pressured by farmers who insist that a higher water level will over-saturate their croplands, have blocked the project from going forward. Tom Charlier reported this story in Memphis' *The Commercial Appeal* May 28. He can be reached at (901) 529-2572 or charlier@gomemphis.com.

► **Ozone washing:** A Nashville company is pioneering a new method for washing produce with ozone, which reduces water use and eliminates the need for chlorine. Strickland Produce Inc. partnered with Tennessee Valley Authority, the Electric Power Research Institute, and Nashville Electric Service on the project. Ozone is used to clean drinking water in some cities, but this is the first time it has been used in the produce industry.

Proponents say it enhances the flavor of vegetables and increases shelf life. And it's so effective that the process requires only half the water of traditional washing methods. Anne Paine reported this story in *The Tennessean* April 13. She can be reached at (615) 259-8071.

UTAH

► **Highway plan opposed:** Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson is shaking up his conservative state. He's taken on religious discrimination, oppressive liquor laws, racial and sexual inequality and urban sprawl. Perhaps his most controversial stance has been against the Legacy Parkway, a proposed 130-mile-long highway along the Wasatch Front mountains. Anderson has personally joined a lawsuit against the project, arguing that commuter rail must come first. Tim Westby profiled Anderson in the July 2 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, write to editor@hcn.org or check the HCN archives at www.hcn.org.

VIRGINIA

► **Sludge safety questions:** Research at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science raises questions about the safety of putting treated sewage on farm fields as fertilizer, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported July 12. Sludge often contains high levels of toxic chemicals called brominated diphenyl ethers, or BDEs, according to a VIMS study published in the journal *Nature*. BDEs are chemically similar to PCBs, DDT and dioxin, pollutants widely considered threats to people or wildlife. For more information, contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► **Alien oysters:** Asian oysters are thriving at test sites in the Chesapeake Bay, exciting scientists and seafood merchants who for decades have watched helplessly as parasites nearly wiped out native stocks, according to a May 23 story by Scott Harper in *The Virginian-Pilot*. The exotic species known as Suminoe, found in waters off China, India and Japan, grew to market size in

the Chesapeake Bay in just six months; it usually takes native oysters at least two years to reach that size. Furthermore, none of the 2,400 sample Suminoes died from the parasites MSX and dermo, which have devastated native oysters. For more information, contact Harper at sharper@pilotonline.com or (800) 446-2004, ext. 2340.

► **Supply center pollution:** State and local officials asked the federal government to investigate the Defense Supply Center in Richmond after the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* published several stories this spring and summer about water pollution, toxic wastes and other environmental problems at the military facility. Residents of nearby Rayon Park believe hazardous substances leaking from the center have caused cancer and other illnesses. For more information, contact reporters Meredith Fischer at mfischer@timesdispatch.com or (804) 743-8884; or Paige Akin at (804) 743-9052 or pakin@timesdispatch.com.

► **Recycling's future:** Because of the rising costs and low participation of curbside recycling, some Norfolk-area cities want to re-evaluate—and possibly eliminate—the program, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported June 2. The Southeastern Public Service Authority, which handles waste for the region, is studying the issue because of financial concerns voiced by several cities, including Portsmouth and Chesapeake. Suggestions range from scrapping curbside recycling to making it mandatory. About 25 percent of the area's households recycle. For more information, contact Harper at (800) 446-2004, extension 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com.

► **Interstate controversy:** State officials have tentatively approved a route for an interstate highway through western Virginia, but environmentalists have vowed to fight the plan, Ray Reed of *The Roanoke Times* reported. The proposed Interstate 73 would run 67 miles from Roanoke to the North Carolina line. Some environmental groups and government agencies fear the road will harm endangered fish and spoil the beauty of the Blue Ridge Parkway. After approving the route in May, Virginia's transporta-

The Beat

tion board amended it in June to avoid 11 acres of wetlands. The Federal Highway Administration still must approve money for the project. For more information, contact Reed at (540) 981-3351 or rayr@roanoke.com.

► **Death-trap shrub:** An exotic shrub planted in highway medians in Virginia turned into a death trap for more than 1,000 sleek, brown birds called cedar waxwings this spring, according to an April 28 story by Rex Springston in the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*. Vehicles killed the migrating birds as they flew in to feed on berries produced by the *Elaeagnus pungens*, or thorny elaeagnus. Highway officials planted the Asian shrub in medians to block the glare of headlights at night but are now considering removing the shrubs and taking other steps to protect the birds. Contact Springston at rspringston@timesdispatch.com or (804) 649-6453.

WASHINGTON

► **Mining:** In June, the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* published a four-part

series entitled "The Mining of the West: Pollution and Profit on Public Lands." The series revealed that taxpayers have been stuck with hundreds of millions of dollars in cleanup costs for mines on public land that have gone bankrupt. The most comprehensive review in years of the nation's policies on mining of public lands, the series also tracked environmental damage through Western states, showed how unstable metals prices put taxpayers at risk and spotlighted how a handful of U.S. senators from the West in key positions have forestalled reform of the archaic 1872 Mining Law. Primary reporters were Andrew Schneider, Lisa Olsen and SEJ member Robert McClure. Contact McClure at RobertMcClure@seattlepi.com or (206)448-8092. The series is available at <http://seattlepi.com/specials/mining/>

► **Culvert controversy:** In January of this year, 20 Native American tribes filed suit against the state of Washington, claiming that the state is violating treaty fishing rights by failing to fix highway culverts. Many of the 2,400 state-owned

culverts are in disrepair, and some block fish passage entirely. Though the case may take years to decide, observers say the tribes have a strong case. A ruling in the tribes' favor could greatly increase tribal influence over fisheries management. Andrew Engelson reported on this story in the July 2 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, write to editor@hcn.org or check the HCN archives at www.hcn.org.

WYOMING

► **Prairie dog preservationist:** Forest supervisor Mary Peterson this spring curtailed sport shooting of black-tailed prairie dogs at Thunder Basin National Grassland in eastern Wyoming. The area contains one of only seven large black-tailed prairie dog complexes remaining in North America. Her move is one of a growing number of actions being taken on behalf of the beleaguered prairie dog. Mark Matthews reported on this story in the July 2 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, write to editor@hcn.org or check the HCN archives at <http://www.hcn.org>.

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