

# SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

Vol. 5 No. 2

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# The Torn Curtain

## E-Journalist group forms in former Soviet Union

By JIM DETJEN

A few dozen ants began showing up on the dining room table at breakfast. By lunch (in a sprawling conference center outside of Kiev, Ukraine) hundreds of ants were out in force, conducting military maneuvers on the table.

Now, nobody has ever accused me of being Mr. Cleanliness, but I must admit that I found these roving bands of insects a bit disconcerting.

By dinner thousands of ants were swarming across the table, which appeared not to have been cleaned all day. The ants marched across forks and spoons, scurrying up glasses, building nests inside the sugar bowl.

I found this a bit disgusting. But the Russian journalists and environmental leaders at my table treated it as if nothing were unusual. They occasionally cupped a hand and brushed a regiment or two off

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## Kamchatka students taste press freedoms

By NANCY SHUTE

The things I remember most about my year on the Kamchatka outpost on a Fulbright aren't the Kodak moments, like climbing into the crater of a live volcano, bobbing in a hot springs or seeing 54 brown bears in one afternoon.

No, I remember being awakened night after night at 4 a.m. by "Fernando" rocketing from the car stereos of the minor Mafiosi leaving the bar beneath my apartment. I remember shrieking with frustration over the days it took to do the simplest tasks: Xerox a quiz, pay my e-mail bill, or find cabbage.

And I remember the look on my students' faces when they saw their words in print for the first time, even if those words were greasily xeroxed onto paper so rough it was hard to

*(Continued on page 16)*

## Agenda firming up for SEJ's 1995 national conference at MIT in Boston

By DAVID ROPEIK and JAY LETTO

Planning is in full swing for SEJ's national conference at Massachusetts Institute of Technology October 26-29. Here's an update of the activities which promise to make this one of SEJ's strongest gatherings to date.

A diverse slate of tours is planned for Thursday the 26th. There's an all-day trip to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute where we'll learn about

ocean pollution, marine biodiversity, and underwater robotic research vehicles. Another tour will visit sites in Boston that exemplify urban environmental issues. Another boats across Boston Harbor to the new sewage plant built to clean up the infamous dirty water, where we'll explore issues involved in major (read: expensive) environmental infrastructure programs.

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Strategic plan defines SEJ's mission

Try getting more than a dozen journalists to agree on the wording of one paragraph. Every time you think you're done, someone makes a good suggestion. Then someone makes a better one.

Last March, SEJ's board spent more than an hour developing the organization's new, four-sentence mission statement. It states:

*The mission of the Society of Environmental Journalists is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting.*

*Towards that end, SEJ provides critical support to journalists of all media on the basic importance of environmental reporting. Through combined efforts of board, staff, membership and appropriate partners, SEJ offers unique educational programs and services.*

So begins a 23-page draft of SEJ's strategic and operating plan for 1995 to 1998. It was written by executive director Beth Parke based on notes from a marathon, two-day board meeting at the University of Michigan.

This kind of document may sound a little fancy for journalists. It smacks of corporate-speak and consultants.

But SEJ's board feels that this plan will help the organization run smoothly and grow effectively. In addition, we hope the plan will impress potential funders and other partners who provide the support we need to make SEJ work.

The plan identifies six "strategic issues" that SEJ is facing. At the top of the list is funding stability, followed by membership development; development of staff, board and other volunteers; improvement of programs and services; protecting the journalistic integrity of our membership and image; and building SEJ's visibility and influence.

We have set specific goals for each year in each of these categories.

In funding, for example, by the middle of 1996 we plan to investigate completely new funding sources such as bequests, new publications, and advertising in the *SEJournal*. We plan to implement at least two of these ideas by June, 1997.

In the area of membership develop-

ment, we plan to increase SEJ's membership from the current 1,100 or so to 1,500 by the end of 1998. Next year, we will emphasize recruiting among editors and colleagues who work for specialized newsletters, electronic media and academic institutions.

To continuously hone the skills of SEJ's staff, board and other volunteers, we will do some training for board members in 1996. We will seek funding for a leadership development retreat for active SEJ volunteers, planned for 1997.

## Report from the society's president

By  
**Emilia  
Askari**

In preparation for testing new programs and services, SEJ will survey the membership in 1996 to see how members would like SEJ to help them. Ideas under consideration include publishing new guidebooks or tip sheets and providing training in computer-assisted environmental reporting.

To protect SEJ's identity as a journalistic organization, the board will establish written guidelines on potential funding sources. In addition, the membership committee will annually review our membership list, screening for possible eligibility changes.

To build SEJ's stature and influence, we hope to launch an awards program in 1996. We are in discussion now with a potential funder.

This is just a small taste of the plans we have made for the next three years.

We invite any and all members of SEJ to contact the office if they are interested in learning more. Copies of the draft plan are available for all members.

The plan may be revised before the board adopts a final version at our next meeting, scheduled for August 5 in Missoula, Montana. As always, the meeting is open to interested members.

If you have suggestions about the plan and can't attend the meeting, please call me, SEJ's executive director Beth Parke, or any board member. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please keep in mind that board elections are coming up in the fall. Several current board members have said that they do not plan to run for re-election.

Being a member of SEJ's board is a lot of work. But it is also very rewarding, thanks to the many other journalists around the country who also are working so hard to improve our profession.

This spring, special kudos go to those who organized regional events in Los Angeles and Atlanta. They include Gary Polakovic of the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, Marla Cone of *The Los Angeles Times*, David Marshall of San Jose State University, Peter Dykstra of CNN, Stuart Leavenworth of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, Ken Edelstein of the *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, Jay Bookman of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and Bruce Ritchie of the *Gainesville Sun*.

SEJ also would like to extend thanks to the following:

- the Knight Foundation, for a three-year \$50,000 grant
- the W. Alton Jones Foundation, for a \$50,000 grant for 1995-96
- *The Los Angeles Times*, the *San Bernardino Sun*, the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, the *Victorville Daily Press*, City News Service of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Chapter of SPJ for support of SEJ's regional conference in California
- the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Raleigh News and Observer* Foundation, CNN-Turner Broadcasting and *The New York Times* Regional Newspapers Group for support of SEJ's regional conference in Atlanta
- the *Boston Globe*, the *Providence Journal* and the *Quincy Patriot-Ledger* for support of October's national conference in Boston.

SEJournal (ISSN: 1053-7082) is published quarterly by the **Society of Environmental Journalists**, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118. Membership \$35 per year (student rate \$30). Subscription fee \$50; \$30 library rate. © 1994 by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

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SEJournal will accept unsolicited manuscripts. Send story ideas, articles, news briefs, tips and letters-to-the-editor to Chris Rigel, SEJ office, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118, Ph. (215) 247-9710, e-mail ChrisSEJ@aol.com. Send calendar items to Janet Raloff, Science News, 1719 N Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036. For Greenbeat, contact Kevin Carmody at 1447 1/2 W. Fletcher Street, Chicago, IL 60657; (312) 229-2814; e-mail KPCarmody@aol.com. For book reviews, contact Kathy Sagan, Family Circle, (212) 463-1240.

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The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to enhancing the quality and accuracy of environmental reporting. SEJ works through a variety of programs and services to encourage information sharing and discussion among journalists, scientists, educators, government officials, industry representatives, environmental advocacy groups and concerned citizens regarding important environmental issues. SEJ's purpose is to enable journalists to better inform the public about critical issues concerning the environment. SEJ's membership of more than 1,000 includes journalists working for newspapers, television and radio stations, broadcast and cable networks, magazines, newsletters, wire services and photo agencies, as well as educators and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's national conferences and to subscribe to this quarterly publication.

SEJournal is published electronically on Compuserve's Journalism Forum, on the SEJ forum on America Online, and on the World Wide Web.

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SEJournal is printed on recycled paper

## Co-Editor Adam Glenn leaves SEJournal to be globetrotter

By A. ADAM GLENN

I'll be stepping down as co-editor of the *SEJournal* after this issue. If you'll indulge me a moment to take care of another piece of business, I'll explain. But first, I want to give credit where credit is due—to the *Journal's* volunteer staff, for all you've accomplished in the last several years.

Since mid-1991 when I began with the *Journal*, and in the last two-and-a-half years as its premier editorial traffic cop, I've seen it grow in page count and story quality, as well as in the sweat equity of this growing group of volunteer editors.

Let me remind you what we've accomplished:

- *SEJournal* has grown in page count by more than one third. It has averaged 36 pages per issue beginning in 1994, compared to 28 pages per issue in 1992.

- We've featured writings and interviews of renowned journalists. Among them: Gene Roberts, managing editor of the *New York Times*; Tom Winship, former *Boston Globe* editor, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Eileen Welsome of the *Albuquerque Tribune*. Controversial writers have had their say too, like the *Times'* Keith Schneider and author Gregg Easterbrook.

- Special cover packages have mined subjects like the politics of environment, ethics in environmental journalism, "backlash" reporting, population and environment, the decline of environmental magazines, and environmental justice.

- The *Journal* has greatly expanded its coverage of SEJ's annual conference. The first time, in Boulder, we gave 10 magazine columns. Last year, for Utah, we produced 37 columns.

- We've instituted a range of new features, including Science Survey, Online Bits & Bytes, Bookshelf, and Media on the Move, as well as occasional features like In Education and regional Essays. Our Viewpoints column has also expanded, and existing features—Green Beat, Reporters' Toolbox, and Calendar—have remained our rock-solid foundation.

- We've offered an array of news and features too numerous to mention, covering the vicissitudes of our profession, and the politics and science of the environmental beat. We've also kept up steady flow of SEJ news, including national, regional, and international developments.

So, congratulations—and a big thank you—to all those who made these accomplishments possible. And to all SEJ members, please let the volunteers of the *SEJournal* know that you're proud of them and the publication. On second thought, how about joining them in all the fun?

Now, let me tell you why I'm leaving behind all the glory. After my name slips off the masthead, I plan to do two things.

First of all, I've come to believe that if we want our profession to be around for a long time to come, we've got to do a better job of making sure that the next generation of journalists is the most diverse possible. How else can our journalistic efforts accurately reflect the society in which we work?

In 1993, the SEJ membership passed a resolution asking

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## Conference...(from page 1)

Another all-day tour will head into the gorgeous New England fall foliage at Harvard's experimental forest to discuss forestry issues and the northern forests proposal. We've also added a tour to a major American manufacturer of electric cars, where each attendee will take a test ride and hear panels on battery technology and the political/regulatory atmosphere 'driving' alternative fuel vehicle markets. (Watch your mail for details.)

As space is limited for each tour, be sure to sign up soon. (Priority will be given to SEJ members and working journalists.) The Woods Hole and forestry tours are all-day, so out-of-towners would need to get into Boston by Wednesday evening to attend these. The Boston Harbor and Urban Environment tours are half-day (afternoon), so attendees would need to arrive in Boston by Thursday morning if they wish to attend.

Networking, which was cited in previous evaluations as perhaps the most valued item at SEJ conferences, just got better. There will be the usual social moments: Thursday evening's buffet reception, the official opening of the conference, and Saturday evening at Boston's Museum of Science promise opportunities for socializing. We've also plugged in more time between panels and speakers, and fewer talking heads at evening events. In addition, joining us this year will be an estimated 100 or more environmental reporters from around the globe, as the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ) convenes its annual gathering in conjunction with our event. We'll organize formal and informal get-togethers, where you can learn the latest environmental news from the folks actually out there covering stories in Africa, Asia, South America and Europe.

Our Friday opening plenary is looking good. "The Environment and The Mood of America" discussion will, we hope, feature top members of Congress, executives from the news media industry, Clinton administration environmental officials, and a couple of nice and saucy commentators, both liberal and conservative. The discussion will be moderated by former Presidential candidate Michael

Dukakis. We'll open that session with a major national poll done for SEJ by Times-Mirror Magazines and Roper/Starch on how the American public thinks Congress – and the media, are handling environmental issues.

At lunch on Friday we'll hear from Elizabeth Dowdeswell, head of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

We're still pursuing the Presidential candidates, and are working with other Boston and New Hampshire-area media groups and academic institutions to lure them to our conference. In the event we can't attract enough of them to have a true candidates' forum we'll offer a platter of small-group sessions during this Friday afternoon time slot, featuring agency heads, Congressional leaders, and other newsmakers.

Saturday morning we'll enjoy a lecture and Q. and A. session with renowned eco-thinker Edward O. Wilson. We hope to hear from Gro Harlem Bruntland of Norway at lunch. Concurrent panels on Friday and Saturday afternoons include fisheries, what's new in climate change, endocrine disrupters, enviro-journalism ethics ("Are We Scaring The World to Death?"), greenwash, the environment and spirituality, the basics of enviro-reporting, and freelancing. Also, international journalists will talk about covering the environment in their countries, award winners will tell how they did it, and there will be hands-on sessions about computer-assisted reporting. We have added a visit to MIT's famed Media Lab for a look at future media technologies.

Time to socialize continues Saturday night at a reception at Boston's wonderful Museum of Science, open for our exploration all evening. And we're adding a new event this year at the Saturday reception...an auction! We hope to include items like time-share weekends at different resorts, something neat being donated by Don Henley of the Eagles, pottery made by your friendly conference chairman, and 20-30 other items. *We strongly encourage your suggestions and/or donations!* Wevonneda Minis of the SEJ board is the guru on the

auction. Send ideas to her. at the *Post & Courier*, 134 Columbus St., Charleston, SC 29403-4800; Ph. (803) 937-5705.

We close with a bang on Sunday when 300 of us will head to Walden Pond for a walk, and later travel to a nearby mansion (now the home of the Thoreau Institute) for panels on environmental history, environmental literature, covering the environment for TV, and a session with a writing coach. Those who can't make the space-limited trip to Walden are hardly out of luck. They can take a boat trip to Boston's outer Harbor with marine scientists from the New England Aquarium. Weather and animals permitting, that boat will head out to the Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary for a whale watch.

There will be a display of a UNEP environmental photograph exhibit...a reading room with samples of award winning work...lots of follow-up literature provided by panel speakers. Newsmaking events, story-generating panels and tours, time to network and socialize... and *we want to see you there!*

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*David Ropeik has been the environment reporter at WCVB-TV in Boston since 1989. He's been on SEJ's board since 1991.*

*Jay Letto, SEJ's conference coordinator is a freelance writer based in White Salmon, WA.*

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*See page 25 for more conference information..*

# Beattie defends Endangered Species Act at SEJ's California regional conference

By GARY POLAKOVIC

The future of the Endangered Species Act was the topic of an all-day conference held this spring for California journalists, the first SEJ-sponsored event on the West Coast. This conference, "Covering the Endangered Species Act in Your Backyard," attracted 50 attendees.

Keynoters were Mollie Beattie, head of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., chairman of the House Resources Committee Endangered Species Act (ESA) Task Force.

Pombo, whose task force held hearings on the ESA across the nation in spring, said the law needs to be changed to give property owners incentives to save wildlife and compensation when protection devalues private land. He predicted the Senate would pass compensation provisions contained in Sen. Slade Gorton's (R-ID) reauthorization bill. Pombo recounted his boyhood experience of watching a bald eagle capture a rabbit and said "we need to preserve that for generations to come. I want my children to see that."

Beattie delivered a vigorous defense of the law, discredited myths surrounding the ESA, cited loss of biodiversity as one of the nation's foremost problems and chided politicians ignorant of the complexity involved in species protection. She likened their efforts to dismantle the ESA to silencing a noisy smoke alarm instead of dealing with the burning building. Formerly a journalist, Beattie challenged reporters to scrutinize claims made by competing interests and to inform readers of the stakes involved if protection for wildlife and habitat is weakened during ESA reauthorization.

Other distinguished speakers at the conference included Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope, California Resources Secretary Douglas Wheeler, and former Bureau of Land Management Director Jim Baca.

A morning panel focused on the fate of the law. One afternoon panel examined the property rights dispute and another featured veteran journalists expounding on tricks of the trade in a toolbox session.

California's burgeoning population, diversity of ecosystems, and abundance

of endangered species make it one of the nation's most contested battlegrounds in the ESA debate. A survey of reporters across the state in January revealed intense interest in the ESA.

The conference was held at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. It was sponsored by SEJ, seven California news organizations, the Bureau of National Affairs Inc. (BNA), and the Los Angeles Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. Reporters, students, professors, activists, government officials, and industry representatives attended.

I organized the event with assistance from Marla Cone of the *Los Angeles Times*, Lee Peterson of the *Daily Breeze*, Carolyn Whetzel of BNA, and Patricia Rice of the *Imperial Valley Press*.

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*Gary Polakovic has covered environment issues in Southern California for the past 10 years. He worked as environment reporter for The Sun in San Bernardino County before moving to The Press-Enterprise of Riverside County in 1987 to cover the environment.*

## Southeast regional conference: boom times and backlash

By STUART LEAVENWORTH

Ever since a Yankee named H. L. Mencken wrote that the South was as sterile "artistically, intellectually, culturally" as the Sahara desert, journalists below the Mason-Dixon line have suffered from an inferiority complex.

And so it goes for the region's environment reporters. In the last five years, southern environment journalists have won two Pulitzers and a slew of other awards. Yet Dixie is still viewed as a backwater for our profession. That may be starting to change.

On July 21-22, reporters and broadcasters will meet at Emory University in Atlanta for SEJ's first regional conference in the South. Entitled "New Realities," the conference will examine the region's booming growth and shifting

political allegiances.

On Friday, July 21, the conference will include panels about urban sprawl; endangered species and property rights; covering "company towns" and digging stories out of EPA and state agencies. George Frampton, assistant secretary of the Interior and former president of the Wilderness Society, will be our keynote speaker. We'll finish up at Manuel's Tavern for an informal grousing session about the state of environment reporting.

On Saturday there will be panels on regional water wars and computer-assisted reporting, followed by small group sessions with Robert Bullard, author of *Dumping on Dixie*, EPA regional administrator John Hankinson Jr. and Noreen Clough, regional director of the Fish & Wildlife Service. U.S. Rep. Charles

Taylor, an outspoken North Carolina lawmaker who sponsored this year's timber salvage legislation, will be our lunch speaker, I then join a plenary panel to discuss how the Republican "Contract" will affect the South's environment.

Registration for the conference is \$25 for SEJ members and students; \$35 for journalists who are not SEJ members and \$75 for others. Fellowships are available for minority journalists and reporters from small news operations. For information, contact the SEJ office or conference chair Peter Dykstra at (404) 827-3349.

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*Stuart Leavenworth, reporter for The (Raleigh N.C.) News & Observer, "got suckered" into being program director for the Atlanta regional conference.*

## Letter from the editor...(from page 3)

that we explore ways in which environmental journalists could interact with disadvantaged, inner-city kids. The idea was not only to help build that pool of future minority journalists, but also to bring us into more direct contact with the environmental issues faced by these communities. My own personal commitment to

this effort is long overdue.

Oh yes, and one other thing. By his time next year, I'll be on the other side of the globe. After I obtain my mid-career masters degree in international environmental policy next December from the Fletcher School in Boston, and after I marry my fiancée Mrnalini

Rajwar next spring in Oklahoma, I'll get on an airplane and head off to live and work for a year in India and South Asia. Pretty hard to edit a journal from there, eh?

In parting, warm thanks and best wishes to my fellow editors and to all the many superb *SEJournal* issues to come.

**Keith Schneider** says he will use his journalism skills in "an advocacy role in a community where it's really important." The former *New York Times* environmental reporter now heads the Michigan Land Use Institute, where he hopes to "foster a set of new ideas about how to develop without paving over every piece of landscape." The Institute first came together to help shape controversial natural gas development in the Great Lakes region and is now housed in a 127-year-old, one-room school house in Benzonia, Michigan. But Schneider has big plans. He hopes to do for land use "what the Rocky Mountain Institute did for energy."

Congratulations to **Karen Dorn Steele** and her colleague, **Jim Lynch** at Spokane's *Spokesman-Review*. The pair landed both a George Polk and a Gerald Loeb award for their coverage of financial mismanagement at the Hanford Nuclear Weapons plant in Washington state. The report, titled "River of Money," details how most of the \$5 million per day spent by the federal government to clean up radioactive waste is, well, wasted. (See story, page 7)

**Richard Stone** is heading east. . . way east. The environmental news writer for the journal *Science* will teach environmental journalism and science writing at Rostov University in southern Russia, near the Black Sea. Stone, who will be in Rostov for a year on a Fulbright scholarship, wants to prepare his students to freelance for Western publications. "In Russia, they have more of their own voice in stories. It's like reading the editorial page. I just want to give them a taste of the way we write here and the way we source stories."

This fall, **Elliot Diring** will be batting around similar issues at Harvard University. Diring is one of two SEJ

members awarded a Nieman Fellowship. The former environmental reporter is now assistant city editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and hopes the fellowship will give him "a stronger perspective to assess stories and help

## Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsy

reporters scope them out. Also, being part of a group of journalists, all doing course work simultaneously, will be productive."

Another member in that group is **Jacques Rivard**. But unlike Diring, Rivard is already quite used to academic life. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television reporter has been teaching journalism at the University of Montreal for 13 years. He plans to use the Nieman Fellowship to study global environmental economics and law.

Getting through the first few issues is the immediate goal of **Bill Breen**, who is the managing editor of a new business magazine, *Fast Company*. The former editor of *Garbage* describes the Boston-based startup as "a cross between *Rolling Stone* and *Harvard Business Review*." He says young executives in their 20s, 30s, and 40s are interested in environmental issues, so he plans to make good use of his environmental writing background.

Preliminary reports indicate that **Kim Motylewski** is better equipped than the average journalist to handle lab work. Motylewski, associate producer for National Public Radio's *Living On Earth*, spent the month of June boning up on basic science at the Science Writing Fellowship Program in Wood's Hole,

Massachusetts. A reliable source says she was the only reporter in the first lab class who knew "how to use a pipette to draw ten milliliters of fluid." Things will be getting tougher. By the time you read this, the journalists will have broken up and Motylewski will be immersed in biology research with real scientists.

Africa was **David Baron's** classroom. He was part of a six-nation agricultural tour sponsored by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing. The science reporter for NPR's Boston affiliate WBUR-FM took advantage of the opportunity because "you don't hear much positive news about what Africa is doing to help itself." Baron says the stories should interest audiences here because there is much western farmers can learn from research like this in the developing world.

"Understanding the farmers as individuals" is what **Paul Raeburn** hopes his readers will get from stories he writes about the Africa trip. The Associated Press science editor, also part of the Council's agricultural tour, says African farmers have many of the same personality traits as farmers he's met in the mid-western United States. The trip was particularly interesting for Raeburn, because he's just finished a book about agriculture. *The Last Harvest*, published by Simon and Schuster, describes how the country's agricultural gene pool is growing dangerously smaller. Raeburn's book is in stores now.

**Paul Rogers** is the new environment reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News*. An avid outdoorsman, Rogers has followed environmental issues on his own for a while. Now the former regional reporter is happy to be paid to pursue his interests. Rogers replaces Scott Thurm, who was previously reported as switched to the business beat. Rogers

says his colleague is now covering Pete Wilson's run for the White House.

She originally thought the assignment from her editor sounded "incredibly boring," but **Katherine Bouma's** investigations into the Alabama forest industry turned into an award-winning series. Writing 'The Big Tree Farm' for the *Montgomery Advertiser*, Bouma realized that "every aspect of Alabama's environment . . . is dominated by that one industry." The series won an award for outstanding southern environmental writing from the Southern Environmental Law Center. Don't you just hate it when those editors are right? Bouma is currently a reporter for the *Orlando Sentinel*.

**Scott Bronstein** is an incredibly

busy man. Just as he settles into his new digs at CNN, Bronstein has pulled in another prize for his former employers at the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution*: a regional AP award for Public Service. He also shared in the Southern Environmental Law Center honors for his 10-page feature about pollution in the South's second largest watershed. This is Scott's third straight appearance in this column, which has been renamed "Bronstein, et al. On The Move."

*SEJournal* co-editor **Kevin Carmody** has landed at "Chicago's third daily," the *Daily Southtown*. Early this year, Carmody became the paper's environmental and health reporter. Carmody moved to Chicago about a year ago with

his wife, SEJ member Pat Tanaka, who is assignment editor at WGN-TV.

Finally, this will be *SEJournal* co-editor **Adam Glenn's** last issue. He'll be around for awhile helping out, but he's getting ready to move to India where he'll set up shop as a freelance writer. (See page 3.)

*Win an award? Start a fellowship? Change jobs? Let us know. Media On The Move is a way for members to keep in touch the 363 long days we're not at the SEJ conference. Send news to: George Homsy at Living On Earth, PO Box 380639, Cambridge, MA 02238-0639. Ph: 617-868-8810, fax: 617-868-8659, e-mail: livingearth@igc.apc.org*

## Top honors for environmental reporters

By **GEORGE HOMSY**

"Environment reporting has moved to the upper echelon of newsroom beats." That's the pronouncement of the press release announcing the latest Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism awards. It sounds like good news for the beat. It also means that those who were recognized face stiffer competition and are truly the cream of the crop.

Here is a list of some environment stories taking awards this year. *Quill*, (June issue, published by the Society of Professional Journalists), has a broader list. Thanks to *Quill* for compiling most of this information.

### **SDX Award for Magazine Reporting**

*Lethal Legacy: Pollution in the Former USSR and Chernobyl: Living with the Monster* by Mike Edwards of *National Geographic*. In two stories, Edwards describes the devastation wrought by 70 years of unchecked industrialization.

### **Investigative Reporters and Editors Book Award**

*Tankers Full Of Trouble* by Eric Nalder of *The Seattle Times*. This book, based on a series of Pulitzer Prize winning articles, examines the personal and environmental risks of moving oil in huge supertankers.

### **George Polk Journalism Award Gerald Loeb Award**

*Wasteland* by Jim Lynch and Karen

Dorn Steele of *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane. Their five-part series on financial mismanagement at the Hanford nuclear weapons plant resulted in greatly increased scrutiny by the Energy Department.

### **Heywood Broun Award**

### **Livingston Award for International Reporting (Zuckoff)**

*Foul Trade* by Michael Zuckoff, Diego Ribadeneira and Maggie Farley, *The Boston Globe*. The series investigated US companies' dumping of dangerous or banned products in the Third World.

### **Alfred I duPont-Columbia Journalism Awards**

*Semipalatinsk* reported by Ed Bradley of CBS' 60 Minutes. In this segment, the CBS team toured a city used for radiation experiments by the former Soviet Union.

### **Scripps Howard Foundation - Edward J. Meeman plaque (Small Market)**

*The Paper Chase* by Ken Ward, Jr. of *The Charleston Gazette* in West Virginia. This article describes the battle to bring to light details of a new paper and pulp mill.

### **1994 Public Service Award - local Associated Press**

*Troubled Waters: The Strangling of the Chattahoochee* by Scott Bronstein, formerly of the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution*. A 10-page series describing how rampant, unchecked develop-

ment is destroying the second largest watershed in the south.

Phillip D. Reed Memorial Award - Southern Environmental Law Center

### **Phillip D. Reed Memorial Award - Southern Environmental Law Center**

*The Big Tree Farm* by Katherine Bouma, formerly of the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Her series of articles covered the forest products industry in Alabama.

### **Scripps Howard Foundation - Edward J. Meeman plaque (Large Market)**

Body of work: Marla Cone of the *Los Angeles Times*. The judges described Cone's work as comprehensive and immensely readable. They said she has an uncanny instinct for developing stories that many journalists would have missed.

### **Investigative Reporters and Editors - Large Market TV Award**

Melody Gilbert and Rita Beatty of KTCA-TV, St. Paul, Minnesota, for an investigation of how the Army secretly sprayed Americans with toxic chemicals.

### **Investigative Reporters and Editors - Magazines Award**

Eric Nelson and Mark Worth of the *Washington Free Press*, for a series about chemically injured workers at Boeing Company.

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*George Homsy is a producer of National Public Radio's Living on Earth in Cambridge, Mass.*

# SEJ members experience academia as MIT Knight, Harvard Nieman journalism fellows

## Knight science fellowship at MIT rich in choices

By DAVID ROPEIK

So you're thinking about applying for that fellowship? Go for it. But beware!

I just spent nine months as a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT. The learning and intellectual stimulation, were fabulous. Spending so much time in a world of ideas, new information, and discovery sure beats the heck out of facing deadlines and battles with the boss.

The Knight program affords participants access to both MIT and Harvard. And if that isn't enough, Knights can fairly easily talk their way into other Boston-area schools. Environmental journalists can tap the rich resources of Tufts University, for example.

Therein lies my first warning. The depth of choice is so rich, and so tempting, that making choices is a challenge. It's like having a blank check in a candy store, but a limited time in which to spend it. I ended up taking classes in environmental geology, molecular biology, neuroscience, human physiology, evolutionary biology (from Edward Wilson), oceanography, a Harvard Business School course in environmental management—and to make sure I was having fun, courses in jazz and pottery.

One nice feature of the Knight program is that you audit your classes, and you don't have to do any of the course work, i.e., readings, problem sets, or tests—unless you choose to. I did some and learned more for doing so. But I chose to learn a little about a lot of things, rather than a lot about fewer things. You couldn't take that approach and sample so many things, if you had to do all the work for each class.

On top of the courses, I attended a seminar on the issue of chlorine, two multiple-day sessions of MIT's Global Change Forum, and a long list of individual lectures. Oh yeah. Almost forgot the 10-day camping and hiking field trip to the Nevada-Southern California area with

a geology class over Christmas break.

But there were lots of things that sounded great that I didn't get to do. That's not a complaint. Just a note of realism if you're thinking about the experience. Be prepared to make some tough choices.

Another warning: Be prepared to be very busy. I "worked" much longer days

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*"There are two problem periods for fellows. One is entry. The other is RE-entry."*

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than I do when I'm at work. I expected it to be more of a vacation. But when you only have nine months in the candy store, you tend not to squander time.

You should also be prepared for some surprising ignorance in academe of "the real world." I heard a lecture from an expert on battery technology, who commented pessimistically about the future of electric cars without knowing anything about the "California Car" rules or how the auto industry was proposing the 49-state car as an alternative, or how 90 percent of all daily auto use is within the mileage of the average lead-acid battery-fueled electric. A geology professor talking about radioactive waste contamination didn't know he had some in the very town where he lives.

This ignorance of the real world makes somebody from the real world (like a journalist) a special guest in most classes. Most professors also are glad to have an adult who could choose to be anywhere, in their class—and they welcome participation and real world/adult perspective.

On the other hand, be warned that scientists and academicians don't much like the press. Be prepared occasionally to find yourself a whipping boy/girl for their complaints. I actually volunteered to speak at a few gatherings (one of oceanographers, one of climate change experts) about how we in the press do what we do, and how we and scientists could get along better.

Finally, two warnings about life after a fellowship, which I now face. A former curator of the Nieman program, Howard Simon, once said, "There are two problem periods for fellows. One is entry. The other is RE-entry."

As much fun as it is to pig out at the candy store, be prepared to have to go back to eating your broccoli! The freedom you experience while on fellowship is sweet and seductive. You don't want it to end. But of course it must.

Which leads to the strongest warning of all. Being away from work, out from under the deadlines and hassles and compromises, will allow you to see your professional reality more clearly. Be prepared. You may not like what you see. Facing that ultimate decision, whether to return to your job, or what kind of a change to make, will surely confront you at some point. It's just part of the price you'll pay for the freedom of sabbatical.

But remember what I said at the outset. GO FOR IT! Demands notwithstanding, I'm sure I will look back on this experience as one of the most stimulating, enriching, fun and exciting years in my professional life.

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*David Ropeik has been the environment reporter at WCVB-TV in Boston since 1989. He's been on SEJ's board since 1991.*



## Nieman boosts enviro beat through fellowships

By CHRIS BOWMAN

At a time when many news organizations are sacrificing environmental coverage, one of the most respected promoters of journalistic quality and integrity is boosting the beat.

Next spring, for the third time, the Nieman Foundation at Harvard will be awarding annual fellowships to a U.S. and international journalist for the study of pollution and natural issues.

I was the first U.S. Environmental Nieman Fellow. My appointment ended in June.

Bill Kovac, Curator of the Nieman Foundation, established the specialized program at a time when I had given up on fellowships. I had been brought to the brink three times as a finalist for mid-career programs at Stanford and Michigan, and I didn't want to repeat the ordeal. Then, in a 1993 mailer to SEJ members, the Nieman Foundation announced the new fellowships.

I couldn't resist. The prestigious 57-year-old foundation was creating its first fellowship for specialized study—not in the high-profile political or criminal justice arena—but in my beat, the environment. I was impressed. So I applied from my post at *The Sacramento Bee*.

Gregory Favre, the executive editor, granted me a leave of absence and agreed to cover the difference between my *Bee* salary and the \$25,000 fellowship stipend.

The official announcement of my appointment could only have come from Harvard:

"Sir, I beg to inform you on behalf of the University that you are appointed Environmental Nieman Fellow to serve from September 1, 1994 through June 30, 1995." The secretary to the Harvard Corporation signed the letter as "Your obedient servant."

Actually, we could have used a servant or two, obedience notwithstanding. The dirty laundry and dishes piled high in our dorm apartment as my wife and I indulged in the impossibly rich intellectual and cultural feast—chamber music, fox-trot lessons, ice skating, kayaking, Red Sox games, museums, lectures and an endless parade of receptions and parties.

The Nieman Fellowship gave myself and my environmental lawyer-wife complete access to all of Harvard, MIT, Tufts, and Boston University. There was no right or wrong way to be a Nieman Fellow or Nieman spouse. We could spend the year as we wished.

Technically, Nieman fellows are auditors. We receive no course credits or degrees. I could work out any deal with professors to satisfy the gentle Nieman requirement of completing at least one course each semester as though it were

for credit.

My international counterpart in the environmental fellowship was Barbara Cieszewska, who covers one of the most polluted corners of the industrialized world for the *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper in southern Poland

Like the other 24 Niemans in our class, Barbara and I participated in twice-weekly seminars with guests from a variety of backgrounds. We were distinguished only by the requirement that we "concentrate" on environmental studies.

I examined the environment from multiple viewpoints—economics, corporate strategy, design, law, and public health. I looked for ways to improve on traditional environmental journalism. Too often, I think, environmental stories exaggerate threats, rely largely on anecdotes from alleged victims, and

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***I examined the environment  
from multiple viewpoints—  
economics, corporate strategy,  
design, law, and public health.***

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juxtapose competing opinions under the pretense of balance. We skimp on information that people need most to judge the merits of proposed bans, restrictions and cleanups.

My goal was to learn the right questions to ask experts and to make sense of their answers. Are the claims of environmental peril scientifically justified? How do these threats compare to everyday risks? What are the health benefits and costs of protection?

The School of Public Health's classes on toxicology and epidemiology taught me how to critique scientific papers for myself rather than rely solely on "expert" opinion. Forest Reinhard's Business School class on environmental management gave me privileged insight into the thinking of soon-to-be corporate executives.

Robert Stavins, a professor at the Kennedy School of Government, had me analyze the causes and consequences of environmental problems from the view of an economist.

It was Stavins' idea to create an environmental study program at Harvard

for journalists. The economist, who teaches nationwide at the Foundation for American Communications seminars for environmental journalists, believes better educated reporters and editors are key to sounder environmental policy.

Funding for the Environmental Nieman Fellowships is provided as part of a grant awarded to Harvard in 1993 by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation for environmental study and research. Villum Kann Rasmussen established a company in Denmark, in 1941, for making Velux roof windows and skylights.

The 1995-96 Environmental Nieman Fellows are Elliot Diringer, environmental writer and editor at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and Jacques A. Rivard, environment reporter with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in Montreal.

Anyone interested should apply in December and January. It may be the last chance. Funding for this program is assured only through the 1996-97 academic year.

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*Chris Bowman is environmental reporter at the Sacramento Bee.*

For information about the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships at MIT, contact:  
Knight Science Journalism Fellowships, Building 9, Room 315, MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139; Phone (617) 253-2336.

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For information about the Nieman Environmental Fellowship, contact:  
Program officer: Nieman Foundation One Francois Avenue Cambridge, MA 02138 Ph: (617) 495-2237

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Listings for other fellowships can be found in Editor & Publisher's final issue of each year. Contact them at (212) 675-4380

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For information about Fullbright scholarships for journalists, see box, page 17.

# Looking beyond the keystone species

The meek don't need to inherit the earth: they already own it. Ecologists are beginning to realize that communities of humble creatures, from soil microbes to sea algae, are just as critical to the health of many ecosystems as the beasts prowling the top of the food chain.

The result is a growing belief that the poster children of conservation, — the spotted owls and grizzly bears of the world — cannot thrive without efforts to preserve a teeming milieu of bugs, mites, slime molds, and other members of the conservation world's underclass. These organisms often operate out of sight and out of mind of environmental groups that aim to protect fur and feathers.

The consequence of elevating no one species above another does not come without a price. Ecologists must reassess the role of a cherished concept in their studies: Habitat often depends on one or more critical "keystone" species.

For years, ecologists assumed that protecting keystone species, such as the sea otter, would save a host of other organisms. This assumption is now being questioned. One of the first attacks came in an article in *BioScience* in 1993 (vol. 43, p. 219) from a team of University of California at Santa Cruz scientists, including prominent conservation biologist Michael Soulé. The authors stated, "Both the complexity of ecological interactions and ignorance of them militates against the application of the keystone-species concept for practical management recommendations."

Not that ecologists want to junk the keystone concept. The idea took the field by storm in the late 1960s, when University of Washington marine ecologist Robert Paine described how removing a starfish species from a swathe of coast off Washington's Olympic Peninsula triggered a cascade of ecological change.

In his experiments, Paine found that mussels quickly filled the area vacated by the starfish. The mussel beds gave rise to a diversity of life that had not existed when starfish were present. Based on these observations, in 1969 Paine formulated the concept of keystone species: An organism that determines "the integrity

of the community and its unaltered persistence through time."

But now ecologists are looking beyond keystone species to see how habitats are maintained. One area they're exploring: how to define groups of species, or attributes of disparate organisms, whose presence defines an ecosystem's health.

For instance, after studying communities of algae in three far-flung locations — in the Caribbean and off the coasts of Maine and Washington State — Robert Steneck of the University of Maine and Megan Dethier of the University of Washington found that many disparate

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## Science Survey

### Rich Stone of Science offers a review of selected environmental science and policy issues in the news

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algae species could be divided into seven functional groups that play specific ecological roles in the oceans (*Oikos*, vol. 69, p. 476, 1994).

Despite some species within a functional group being only distantly related to each other, each group has traits of size and anatomy that define how successful the group is within an ecosystem. The integrity of these habitats depends on the presence of these functional groups, with little premium on which species are actually carrying out the functions.

Other recent ideas render species truly anonymous when it comes to assessing habitat health. Take, for instance, University of Washington conservation biologist James Karr's Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI), a framework for assessing ecological health that transcends species boundaries.

Karr began developing the idea in the early 1970s, when he was consulting for an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) project to clean up Lake Erie. The EPA scientists, Karr recalls, focused in the beginning only on physical and chemical remediation. The experience spurred Karr to develop the IBI, a battery of some three dozen factors, among them

salinity, soil composition, weather, disease, and competition, that can be used to measure ecosystem health.

Work on keystone species has tended to focus on one factor in particular: how species affect the flow of nutrients from detritus to top predator. Often left out of the food-web equation is how organisms engineer their environments.

In an article last year in *Oikos* (vol. 69, p. 373), ecologists Clive Jones (Institute of Ecosystem Studies, Millbrook, New York); John Lawton (Imperial College, Berks, London); and Moshe Shachak (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel) argue that ecologists often neglect the role of organisms in fashioning their habitats. The emphasis on food web, the scientists say, has ignored activities such as beavers building dams, microalgae absorbing light and reducing the strength of sea ice, and blind mole rats digging and tunneling.

Rather than abandon the idea of the keystone species, scientists are refining it. A few dozen ecologists met last December to craft a better definition of keystone species that accounts for the diversity of organisms — not just top predators — crucial to ecosystem health.

The meeting spun off a paper, submitted to *BioScience*, that lays out a framework to determine quantitatively which species should be classified as keystones. One measure, for example, might be the ratio of the biomass of a species to its effect on the biomass of an entire ecosystem.

The bottom line, ecologists say, is not to cordon off research on keystone species, but to integrate it with studies on a range of factors affecting ecosystems. That should translate into a better understanding of how to preserve species: both the darlings of conservationists and the lowly creatures that hold habitats together.

This is my last Science Survey before packing off for a year in Russia. I thank many SEJ members for the nice comments about the column since it first appeared in the Spring 1994 issue.

—Rich Stone

## Part II: Overcoming science anxiety—Homing in on the right journals to supplement sources

By JANET RALOFF

Our last Toolbox (*SEJournal* volume 5, no.1, p. 20) pointed out why and how to tap scientific journals as resources for the environment beat. But there are thousands of journals that cover science—and a large fraction of these at least periodically tackle environmental topics. How can reporters identify the particular journals best suited to their individual needs? Here are several strategies, depending on the resources at hand.

The easiest? If you live near a major research center — regardless of its focus (medicine, physics, forestry, agriculture, industrial engineering) — check out its library. Allow yourself a minimum of three hours to scout the journals. Peruse anything that might be even tangentially related. For instance, the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* regularly carries reports on the accumulation of metals and pesticides in crop plants. That can be interesting reading for anyone who eats. And the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* has published a number of articles tying pesticides or industrial pollutants (such as PCBs) to malignancies.

Depending on your beat, one or more journals may feature something topical. If you hit pay dirt, thumb through the last three or four issues to see how frequently they published articles in your area of interest. If you see more than occasional articles, jot down the address and phone numbers for the journal's editorial office, along with citations of articles that caught your interest (volume and issue number, article title, lead author and page numbers).

When you get back to your office, call or write editors of each “pay dirt” journal and explain that you’d like to begin including their papers in your reporting. Then cite the articles that looked important, to demonstrate that you are indeed familiar with their publication. Explain that because you will need to know what’s appearing on a timely basis, it would help if they could fax you the table of contents a week before they go to press. Then phone or

fax a request to receive the actual article of anything that looks interesting. (In most cases, it helps if you promise not to run your article prior to the journal’s mailing date.)

To build up rapport and good will with these people, send tear sheets of anything that develops. And, of course, cite the journal in your story. If your beat is narrowly focused, it might actually pay you or your employer to subscribe to one or more journals. (Though they typically cost \$100 to \$1,000 each, remember that as a business expense, these subscriptions are tax deductible.)

For instance, if there is a nuclear plant on your doorstep or if radon-emitting granite outcroppings dot your landscape, you might benefit from regularly scanning *Health Physics* (reporting the science of radiation effects). Similarly, *Conservation Biology* could prove a bonanza for reporters focusing on western land issues. It features relationships between predator species (such as wolves and lynxes) and their prey—and how upsetting the balance between them can alter a region’s plant cover, water-holding capacity, or soil structure. Or how introduced species—from game fish to cattle—have altered their new ecosystem.

If you don’t have access to major research laboratories close to home, plan to visit ones whenever travel takes you to Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Seattle, Dallas, Miami, or Boston (remember, this year’s SEJ annual meeting will take place in a city with 55 colleges and universities in its surrounding communities). If traveling on business, allot at least a full half-day for the venture. Even if it’s vacation travel, think of this research as an inexpensive investment in your career development.

No money to travel and working in the boonies? Consider a more indirect tack to identify useful journals. Whenever you interview a scientist or engineer—even if it’s just the manager of the local water-treatment plant—conclude the exchange with a few queries about what he or she reads, and especially what journals have proven most useful

over the years. The very fact that you’re interviewing this person suggests your professional interests coincide. If anything comes particularly highly recommended, ask to view it and perhaps even borrow it over a weekend. If the interview is by phone and long distance, you might ask your source to fax you a photocopy of the table of contents and address of the journal’s editorial office. Then contact the journal and request a sample back issue.

An even more indirect approach is to begin noting the journals cited in wire service and other news copy containing articles in your beat. If any journals pop up regularly over the months ahead, consider tracking down sample copies from their publishers. How do you find those publishers? Check whether your local library carries *Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory* (RR Bowker, New Providence, NJ). This five-volume reference publishes every journal’s address, phone, fax, and price.

If necessary, call the closest university library and ask them to conduct such a search for you. Warning: It may require faxing them the request and waiting a day or so for them to get back. But most are amenable to looking up what you need if you explain your plight.

You might also consider querying fellow SEJ members about the journals they use most. Because the directory lists several of our beats, you can home in on colleagues with similar interests. And focused queries may be no more than an e-mail away.

Once you identify potentially useful journals, find out whether they provide a fax service for reporters. The major science weeklies—*Science* (ph: 202-326-6421), *Nature* (ph: 202-737-2355, and *The Lancet* (ph: 212-633-3834) — will fax a table of contents as it becomes available together with summaries of a few articles they expect will generate the most interest. (One especially nice feature of this service is that the lead researcher’s phone and fax numbers are often included—a real benefit when that

(Continued on page 17)

# Changes needed in environmentalist outlook

By **DR. BRENT BLACKWELDER**

After 25 years of environmental work, my chief concern is that environmentalists spend the majority of their time on the defensive. We are fighting brushfires—a toxic dump, a wetlands landfill, a refinery, an Army Corps dam, a subdivision destroying old forests. New federal and state legislatures have put us on the defensive now more than ever.

This is true not only of environmentalists, but also of citizens and (perhaps especially) journalists who cover the environment. To achieve lasting and sustainable progress we must all begin to get at the root cause of environmental problems; namely, the economic system under which we live.

Some of the basic economic levers are the taxing and spending powers of governments at the federal, state, and local levels. The tax code generally rewards anti-environmental behavior in every sector: fossil fuel use, transportation (\$300 billion annual subsidy to the automobile industry), pesticide use, and virgin rather than recycled materials—to name a few. The tax code even rewards the mining of lead, mercury and uranium, and some of the biggest tax breaks go to the biggest polluters, which incidentally are the lowest job creators per dollar spent.

Similarly, the federal government spends only two percent of its budget on environmental protection and almost as much money on destructive activities such as various nuclear power programs, highways and dams.

Unless we take the offensive and change the economic system, the present pattern of taxing and spending will simply enrich and empower all the destructive forces at work today. Even efforts to protect park and wilderness areas are doomed unless we revise the economic system. Transboundary pollution is reaching the most remote parts of the planet: frogs are disappearing from mountain wilderness areas, Arctic haze chokes the Inuit people, new forms of DDT reach islands in the Great Lakes, Soviet oil and nuclear spills and disposal threaten the Arctic Ocean. And if major changes are not made in energy use, the

specter of global warming could turn all the Nature Conservancy's preserves into wastelands, because their plants and animals won't remain with a significant shift in climate.

How can we take on an issue as large as the global economy? I can't speak for journalists, but I do have some ideas for environmentalists—many of which deserve much more focused attention from the news media than they have yet received. Even within a narrow political focus, these issues are newsworthy.

First, environmentalists have many

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**Viewpoints**  
is a regular feature of SEJournal,  
offering a forum to people  
who deal with environmental  
issues and the media

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actual and potential allies with whom we should work. For example, most religious organizations now preach stewardship of creation, and they speak out against greed. As the son and grandson of Episcopal ministers, I urge all religions to join as allies in trying to get the economic system changed. The system should reward long-term stewardship rather than short-term speculation.

Second, organized labor is deeply concerned about the loss of jobs in the globalized economy. An environmentally sustainable economy should be creating and sustaining meaningful jobs in healthy workplaces.

Third, environmental organizations themselves need to put resources into the big levers at the federal and state levels. Unfortunately, there is only one full-time environmental advocate for dealing with federal tax code issues and only one for all the federal appropriations. This is not enough muscle power to match the hundreds of business lobbyists gathered outside the Ways and Means Committee.

The situation, however, is not hopeless. In the last Congress, for instance, Friends of the Earth worked with a group of 250 organizations across the country and succeeded in obtaining a seven percent increase in EPA's operating budget.

The trial run of the Green Scissors Campaign to cut anti-environmental spending succeeded in canceling five wasteful programs (like nuclear reactors in space) saving taxpayers more than \$7 billion. The Campaign, which involves both environmental groups and fiscally conservative organizations, has targeted 34 federal programs this session.

Conservatives have opened the door to discussions of a total revision of the tax code. We support a shift away from taxing employment and income and onto taxing pollution, resource extraction, and energy.

The first 100 days of the new Congress have witnessed an unprecedented onslaught against environmental laws. What started as a quiet and somewhat indirect attack on environmental programs through the Republican Contract with America has mushroomed into a frontal assault on the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, Superfund, and the Endangered Species Act. During the opening three months, 61 freshman members scored zero on the League of Conservation Voters 100-day scorecard.

Although the most direct attacks on environmental statutes are likely to be stopped in the Senate or through a presidential veto, the greatest danger lies with the 13 appropriations bills. House members like David McIntosh (R-Indiana), who headed vice president Quayle's Competitiveness Council, have vowed to accomplish their objectives with amendments to appropriations bills. While Clinton signaled that he would veto the House version of the Clean Water Act, a more likely scenario is that he will be confronted with miscellaneous weakening changes to this law as part of the VA-HUD appropriations bill.

To counter the backlash and get at another root cause, the most fundamental change which the environmental movement must make is in the area of elections to public office. It is difficult to make progress with decision-makers who don't take environmental problems seriously. The environmental movement spends less than one percent of its budget

*(Continued on page 27)*

## JULY

21-22. **Environmental Reporting in the South** (sponsored by SEJ). Emory University, Atlanta. Contact: SEJ. Ph: (215) 247-9710; fax: (215) 247-9712; e-mail: sejoffice@aol.com

23-27. **Health Physics Society annual meeting** (with sessions on health effects of radon and other sources of radioactivity). Boston. Contact: HPS Administrative Services, 8000 Westpark Dr., Ste. 130, McLean, VA 22101. Ph: (703)790-1745; fax: (703) 790-2672.

24-26. **Engineering Solutions to Indoor Air Quality Problems** (sponsored by EPA and the Air & Waste Management Association). Research Triangle Park, NC. Contact: Kelly Leovic, USEPA, Md-54, Research Triangle Park, NC 27711. Ph: (919) 541-7717; fax: (919) 541-2157.

23-28. **Rangelands in a Sustainable Biosphere**. Snowbird, UT. Contact: General Secretary, 5th Internat'l Rangelands Congress, P.O. Box 11637, Salt Lake City, UT 84147. Ph: (801) 524-5054; fax: (801) 524-4403.

## AUGUST

6-9. **Soil and Water Conservation Society's 50th annual meeting** (focusing on erosion control and ways to reduce agricultural water use). Des Moines. Contact: S&WCS, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021-2331; Ph: (800) THE-SOIL; fax: (515) 289-1227.

14-17. **Environmental Remediation '95** (sponsored by U.S. Dept. of Energy, sessions will focus on the agency's efforts to clean up its long-standing radioactive and chemical wastes). Denver. Contact: Norma Castaneda, DOE, Rocky Flats Field Office, P.O. Box 928, T-117A, Golden, CO 80402. Ph: (303) 966-4226; fax: (303) 693-5152.

15-17. **International Conference on Managing Hazardous and Particulate Air Pollutants** (sponsored by the Electric Power Research Institute, DOE, EPA, and Canadian Electrical Assoc.). Toronto. Contact: Lori Adams, EPRI. Ph: (415) 855-8763; fax: (415) 855-2041.

16-17. **International Energy and Environmental Congress** (with sessions aimed at integrating energy and environmental interests through everything from simple conservation to novel pollution abatement technologies or greener technologies). Richmond, VA. Contact: Association of Energy Engineers, 4025 Pleasantdale Rd., Ste. 420, Atlanta, GA 30340. Ph: (404) 447-5083; fax: (404) 446-3969.

20-24. **American Chemical Society annual meeting** (with dozens of environmental sessions). Chicago. Contact: Marv Coyner, ACS, 1155 16th St., NW, Washington DC 20036. Ph: (202) 872-4451; fax: (202) 872-4370; e-mail: mdc93@acs.org

21-24. **Second Biomass Conference of the Americas: environment, agriculture and industry**. Portland, OR. Contact: Dori Nielsen, National Renewable Energy Lab., 1617 Cole Blvd., Golden, CO 80401-3393. Ph: (303) 275-4350; fax: (303) 275-4320; e-mail: nielsend@tcplink.nrel.gov

## SEPTEMBER

11. **Can America Save Its Fisheries?** (sponsored by Sea Grant's Issues Forum with panels on who owns the fish, how are our changing coasts affecting fisheries, and are we organized to manage). National Press Club, Washington DC. Contact: Ben Sherman, SG Media Relations Coordinator. Ph: (301) 405-6381; fax: (301) 314-9187; e-mail: sherman@mbimail.umd.edu

11-14. **Southwestern Rare and Endangered Plant Conference** (focusing on flora of AZ, CO, NM, TX, and UT). Flagstaff, AZ. Contact: Joyce Maschinski, The Arboretum at Flagstaff, P.O. Box 670, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. Ph: (602) 774-1441; e-mail: jmm@nauvax.ucc.nau.edu

12-16 **Inside Urban Ecosystems: the 7th National Urban Forest Conference**. New York City. Contact: Michael Barratt, American Forests, P.O. Box 2000, Washington DC 20013. Ph: (202) 667-3300, ext. 227; e-mail: lmallet@amfor.org

17-22. **World Environmental Congress (with sessions on innovative technologies, federal and international policies, and a followup to the Earth Summit's Agenda 21)**. London, Ontario. Contact: Science & Technology Integration, Inc., UWO Research Park, 100 Collip Circle, Ste. 110, London, Ontario, Canada N6G 4X8. Ph: (519) 858-5055; fax: (519) 858-5056.

24-27. **Greater Yellowstone Predators: ecology and conservation in a changing landscape**. Yellowstone National Park, WY. Contact: Paul Schullery, Yellowstone Center for Resources, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190. Ph: (307) 344-2205; fax: (307) 344-2211; e-mail: sarah\_broadabent@nps.gov

26-29. **International Conference and Workshop on Modeling and Mitigating the Consequences of Accidental Releases of Hazardous Materials**. New Orleans. Contact: ETA, 125 Elm St., Westfield, NJ 07090. Ph: (908) 233-2300 fax: (908) 233-2015.

## OCTOBER

4-6. **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health** (sponsored by Electric Power Research Institute). Jackson Hole, WY. Contact: Linda Nelson, EPRI, 3412 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304. Ph: (415) 855-2127; fax: (415) 855-2041.

21-25. **Mechanisms and Prevention of Environmentally Caused Cancers** (sponsored by the Lovelace Institutes). Santa Fe,

NM. Contact: Alice M. Hannon, the Lovelace Institutes, 2425 Ridgcrest Drive SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108-5127. Ph: (505) 262-7255; fax: (505) 262-7043.

23-25. **International CFC and Halon Alternatives Conference**. Washington DC. Contact: Heather Tardel, ICFCHA Conference, P.O. Box 236, Frederick, MD 21701. Ph: (301) 695-3762; fax: (301) 695-0175.

26-29. **SEJ annual meeting**. Boston. Contact: SEJ, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118. Ph: (215) 247-9710; fax: (215-247) 9712; e-mail: sejoffice@aol.com

29-Nov. 1. **International Neurotoxicology Conference** Hot Springs, AR. Contact: Joan Spyker, Chairman of Pediatrics, UAMS #512, Arkansas Children's Hospital, 1120 Marshall St., Room 207, Little Rock, AR 72202-3591. Ph: (501) 320-2986; fax: (501) 320-3947.

## NOVEMBER

5-9. **Second Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry World Congress** (with 1,000 technical presentations in such areas as toxicology of environmental contaminants, ecosystem management, of pollutants, and chemistry of environmental contaminants). Vancouver, British Columbia. Contact: Rod Parrish, SETAC, 1010 N. 12th Ave., Pensacola, FL 32501-3307. Ph: (904) 469-1500; fax: (904) 469-9778; e-mail: setac@setac.org

6-8. **Superfund XVI** (sponsored by Hazardous Materials Control Resources Institute). Washington, DC. Contact: E.J. Krouse & Associates., 7315 Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 450 N, Bethesda, MD 20814-9634. Ph: (301) 986-7800; fax: (301) 986-4538.

## WORKSHOPS

October 20-22. **Oceans and the Environment**, a course sponsored by the Foundation for American Communications and Scripps Institute of Oceanography for mid-career journalists in La Jolla, CA. Open to the first 40 qualified applicants. Subsidized meals still just \$75, with hotel and travel costs the responsibility of attendees. Interested candidates should contact: FACS, 3800 Barham Blvd, Ste. 409, Los Angeles, CA 90068. Ph: (213) 851-7372; fax: (213) 851-9186.

## ENTRY DEADLINES

**Aug. 31 for 2nd annual Soil and Water Conservation Soc. journalism competition**. The society is offering separate \$300 awards for print and broadcast reporting that "interprets conservation for the public." Submissions accepted for stories that ran in 1994. If interested, contact Sue Ballantine, SWCS, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021-9764. Ph: 1(800) 843-7645 (800-THE-SOIL), ext. 16. There will be a \$10 application fee.

# Kiev...(from page 1)

the table. But most of the time it was as if nothing were unusual.

This was but just one of the cultural differences I experienced during a trip to Russia and Ukraine in late May and early June. The purpose of my trip—my first to the former Soviet Union (FSU)—was to build bridges with environmental journalists and educators in the vast area of Eurasia.

The EcoForum conference I attended was a horizon-expanding trip in many ways. More than 150 journalists, scientists, academics, and activists from the FSU met with about 40 American counterparts. The purpose was to learn about each other's countries, establish linkages, and assist each other. The trip was sponsored by a nonprofit group, the Institute for Soviet-American Relations (ISAR).

I spoke throughout the conference about efforts by American journalists to build the Society of Environmental Journalists during the past five years, and described SEJ's programs. I was assisted in this effort by Christine Maugans Hoch of Environmental Health Center, which publishes *Environment Writer*. Our efforts were at least partly successful. By the end of the week, environmental writers from throughout the FSU decided to create a fledgling organization that will exchange information about environmental journalism and ecological developments throughout the FSU (a

land that is increasingly called Eurasia), a vast region spanning 6,000 miles and 10 time zones. The new group is headed by Ilya Belov, a bright, young editor of the Moscow-based *Russian Conservation News*.

I couldn't help but think back to the meeting in Washington, D.C. in December 1989 when about 20 American environmental journalists got together and decided to form SEJ. Obviously, it's too early to know how successful the Eurasian effort will be and what shape that organization will take. SEJ will provide support in the form of information and advice. Ultimately, it will be up to the FSU journalists whether or not their effort succeeds.

There certainly is a vast need for environmental media and an effective organization of environmental journalists in the FSU. It's hard to overstate the seriousness of environmental degradation there. Safe drinking water is virtually unheard of throughout the FSU. Even in Moscow and Kiev we were advised to drink bottled water or to boil water taken from the tap.

Vast areas of the FSU are radioactive. During more than

half a century of secrecy, the leaders of the former Soviet Union haphazardly dumped radioactive debris from nuclear weapons and nuclear submarines and conducted atomic weapons tests with little regard to their impact on the environment. In Kiev, many people are still traumatized from the 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant and there is widespread suspicion that significant amounts of the produce eaten in Ukraine are still laced with radioactive poisons.

"Nobody knows how much of the food being eaten is still radioactive," said Jonathan Spaulding, director of ISAR's office in Kiev. "Much of the regulatory system has broken down and it's common knowledge that it's easy to bribe an official if you want to sell a truckload of radioactive beets on the market."

Pollution belches from the smokestacks of Russian factories and a gray haze blankets the city of Moscow. Misguided irrigation practices have reduced the size of the Aral Sea, once

the world's fourth largest inland sea, to one-third its original size—and killed many of its fish and other organisms. Severe soil erosion abounds in many places, and the threat of deforestation of its vast forests by multi-national corporations is growing.

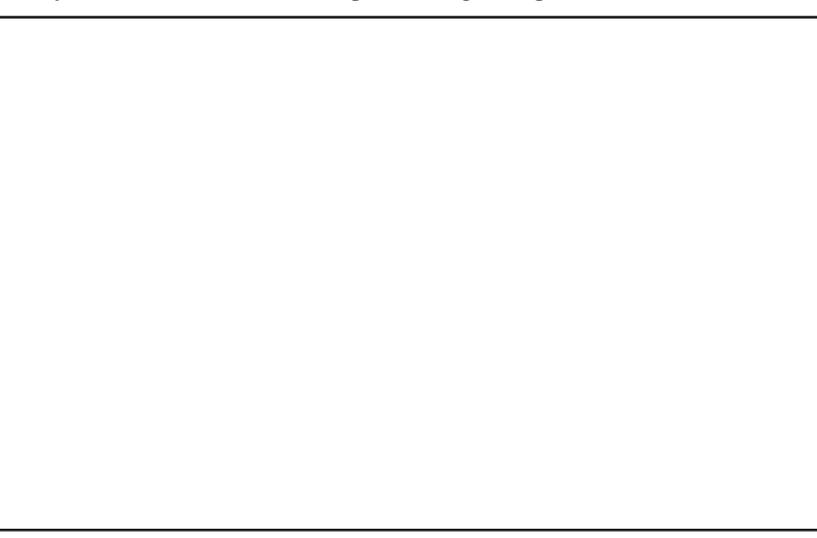
The list goes on and on. According to *The New State of the Earth Atlas*, written by Joni Seager (Touchstone Books), a quarter of the population of the FSU lives in regions of "critical or catastrophic environmental degradation."

Even in a region of thriving economy and well-developed free press, the restoration of the region's ecology would be a challenge. But in Russia, Ukraine, and much of the FSU the economy is in shambles and the idea of a free press is just starting to take root.

When I asked a young Ukrainian interpreter to tell me how life has changed since Ukraine became independent in 1991, he painted a bleak picture. His parents had lost their jobs. The inflation rate is about 1,000 percent a year. Severe gasoline shortages abound. Serious crime is increasing. The health system is deteriorating and the incidence of hepatitis, diphtheria, polio, cholera, and AIDS is increasing.

Surely something must be better these days, I asked. The only improvement he could think of is Ukraine's political independence. "In the old days Ukrainian soldiers would have been sent to Chechnya to put down the insurrection," he said. "Now, at least we don't have to fight wars we don't believe in."

The conditions under which FSU journalists work is primitive and often dangerous. In Armenia, which is at war with



**IFEJ president Jim Detjen with delegates from the Former Soviet Union attending the Ecoforum conference in Kiev.**

Azerbaijan, environmental filmmaker Vartan Hochannisyan said he can count on only one hour of electricity a day. The mail system throughout the FSU is unreliable and the telephone system in many countries is antiquated.

Some of the FSU countries are repressive to a free press. In Tajikistan (in Central Asia) all independent publications and broadcast outlets have been banned or forced out of business. Since May, 1992, at least 27 reporters and editors in Tajikistan have been murdered, according to the nonprofit organization Committee to Protect Journalists. The situation is so bad that most Tajik journalists are either in hiding or in exile abroad.

Compared to the United States, few of the FSU's newspapers or television stations have environmental journalists. But in recent years a great number of environmental publications have sprung up to document the serious ecological problems in the FSU. Some are published by environmental organizations or nonprofit scientific groups. Many of the articles are written by freelance writers.

Other environmental journalism efforts are ingenious.

In Tbilisi, Georgia, an energetic young woman, Manana Jakhua, has helped set up a radio station (known as Radio Green Wave) with grants from ISAR and the Soros Foundation. Fifteen nonpaid staff members donate their time and skills to produce 12 hours of environmental programming a day. They are negotiating arrangements with the BBC and several European radio stations to expand their broadcasting and are even discussing the possibility of creating a television program dedicated to environmental news in Georgia.

I found similar experiments going on all across the FSU. In Tomsk, Russia, Boris Nekrasov edits the *Green Manuscript Pages* in a special ecological section for the Tomsk Regional Newspapers. In other parts of the FSU, unemployed scientists and teachers are documenting environmental degradation with articles, photo essays, and documentaries.

I also found many of the Americans who participated in

the Ecoforum conference to be fascinating.

Bill Pfeiffer, a computer-savvy environmental activist from Petersham, Massachusetts, has helped create an e-mail network for environmental organizations throughout the FSU. In some countries, he has had to literally smuggle in computers and set up the computer network by himself.

Another interesting e-mail project has been set up by Malcolm Campbell of Boulder, Colo. Campbell has created a nonprofit organization called Global Response. If an environmental activist is jailed in Haiti or a governmental body is poised to vote on a critical piece of environmental legislation, Campbell notifies a network of environmental activists electronically and urges

them to respond to appropriate officials immediately.

"It certainly could be utilized by environmental journalists," he said. "If a journalist is jailed or fired because of articles he writes, we can mobilize a network of concerned citizens to come to his assistance."

But it was the journalists, scientists, educators, and activists in the FSU who impressed me the most during my stay in Ukraine and Russia. I couldn't help but be moved by their dedication and commitment.

And I couldn't help but think of the irony of our meeting at a conference center outside of Kiev where, once, only Communist Party leaders could gather. It was here that the Communist elite adopted strategies and plans that severely degraded the environment. Now, environmental journalists, educators, scientists, and activists from the United States and the FSU are meeting together to find remedies to the problems created during the Communist era.

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*Jim Detjen, SEJ founding president, director of international program; president, International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ); Knight Chair of Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI*

## Tips for travelers to the Former Soviet Union

**Be careful of crime.** During my stay in Moscow I was jumped in broad daylight by seven or eight teenage boys who attempted to steal my passport and wallet. I started shouting and they soon ran away. I was shaken, but not injured, and I wasn't robbed. But I could have been and I was wary during the rest of my stay in Russia's largest city. The crime rate has soared in the FSU since the breakup and attacks on tourists are not uncommon. Keep your camera hidden (a sign that you are a tourist), and consider wearing a money belt.

**Bring plenty of cash.** Merchants

nearly all expect cash and almost none accept credit cards or traveler's checks. Most will gladly accept American dollars because the high inflation rate (1,000 percent annually in Russia) causes rubles to rapidly lose their value. But you will need some money in rubles to buy subway tokens, stamps, and other items.

**Don't drink the water.** Even in large cities such as Kiev and Moscow there is no guarantee that the water is safe. In rural areas you can bet that it is not. Drink only bottled water, canned soft drinks, or beverages made with

boiled water.

**Take the subway.** The subways in Moscow and Kiev are inexpensive (for about 12¢ in Moscow you can travel anywhere in the city), clean and highly efficient. In many areas they are filled with sculpture, murals and art. You'll enjoy the experience.

**Expect delays and shortages.** Compared to the United States, the former Soviet Union is not geared up for tourists. Flights are sometimes overbooked and frequently delayed. Gasoline shortages often occur. The telephone system is antiquated.

# Kamchatka...(from page 1)

tell an “r” from a “t.”

I had come to Kamchatka seeking a sabbatical from journalism’s daily grind, a chance for more than a few days in a place on a story. Not that I’d had anything to complain about. I had spent the past decade in one of the greatest jobs in journalism, traveling the world on assignment for magazines including *Outside* and *National Geographic*.

One of those assignments, for *Smithsonian*, had taken me to Kamchatka (an outpost north of Japan) to cover the arrival of the first American delegation in 1991. This California-sized peninsula had been closed to outsiders, even most Russians, for most of the 20th century, leaving it relatively unspoiled and wholly isolated.

First Glasnost, and later the fall of Communism, finally opened the gates. I wanted to find out what would happen to Kamchatka and the people of that land as they returned to the world.

A fellow journalist who had written his third novel while on a Fulbright to England suggested I apply. In fact, the Fulbright program welcomes journalists and other non-academic professionals, although the application process would lead you to believe that only professors with a drawer full of course outlines need apply. I had never taught anything more challenging than a guest appearance at somebody else’s feature writing class, but in July 1992 I invented a course outline and syllabus and waited. The following June, the Fulbright people announced that they’d be sending me off to Kamchatka in the fall to further world understanding of democracy.

I sublet my Washington, D.C. apartment, bought overseas health insurance, packed up eight boxes of books and a year’s supply of tampons and headed west, traveling via Anchorage, and Magadan (former gateway to the gulag). In Magadan I nearly had to load the eight boxes of books on the plane myself. I had managed to drag them through the terminal and onto the tarmac, but was defeated by that last 10 feet. A New Russian in black Vuarnets and a trench coat saw me sobbing under the Yak-40, said “You poor woman” in perfect English and loaded them himself.

What I found in 11 months of living on the Russian frontier was not what I expected, even after having been there twice before. The biggest shock was not the earthquakes that shook the Communist “pre-shab” flats or the seven-month-long winter, but the recognition that our former Cold War adversary is a Third World country—albeit one where the citizens read Shakespeare and fly into space.

When you hit age 50 in Russia, you get a big birthday party; men’s life expectancy is 58. Environmental pollution, abysmal health care, and inadequate food supplies are the main culprits. Since the fall of Communism things have gotten

worse. My colleagues at the Kamchatka State Pedagogical Institute, a university-level school, worked for months without pay. The local government often cut off the electricity, telephone, and hot water to save cash. Biologists estimate that in the past five years half of Kamchatka’s magnificent brown bears have been killed by poachers and foreign trophy hunters.

Although Russia’s journalists are now officially independent, they still labor under heavy censorship while struggling to become financially independent. Kamchatka has two presses, one an ancient linotype owned by the government, another an offset owned by the Mafia (a term virtually synonymous with government). There is a dearth of information on just about anything besides horoscopes and the doings of Julia Roberts. Non-Russian publications are almost impossible to find.

I didn’t expect much from my students from the PedInstitute. Most took my classes to study English, not journalism, and there is no tradition of independent student newspapers as we have in the states. So I was surprised when they decided their class project was going to be a newspaper.

They had no problem with story ideas: an interview with the prosecutor about increased crime, a profile of Kamchatka’s most renowned artist, a funny feature about the origins of the name Kamchatka, a series on the plight of Kamchatka’s indigenous people, and a business story on a firm’s introduction of new legal software.

They also had no problem using leads, news hooks, and quotes.

Sources were another matter. In a country where five years ago a slip of the tongue meant your relatives disappeared, “source” was considered synonymous with “anonymous.” My students were aghast at the notion of asking government officials for information and amused by my assertions that government data would be at all useful. They grudgingly attributed sources and managed to dig up a surprisingly large amount of good data. But their prose style still reverted from tidy AP style to the byzantine, not surprising in a place where a page one news story on a local oil spill ran: “The perpetrators of this barbarity must be punished!”

The students typed stories on two aging laptops I had brought, and cadged desktop publishing from computer nerds around town. We extracted information from the Internet. The first edition of *New Generation* rolled off the Xerox in the midst of January’s blizzards—all eight pages of it. I was completely unprepared for the town’s reaction: the first printing of 500 sold out almost immediately, snapped up by people eager to read anything new written in English. The students were feted at the library and featured on TV. And I received a true Soviet-style signifier of importance: my phone was tapped.

*New Generation* published five editions during my tenure, growing in pages and circulation each time. We became adept

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***Kamchatka has two presses, one an ancient linotype owned by the government, another an offset owned by the Mafia (a term virtually synonymous with government).***

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at finding Xerox operators without serious drinking problems willing to do a little work on the side. When I left in August, the staff insisted that they couldn't publish without me. Since then they have published three more editions, the last a lavishly illustrated extravaganza on the underground music scene.

When I returned to Kamchatka on a visit in June, my former students were plotting how to get their own desktop-publishing computer and laser printer. "Our mission must continue!" said Alyosha, an 18-year-old Tom Petty look-alike who in the past had greeted my attempts to get things done with a sigh and the words: "Nancy, this is Russia."

I was surprised to realize, when I returned, that I had inadvertently done what I'd told the Fulbright people I would: use local resources to encourage small-scale independent journalism. And I certainly got my sabbatical, although learning 100 ways to cook cabbage hadn't been on my agenda. And I was powerfully reminded of the power of words and information, easily forgotten in the flood of data that greets us each day in the U.S.

I learned, too, that we have a lot to offer to our colleagues in countries like Russia, where trying to get accurate information and disseminate it is a daily struggle. As members of SEJ, we can make that struggle a little easier by trading our skills and information with Russian journalists.

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*Nancy Shute is a freelance writer whose stories have appeared in magazines and newspapers including Outside, Air & Space/Smithsonian, Smithsonian, and The Washington Post.*

*If you are interested in working on SEJ's international projects, please contact:*

- Nancy Shute; Ph: 202-338-9110;  
E-mail: nshute@igc.apc.org
- Jim Detjen, president, International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ);  
Ph: (517) 353-9479;  
E-mail: detjen@pilot.msu.edu
- Emilia Askari, president, SEJ;  
Ph: 800-678-6400 x4536;  
E-mail: askari@det-freepress.com

*For information about Fulbright Scholarships for journalists, contact:*

The Council for the International Exchange of Scholars  
3007 Tilden St. NW, Suite 5M  
Washington, D.C. 20008-3009  
Ph: 202-686-4000.  
E-mail: info@ciesnet.cies.org

Applications for most Fulbright lecturing and research awards are due August 1 each year.

*For more information about fellowships, see box, page 9.*

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## Science Journals...(from page 11)

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scientist lives overseas.) Many monthlies have begun offering similar services.

A few journals, such as Environmental Health Perspectives, have actually developed a comp (as in complimentary, or free) list for reporters and send out these issues (sometimes carrying an embargo) a week or more before the journal mails to its paid subscribers.

Finally, my perennial favorites:

- *Ambio* offers review-ish reports on environmental issues of international concern, often with a developing-world emphasis—from deforestation and acid deposition, to heavy metal contamination of estuaries, and effects of chemical contamination on wildlife communities. Published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Box 50005, S-104 05 Stockholm, Sweden, ph (+46) 8-15-47-44, fax (+46) 8-16-62-51.
- *The American Journal of Epidemiology* regularly carries articles linking a host of diseases to occupational settings, indoor

air contaminants, EMFs, and industrial air pollutants. Published by Johns Hopkins University, Candler Bldg. Ste. 840, 111 Market Pl., Baltimore, MD 21202, ph (410) 223-1600, fax (410) 223-1620.

- *American Journal of Public Health* is especially good for covering effects of childhood lead exposures, smoking and environmental tobacco smoke, and pesticide exposures. Published by American Public Health Association, 1015 15th St., NW, Washington D.C. 20005, ph (202) 789-5600.

- *Environmental Health Perspectives* reports studies linking a truly diverse range of environmental contaminants to health. Published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, PO Box 12233, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709. For sample, contact Michael Dieter, ph (919) 541-3360, fax (919) 541-0273, e-mail: dieter@niehs.nih.gov

- *Environmental Science and Technology* offers not only peer-reviewed air and water pollution analyses, but also studies describing novel technologies to control pollution. Published by American Chemical Society, 1155 16th St., NW, Washington D.C. 20036. For samples, contact Marv Coyner, ph (202) 872-4451, fax (202) 872-4370, e-mail: mdc93@acs.org

- *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology* serves as the premier vehicle for new data on the health effects of dioxins, PCBs and a number of other toxic substances. Published by Academic Press, 6277 Sea Harbor Dr., Orlando, FL 32887-4900. Editorial office is 525 B St., Ste. 1900, San Diego, CA 92101-4495, ph (619) 699-6469, fax (619) 699-6859.

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*Janet Raloff is environment and policy editor for Science News in Washington, D.C.*

# Listserv expands SEJ's online universe

By **AMY GAHRAN**

So—you don't have an America Online (AOL) account, but you're curious about what SEJ members are doing on our private forum on America Online. Now, if you have access to Internet e-mail, you can get SEJ news and participate in online discussions through SEJ's members-only e-mail list.

E-mail lists (or "listservs") are lists of e-mail addresses maintained on the university computers or Internet access providers. (SEJ's listserv, which began in May, is hosted by Indra's Net, a commercial Internet access company in Boulder, Colo.) Each listserv an e-mail address, and mail sent to that address is distributed to all addresses on the list. Our listserv includes about 160 SEJ members.

What do we discuss on the listserv? Anything related to SEJ or to environment journalism can be covered. Computer-assisted reporting is discussed sometimes, too. Topics so far include Gregg Easterbrook's book, *A Moment on*

*the Earth*; upcoming SEJ regional events; members' requests for information; bulletins about groups or publications useful to environment journalists; and a call for speakers for an upcoming computer-assisted reporting conference.

The SEJ listserv is meant to complement our existing forum on AOL, not to supplant it—both venues have their strengths and weaknesses. I cross-post most messages from the listserv to the AOL forum, and vice-versa. Therefore, if you already have access to the forum, you won't miss anything significant by not subscribing to the listserv (although some members do belong to both).

Like our AOL forum, our listserv is for SEJ members only. Subscription requests must be approved by the list manager (me). New subscribers receive a welcome letter and information on SEJ mailing list policies. This takes just a day—maybe two if you're trying this on the weekend. (I don't check e-mail when I'm climbing mountains.)

The SEJ listserv is unmoderated—that is, any approved subscriber can post a message to the list, and that message will be circulated to all other subscribers by software on our host computer without being screened by the list manager. So far our subscribing members have adhered to the listserv's policies fairly well with no PR blitzes or idle chatter. (See sidebar.)

Here's how it works:

- An SEJ member posts a message to the listserv asking how to contact a certain environmental group. Each subscriber receives e-mail containing that request.
- The list manager copies that posting to the appropriate section of the AOL forum (in this case, the "info needed" folder). Now the original request will reach both listserv subscribers and members who participate only in our AOL forum.
- If someone on the listserv or the forum wants to reply privately to that request, e-mail can be sent directly to the author of the original message. Or, if the person responding wants to make the response

## SEJ Listserv Basics

*Background:* This list utilizes Majordomo list management software. Our host is Indra's Net, Boulder Colo. List manager is SEJ board member Amy Gahrn. *Status:* closed (private, for SEJ members only—subscriptions must be approved by list manager) but unmoderated (postings by subscribers are not screened). *Subscriber Requirements:* Open to all current SEJ members, regardless of membership category. Cancellation of SEJ membership or significant delinquency in dues payments will result in canceled listserv subscription. *Listserv Traffic:* averages about 5-10 messages per week. *Listserv Address:* **sej@indra.com** for postings only. Commands (including subscription requests and unsubscriptions) must be addressed only to **majordomo@indra.com**

### • How to get on the listserv (subscribing):

1. Create a piece of e-mail and address it to: majordomo@indra.com  
(Do not send this mail to sej@indra.com; the message will bounce back to you as an error.)
2. Leave the subject line blank.
3. In the message body, type only:  
subscribe sej first name last name <internet e-mail address>  
Be sure your full name comes before your e-mail address. I need this to verify your SEJ membership.  
Be sure to include <> around your e-mail address.  
For example: if Joe Schmoe wished to subscribe to the list, the body of his message to majordomo@indra.com would read: subscribe sej Joe Schmoe <jschmoe@whatever.com>

You should then receive a message stating that your subscription request is awaiting approval by the list manager. Once it has been verified that you are an SEJ member in good standing, your subscription will be approved. You will receive the "welcome to the list" letter with further instructions.

### • How to get off the listserv (unsubscribing):

1. Create a piece of e-mail and address it to: majordomo@indra.com  
(Do not send this mail to sej@indra.com; the message will bounce back to you as an error.)
2. Leave the subject line blank
3. In the message body, type only:  
unsubscribe sej first name last name <internet e-mail address>  
Be sure your full name comes before your e-mail address.  
Be sure to include <> around your e-mail address.  
E.g., if Joe Schmoe wished to unsubscribe from the list, the body of his message to majordomo@indra.com would read: unsubscribe sej Joe Schmoe <jschmoe@whatever.com>  
Unlike subscriptions, unsubscriptions do not have to be approved by the list manager. If you send the unsubscription command properly, it will be immediately processed, and you will receive no further mail from the list. You can resubscribe at any time as long as you hold a valid SEJ membership.

### • How to subscribe to the digest:

1. If you're already subscribed to the SEJ list, unsubscribe (as described above) before you subscribe to the digests, or you'll continue to get individual postings and digests.
2. Create a piece of e-mail and address it to: majordomo@indra.com

public, he or she can send that response to the listserv address (sej@indra.com). It will then be circulated to all listserv subscribers. However, for members who only have access to the AOL forum and not the listserv, public responses must be posted to the forum—they will bounce back to the author if e-mailed to the listserv address.

- Public responses posted either to the listserv or the forum will be cross-posted.

Traffic on the listserv runs about 5-10 messages per week. For some people this is just fine, others may feel it's slow, and still others may find it overwhelming. Members who want to read the SEJ list, but who would rather not get several individual pieces of e-mail each week from it, can subscribe to the digest for this list. The digest is a version of the listserv in which individual postings are compiled into a single text file. When 32K of posted text accumulates, a digest is sent out to everyone on the digest list. People who subscribe to the digest can still post messages to the listserv, so no interactivity is lost.

As I write this, when you subscribe

to the listserv it's like stepping into a meeting in progress—you get the current postings or digests, but you can't go back and retrieve old material. I'm setting up a way to archive our digests online so that subscribers can retrieve them at will—either through e-mail commands or through an Internet function known as FTP (file transfer protocol).

When I first began this list, Chris Rigel, SEJ's systems manager, sent me a list of all the e-mail addresses for members on SEJ's main membership database. I then subscribed all of the SEJ members on that list. (Knowing that not everyone would want to be on the listserv, the welcome letter says right up front how to unsubscribe from the list.) We had about 40 bad e-mail addresses, of which I have been able to resolve only a handful. Also, I have since discovered that CompuServe charges its members a small fee for each piece of e-mail from a non-CompuServe sender, so several CompuServe members unsubscribed themselves. Altogether, only about 15 people have chosen to unsubscribe from the listserv so far. A few members who

weren't on my initial contact list heard about the listserv by various means and have subscribed.

If you have Internet e-mail and were not notified about the listserv, it means that the SEJ office doesn't have your current e-mail address. Members should make sure the SEJ office has your e-mail address (e-mail chrisSEJ@aol.com) and we'll send you an invitation to subscribe.

So far, the listserv is working out very well. I've gotten much positive feedback, especially from members who couldn't access the AOL forum. I've also gotten some constructive criticism, which has been very helpful since this is the first listserv I've ever managed. The really good news is that the listserv doesn't cost SEJ one penny. I get to manage a listserv for \$1 per month under the conditions of my personal account on Indra's Net. I think I can afford that for SEJ.

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*Amy Gahrn is an editor for E Source in Boulder, Colorado, and an SEJ board member.*

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Do not send this mail to sej-digest@indra.com; the message will bounce back to you as an error.

3. Leave the subject line blank.

4. In the message body, type only:

subscribe sej-digest first name last name <internet e-mail address>

Be sure your full name comes before your e-mail address.

Be sure to include <> around your e-mail address

E.g., if member Joe Schmoe wished to subscribe, the body of his message to majordomo@indra.com would read:  
subscribe sej-digest Joe Schmoe <jschmoe@whatever.com>

You should then receive a message stating that your digest subscription request is awaiting approval by the list manager. Once approved, you will receive the "welcome to the list" letter.

- **To post a message to the SEJ list** (or to publicly reply to postings you have received): send e-mail addressed only to: sej@indra.com

Such mail will be circulated to all subscribers on the list, without the intervention of the list manager.

- **To privately respond to a listserv posting** (whether to the original author or to other parties): Send e-mail directly to that person or persons. Do not address private mail to sej@indra.com

### **SEJ Listserv Policies:**

*Privacy:* This is a private forum, so that we can foster open communication among SEJ members. Generally, comments to the listserv and the AOL forum are considered off-the-record. So far, members have abided by this. However, if

you post anything to this listserv that you want to be extra certain isn't quoted in another member's syndicated column under any circumstances, then mention clearly in that posting that your comments are intended for SEJ members only, not for redistribution — just for emphasis. Remember that you can opt to e-mail directly to one or more list members for very private comments. Also remember that in any communications, even verbal, you always must rely on your own judgment as to whether to say something sensitive to anyone, ever.

*Courtesy:* If you would like to quote (in an article or other public media) from a posting to the listserv, do the author of that posting the courtesy of asking his/her permission first — even if the posting does not seem sensitive.

*More privacy:* The list of commands sent to new subscribers tells how to get a list of all the names and e-mail addresses on the SEJ listserv. As with information in the annual SEJ membership directory, the list of SEJ listserv subscribers is under no circumstances to be redistributed in whole or in part to persons or organizations outside of SEJ.

*More courtesy:* Although we welcome news of events, publications, or services of interest to environmental journalists on the listserv, this listserv is not to be used for posting electronic press releases. If you have an announcement to make, make it briefly (a paragraph or less) and give contact information for interested members.

Any questions or problems: Contact Amy Gahrn, the manager of this listserv, at: mtn@indra.com or amygahrn@aol.com. Or call Amy at (303) 543-8513 between 9:00 am and 9:30 pm MST only.

# Meeting of scientists, officials and journalists spurs draft of environmental reporting principles

By **JIM DETJEN**

Is it possible to develop a set of principles that environmental and science journalists can follow worldwide?

This was the challenge put forward by Professor Guido Perin at a meeting last April in Rovereto, Italy. The occasion was the 25th anniversary meeting of the Italian Water Pollution Control Association. Perin, a professor of environmental toxicology at the University of Venice, invited scientists, environmental officials and journalists from Europe and the United States to a conference in Italy to grapple with this and other environmental issues.

Admittedly, the task Perin asked a team of three Americans to carry out was ambitious. We were well aware that whatever principles we drew up could be endlessly debated. Nonetheless, we felt it worthwhile to draft a set of principles as a way to get the discussion going.

The following 15 principles were agreed upon by Gordon Chesters, an environmental scientist at the Water Resources Center at the University of Wisconsin in Madison; Joseph A. Cotruvo, of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and myself. Yes, I admit they could probably use some tighter editing; they were written by a committee. But what do you think of the ideas? Do you agree with them? Did we forget anything important? Let us know. Give me a call at (517) 353-9479 or send me an e-mail message (DETJEN@pilot.msu.edu).

## *Introduction*

The quality and effectiveness of environmental and science reporting is a function of a reporter's perspective, training, analytic abilities and persistence; the quality of the information that is available; the qualifications and credibility of sources; and the subject matter's relevance. This proposed set of principles provides guidance to environmental and science reporters. It is intended to enhance their credibility, consistency and effectiveness in reporting complex and controversial technical issues. These

guiding principles, although obvious, may also be applicable in other areas of reporting. These guidelines are presented to stimulate discussion within the journalistic community and to encourage the adoption of an appropriate set of principles to enhance the quality of reporting throughout the profession.

**1.** Your knowledge, contacts and credibility are your principal assets in achieving fair and accurate reporting on environmental and science issues. Cultivate and expand all of them continuously.

**2.** Act ethically. You carry a public trust and the concomitant responsibility. Your articles and reports are the public's principal source of information on complex and potentially significant environmental and science issues, and as such will be an important factor in determining the public's role in solving problems.

**3.** Understand the limitations of science. Science does not have all the answers; usually it is much more adept at raising questions. Complicated real-world problems do not have simple solutions because each option generates new problems and affects different constituencies. The solutions to complex problems usually require factoring science, technology, law, economics, politics and public interests into the available options, and trying to find an acceptable course of action.

**4.** Be prepared. Anticipate. Get help. Assemble a group of qualified credible sources to help you evaluate and explain issues and the statements of different parties. People are not necessarily qualified and credible just because they have titles and advanced degrees. Match specific expertise to subject matter. Beware of sources who are willing to pontificate outside of their area of expertise (e.g. having a PhD in chemistry or physics does not necessarily mean that a person is qualified to critique ozone depletion processes.) Also, being a physician does not necessarily mean that the person is qualified on public health issues.

**5.** Use credible sources and good

judgment. Don't be hypocritical. Avoid using information from incredible fringe elements that might make interesting copy but confuse the issue; at least, don't give them much weight. It is disingenuous to justify yourself by claiming you were merely presenting a range of options.

**6.** Don't try to outdo the supermarket tabloids. Life is already tough enough for decision makers and the public. Avoid sensationalism that can confuse and panic the public, trigger bad decisions and misdirect action away from the real problems of our society. Since speculation and perceptions are often accepted as fact, avoid overstating cases—especially with splashy headlines and appeals to emotion.

**7.** Don't mislead with misinterpretations. Understand the differences between hazards, hypothetical risks, and actuarial risks. Just about everything is hazardous under some condition of use or misuse. The question is what is the likelihood that harm will occur in some particular situation. State the range of uncertainty whenever possible. Hypothetical risks are modeled projections that often go well beyond what has been observed in studies. Sometimes they are fairly credible, often they are not, or at least not very precise (e.g., extrapolations of human cancer risks are often made from chemicals tested in animals at high doses while humans are typically exposed to low doses). There may or may not be validity in a particular case, but quantifying risk is very imprecise and designed to be conservative (i.e., more likely to overstate the true risk). Epidemiological studies are also difficult to interpret—as recent debate on the risks of coffee consumption illustrate. On the other hand, actuarial risks (like automobile death rates or coal mining accidents) can be measured with certainty.

**8.** Beware of advocates on either side of an issue—they all have biases, as does everybody else. Environmentalists are not necessarily right (no matter how dedicated they seem) and industry is not necessarily wrong (even though profit is a factor). Treat all information from

parties at issue skeptically (i.e. requiring corroboration) and keep them all at arms length.

9. Communicate in comprehensible terms. Do not toss around strange numbers (like one in a million risks) or terms (like parts per million or micrograms per liter) without providing a context. Educate your audience with apt analogies and explanations of unfamiliar terms and give perspective. For example, the U.S. cancer death rate has been about one in four deaths (0.25) for a long time. An excess cancer risk of one in one million would become 0.250001. Use charts and illustrations whenever they can help improve communication.

10. Aim for depth. Get past the surface. Describe plausible alternatives and solutions when you address important complex issues. Spell out advantages and disadvantages and the consequences

of alternatives.

11. Do your homework—work. Be a skeptic. Check the biases and validity of the assertions you hear. Ask for documentation; contact your sources for assistance and corroboration. During interviews ask probing and specific questions.

12. Be meticulous and honest. Be careful with the accuracy of quotes and facts, checking and double-checking before publishing or broadcasting. Work with editors to make sure that the headline reflects the tone and context of the story.

13. Retain your objectivity. Do not take sides unless you make it clear you are editorializing. Why risk damaging your credibility?

14. Background and training in science. When writing on technical issues, broad science training is invaluable. Keep and expand your expertise and

breadth of knowledge by reading, and by taking classes and workshops in pertinent and newly emerging subjects throughout your journalistic career.

15. Set the record straight. Be willing to admit errors of fact or changing interpretations openly and with as much visibility as in the original story. Science does change and people can make mistakes. If you do your homework, serious errors won't happen very often, but if they do, or if new information changes the original conclusion, being forthright will enhance your credibility.

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*Jim Detjen, SEJ's founding president, chairman of the National Advisory Board, and president of the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ), is Knight Chair of Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University.*

## The changing environment beat: an editor's view

By **ROBERT W. CHANDLER**

News changes. It waxes and wanes. Almost never is it cast in stone. Beats can develop slowly, and newspapers took a long time to discover the environment beat. In some ways, the environment beat evolved like the education beat, which gradually changed from covering local school board meetings to reporting on what took place in public schools, and on what the future of education might hold.

This transition was easier for newly named education writers than for environment writers. They covered school boards—which were responsible only for certain levels of education in clearly defined geographic regions; institutions with fixed ways of getting and spending money. But the environment is not like that. It covers everything, everywhere.

As is the case with many reporters on newly expanded beats, some environmental reporters tend to adopt the protective coloration of the activists on their beats, those who furnish the strongest and most provocative copy. A few reporters become activists; they are advocates, not observers.

Once that stage is reached there is a danger—the danger that a reporter suddenly will discover the “ultimate truth.” This truth will be a finding that the

reporter understands, but that neither his editors nor his readers will recognize without his help. Too often, reporters fail to provide that help. Rather, from an editor's viewpoint, the “ultimate truth” can only be described with lots of words, all accompanied by graphics in varying colors and color halftones to furnish variety.

Such projects are never small ones.

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***Indeed, the real problem may be that reporters become so interested in their stories that they think their editors understand these stories as well as they do. They don't.***

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They take much reporter time, seldom available in an unbroken mass sufficient to complete the blockbuster story and sidebars, or to complete a series all at once. Usually the reporter has to approach the job piecemeal or get an editor's approval to drop all else until this great truth is reported.

And then comes the toughest job of all: getting space. Space often is available for Sunday thumbsuckers on various topics, but it is difficult at best for most reporters to confine themselves to space which is readily available.

A major reason environmental

stories have trouble competing for space is that these stories don't fit into the traditional definition of news. However, this problem is not insurmountable. Our small newspaper once reported a 10,000-year-old story as the lead story of that day, a paleontological find of national importance. The reporter who discovered this story was able to write it succinctly, to make its importance apparent, and to persuade his editor that it was more important than any other story that particular day.

However, this kind of persuasion is hard to pull off when the story being pitched is a species in trouble, or global warming, or problems with the ozone layer. Reporters must weigh their interest in a story against what the editor thinks will interest readers. Editors have the upper hand, and they know, better than reporters, that newsrooms are not governed by popular vote.

It's easy for environmental reporters to blame lack of space for their stories on the bottom line—the need for editors to produce newspapers capable of producing profits in an increasingly hostile business environment. At these times, reporters too often believe that editors simply don't understand long, complicated, difficult stories. However, this is not

*Continued on page 27*

# Easterbrook's environmental optimism: "A Moment on the Earth" spurs criticism

## Contradictions and spin doctoring abound

By KATHY SAGAN

I first came across Gregg Easterbrook's work in a *New York Times Magazine* article a year or so ago about how the "Third World" is in a real crisis of poverty, sickness, and pollution, while environmentalists sit around preoccupied with "First World" concerns such as synthetic chemicals in food and the greenhouse effect. Like the author, I, too, have been to New Delhi, Bombay, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Quito. No one would argue that the people of developing countries have it much worse than we do. But why the dichotomy? Why the need to pit these concerns against one another?

Then I read an article by Easterbrook in *Newsweek* called "Rachel Carson Was Wrong," which posited that none of the "doomsday" scenarios Carson predicted have come to pass—enumerating them one by one, only to end the piece with a short quip that they haven't materialized because society has, in fact, heeded Carson's warning.

Now, with the publication of his book, *A Moment on the Earth* (Viking, \$27.95, 745 pp.), Easterbrook presents us with a wide canvas on which he spins his craft to new heights. Covering an impressive amount of material (unfortunately not all accurately) he seems compelled to process all this information through a funnel of forced optimism—to fit into what he calls "a new view of ecological thought called 'eco-realism.'"

According to Easterbrook, "the founding concept of eco-realism is: Logic, not sentiment, best serves the interests of nature. The ecological impulse must become grounded in rationality...Love nature? Learn science and speak logic. Many lesser creatures will thank you."

He then posits his manifesto. Among his credos:

"In the Western world the Age of Pollution will end in our lifetime, with society almost painlessly adapting a

zero-emissions philosophy."

"Most recoveries from pollution will happen faster than even optimists project." And others...

This news sounds wonderful. Too bad Easterbrook doesn't heed his own advice and ground his own philosophy in well-researched and reasoned fact. Only by half-reporting some issues, and misreporting others, can he draw some of the conclusions he does. Naturally, anyone who questions his facts or interpretations is labeled an "enviro," and immediately diagnosed as a pathological pessimist with a seemingly genetic inability to see environmental issues in a positive light. How much easier it is to name-call, than to foster real debate.

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*Kathy Sagan, Peter Montague  
and Philip Shabecoff offer  
commentary on Easterbrook's  
"A Moment on the Earth."*

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Easterbrook's writing is full of contradictions and disingenuous lines of reasoning. He uses facts as "semiotic playthings;" mixes and confuses geological time and human time in ways that make little practical sense; he splits off information that doesn't support his point—then backtracks later to cover himself, over and over again.

Here's one example of his "playful" logic and reasoning: It was predicted we would run out of coal, then new seams were found. An oil crisis was predicted, then prices dropped. From this he draws the conclusion of "The Law of Environmental Affairs: Whenever all respectable commentators believe a problem cannot be solved, it is about to be solved. Therefore global warming considered unstoppable means that the greenhouse effect is about to become old news." He, of course, covers himself several paragraphs later saying, "it may well be that 0.002 percent of annual addition is sufficient to tip the scales in favor of warming." So what's the point?

The sheer scope of the material cov-

ered in *A Moment on the Earth* would be awesome enough, if current debate about these issues was summarized in an objective, trustworthy way, instead of filtered through this Panglossian world view. But then again, the climate is ripe for this kind of thinking. I was recently asked to write a magazine piece on food safety and was told by the editor, "We don't want anything scary." Readers are tired of bad news, scary facts and being held responsible for things. Regulation is out; blame it on the other guy is in. Better yet, just wish the problem away. A "shoot the messenger" mentality is prevalent in many circles, and I would argue that some of Easterbrook's construct is just a brilliant packaging job of salable ideas in the current journalism market.

Take the debate about synthetic chemicals, which is full of misinformation. Three separate times Easterbrook brings up Bruce Ames and his work on natural carcinogens in food. He argues that "it may eventually be shown that natural chemicals are a leading source of cancer." This is further than even Ames himself is willing to go. Ames' own report states, "Although the findings do not indicate that these natural dietary carcinogens are important in human cancer, they cast doubt on the relative importance for human cancer of low-dose exposure to synthetic chemicals." But Easterbrook goes one further, saying "if natural carcinogens are an important cancer cause (which they are not) the way to get rid of them is bioengineering." Even Ames, an extremist in this view, doesn't believe this to be the case.

Dismissing the long-term effects of insecticides, Easterbrook says, "Nature has made beetles that have lasted 200 million years. Compared to that, what's a can of Raid?"

He blithely says most journalists only read summaries of studies and reports and not the reports themselves. This must be true in his own research on the Environmental Protection Agency reassessment of dioxin. However, even if he read only the executive summary,

he would see that the EPA has not backpedaled on its position about dioxin toxicity one iota. In fact, the draft reassessment says that while it is a probable human carcinogen, cancer is not dioxin's most sensitive endpoint. At much lower doses one can see immunological, neurological, and reproductive problems.

Easterbrook praises 1990 EPA administrator William Reilly for initiating the reassessment of dioxin and says environmental groups opposed it. Reilly was pressured by the paper industry to revisit dioxin in light of a supposed consensus among scientists that a threshold existed below which dioxin is harmless. The paper industry was hoping a reassessment would allow the water standards to be weakened. The theory of a supposed threshold was in itself misrepresented as a consensus. Many environmental groups welcomed the study, even though Reilly himself initially told reporters as the reassessment was just under way, he expected that EPA would discover dioxin to be less toxic. This, of course, turned out to not be the case. One wonders why Easterbrook doesn't address lobbying in any consistent way. Certainly it plays an important role in any environmental discussion.

With regard to animal testing, Kenneth Olden, head of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) has publicly stated that Keith Schneider misrepresented his position on animal testing in an article in the *New York Times*. Nonetheless, Easterbrook continues the misinformation (or disinformation), obviously relying on secondhand material for some of his assertions.

Easterbrook does the same thing with information on Times Beach. Vernon Houk, an official of the Centers for Disease Control, was not the person who ordered the evacuation of Times Beach, as Keith Schneider has reported. Lee Thomas was. Some of Houk's lack of popularity in his later career may stem from the fact that he was brought before Senate hearings for copying industry water studies onto CDC letterhead and passing them off as agency findings. Another, albeit minor correction regarding Times Beach is that soil samples were measured before the flood, not

after. He tends to get both large and small points wrong in various issues.

He says fat is "one of the most potent carcinogens." But isn't it the toxins stored in fat that are dangerous?

He says "this chapter asserts that water pollution is essentially over in the United States." Just like that. No, we don't have epidemics of cholera or typhoid. Yet the CDC and EPA just announced a nationwide warning for immune-compromised people to boil tap water because of the presence of *Cryptosporidium* in water. And the EPA says that in 1994, some 30 million Americans were served by drinking water systems that violated one or more public health standards. Easterbrook refers to the Milwaukee incident in which *Cryptosporidium* caused stomach cramps in 300,000 people who drank municipal water. He doesn't mention the 104 people who died from it.

He says that areas downwind of Chernobyl received a dose of radiation only one-fifth of what one would get in an X-ray. Later he says "the Ukrainian government estimates that long-term exposure from the accident will cause up to 8,000 additional premature deaths. Some estimates put the number at 17,000 or higher." These deaths are additional to the immediate deaths, figured at 31,400. Some X-ray!

He says there's no ozone hole over the North Pole. He confuses global, regional, and local temperatures when discussing global warming; confuses species when discussing endangered species. And on and on. Ultimately he claims a prominent role for man in nature, which tends to contradict his basic premise that whatever man does will ever make nature blink—short of nuclear war, of course.

Clearly Easterbrook has pored over volumes of material and spent hours synthesizing it in preparing his thesis and writing this book. Yet he relies over again on the same studies and spokespeople rather than present differing points of view. Ongoing, honest debate would be welcome on any number of these issues. However, he does the issues a disservice by manipulating them just to support his viewpoint. After all, what's the point of eco-realism, if not a logical, science-based, objective perspective?

Rather than heralding in a new era of environmental optimism, Easterbrook merely markets a message to match the times and the pressure for good news and less government regulation. (Is this really his intent? It's hard to know.) It's easy to say there will be an end of pollution in our lifetime; in the next decade we'll have zero emissions; but where are the facts to back it up?

In these times spin has become the substitute for honest debate. This is an important book, if only in sheer scope. Too bad it is riddled with misinformation (in an age of disinformation).

Oddly enough, in Easterbrook's discussion of environmental optimism the issue of backlash rarely comes up.

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*Kathy Sagan is editor-at-large for Family Circle magazine and SEJournal book review editor.*



## Journalists role: to probe beneath the veneer of others' propaganda

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Gregg Easterbrook's article in the last *SEJournal*, "Up the Planet," and his book, *A Moment On the Earth*, send a jarringly wrong message to environmental journalists.

Reporters are the eyes and ears of civil society. We are not here to serve our readers, listeners or viewers fatuous, feel-good fluff about "the most glorious news that can be imagined"—especially when the news is very far from glorious. Our role is to probe beneath the veneer placed over our continuing environmental ills by industrial, political and ideological propaganda.

Easterbrook's message, his "eco-realism," is that in the rich industrialized countries, the war to preserve the environment is basically over and we have won. "Pollution," he asserts, "will end within our lifetimes, with society almost painlessly adapting a zero-emissions philosophy."

The great irony, of course, is that this "don't worry, be happy" message

comes just as the anti-environmental Republican right has taken power in Congress and is attempting (with some success) to roll back environmental gains made not only since the first Earth Day in 1970, but since the emergence of modern environmentalism a century ago.

Scientists such as Dr. Peter Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden, and environmental groups have pointed out the many errors with which *Moment* is riddled. The Environmental Defense Fund compiled more than 50 pages of scientific corrections from only four chapters of the book.

Easterbrook's most fundamental error, however, is his contention that environmentalism is founded on "pessimism" and a "doomsday" view of ecological problems. Anyone with a sense of the history, however, knows modern environmentalism sprang from the progressivism of the Theodore Roosevelt era and is firmly based on the idea of progress, not pessimism.

Yes, we have made progress in solving our environmental problems. But scientists and environmentalists and most environmental journalists know that we can and should do a lot better.

Actual reality (as opposed to Easterbrook's virtual ecoreality) is that environmental and public health goals are only reached when scientists, environmentalists, and citizens identify problems and abuses and suggest solutions—and when journalists report about them.

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*Philip Shabecoff, formerly environmental reporter with the New York Times for 14 years, is currently publisher of the daily environmental news service Greenwire and a member of SEJ.*



## Easterbrook's case built on error, disinformation, even some distortion

By PETER MONTAGUE

Gregg Easterbrook's recent book, "A Moment on the Earth," is remarkable

for its "optimism." But careful examination reveals that his case for optimism is built on errors, distortions, and disinformation. Here are a few of Easterbrook's claims, compared to the facts.

*Easterbrook:* Toxic waste isn't an important problem because the National Academy of Sciences in a 1991 report

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### ***Easterbrook's most fundamental error is his contention that environmentalism is founded on "pessimism" and a "doomsday" view of ecological problems.***

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said there is "no clear relationship between proximity to toxic wastes and cancer" (p. 604).

*Fact:* What the National Academy of Sciences said about toxic wastes and human health was this: "A limited number of epidemiologic studies indicate that increased rates of birth defects, spontaneous abortion, neurologic impairment, and cancer have occurred in some residential populations exposed to hazardous wastes. We are concerned that other populations at risk might not have been adequately identified."

The Academy further said, "Millions of tons of hazardous materials are slowly migrating into ground water in areas where they could pose problems in the future, even though current risks could be negligible."

*Easterbrook:* Radioactive waste disposal is not really a problem because even at the WIPP site in southern New Mexico (built to hold long-lived transuranic military wastes) most of the radioactivity will have disappeared within 300 years (p. 514).

*Fact:* The WIPP radioactive waste dump in New Mexico is slated to hold, at a minimum, one ton of plutonium-239 which has a half-life of 24,400 years. Plutonium is one of the two or three most potent carcinogens around. According to the government's environmental impact statement, WIPP may eventually hold up to 44 tons of plutonium. It will take 10 half-lives, or 240,400 years (far longer than *Homo sapiens* have walked the earth), for this plutonium to decay away, not 300 years.

*Easterbrook:* Most forms of cancer are in decline (p. 246).

*Fact:* According to the National Cancer Institute, the incidence (occurrence) rates of 14 out of 16 types of cancer are increasing, not decreasing. The death rates for eight out of 16 types of cancer also are increasing.

*Easterbrook:* Chemicals are, today, assumed to be dangerous, and the burden of proof is on the manufacturers of chemicals to prove safety before new chemicals can be introduced into commerce.

*Fact:* Today in the U.S., new chemicals are introduced at the will of the manufacturer, and it is up to the public to prove harm before a chemical can even be regulated, much less banned.

*Easterbrook:* Dioxin is in the same chemical family as table salt (p. 414); the largest study of dioxin and human health found only a "slight" increase in cancer (p. 235); dioxin is natural, caused mainly by forest fires (p. 238); and new emissions of dioxin have already been "nearly eliminated" (p. 238).

*Fact:* According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has been "reassessing" dioxin for the past four years, at least half of the dioxin sources in the U.S. have not been identified—so Easterbrook cannot know that new sources of exposure have been eliminated. EPA says forest fires are a minor source of dioxin and even that minor source may be caused not by nature but by industrial releases of chlorine settling onto the leaves of trees. The largest study of dioxin and human health found a 46 percent increased hazard of cancer among workers whose exposure lasted at least a year and began at least 20 years ago (thus allowing the cancer latency period to run its course)—46 percent is not a "slight" increase by anyone's reckoning. True, dioxin is a chlorinated chemical, as is table salt. However, dioxin is only in the "same family" as table salt in the sense that an AK-47 and a pea shooter are in the same family—both can be used as weapons.

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*Peter Montague is editor of Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly, the weekly newsletter of the Environmental Research Foundation (ERF) in Annapolis, Maryland.*

## SEJ annual conference registration information

To register for the Conference, return this form with payment to the MIT Conference Services Office, Room 7-111, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA. The fee may be paid by check or money order made payable in US currency to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or via credit card with the appropriate information provided. Persons paying via Mastercard or VISA may fax registrations to (617) 253-7002. Registration will be confirmed upon receipt.

### Please see registration form back for fees.

Fees include admission to all sessions, materials, refreshments during each day, the Welcoming Reception and Dinner on Thursday evening and the Reception on Saturday evening. A cash bar will be available at both receptions.

Cancellations received in writing prior to 15 September will be entitled to a refund less a \$35 processing fee; no refunds will be granted after that date. Substitutions may be made until the start of the Conference.

### Flight Information

For flight information and conference travel discount information, call Carlson Travel Network at (800) 283-8747.

### Hotel Accommodations

A block of rooms is reserved at the Hyatt Regency Hotel and the Cambridge Center Marriott Hotel. The Hyatt is located at 575 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139 (Telephone: (617) 492-1234; FAX (617) 491-6906). Conference rate at the Hyatt Regency is \$145/single and \$155/double per night.

The Marriott is located at 2 Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA 02142 (Telephone: 617-494-6600; FAX: 617-494-6565), and is \$138 per night for single or double accommodations plus local applicable taxes. Room availability and rate are only guaranteed until September 25, 1995.

Both Hotels offer restaurants and a health club with swimming pool, and parking is available in adjacent garages for an additional per day charge. Shuttle service will be available from the hotels to MIT and the evening events.

# Registration

Fifth National Conference

Society of Environmental Journalists

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code and Country \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Electronic Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Languages \_\_\_\_\_

Languages in which I am fluent: \_\_\_\_\_

English is my 2nd language.

I am willing to help as an interpreter for a portion of the conference \_\_\_\_\_

October 26-29, 1995

Massachusetts  
Institute of Technology

Cambridge,  
Massachusetts

# SEJ annual conference Thurs. tour descriptions

(Please indicate your tour choice by marking the checkboxes on the form.)

## Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute

All-day tour featuring panel sessions including ocean pollution, oil spills and the ocean's role in climate change; a demo of WHOI's underwater exploration equipment; and visit to a local salt marsh fouled by an oil spill two decades ago.

## Boston Harbor Clean-up

A half-day tour of what was once the nation's dirtiest harbor includes the massive treatment plant being built for the clean-up; and discussions on what's happened since George Bush made the harbor infamous, and the erosion of public support in the face of skyrocketing water and sewer costs.

## Urban Environmental Issues

A half-day tour of some of the area's poorest neighborhoods which play host to high numbers of commercial and industrial facilities. Perhaps not coincidentally, these neighborhoods are among the top in the state for occurrences of cancers and other health problems. The tour includes a session with locals who are fighting for urban environmental justice.

## Forest Issues: The North Woods Controversy

Forests from the Adirondacks in New York to Maine's North Woods are impacted by all sorts of uses, including logging, recreation and development. The Northern Forest Council has negotiated a compromise to save the North Woods, pleasing no one. Travel to an experimental forestry site for a half-day session exploring Eastern forestry issues, both unique and reflective of the forests across the country.

<u>Tours</u>	<u>Choices</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>Member Fees</u>	<u>Total Amount Enclosed \$</u>
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (full day)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		By August 14 After August 14 \$95 \$125	<u>Method of Payment</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Check/Money Order made payable to MIT is enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard <input type="checkbox"/> VISA
Boston Harbor Cleanup (half day)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		One-Day by August 14 \$50	
Urban Environment Issues (half day)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		One-Day after August 14 \$75	<u>Account Number</u> <u>Expiration Date</u> <u>Cardholder's Name</u>
Forest Issues: The North Woods Controversy (half day)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		By August 14 After August 14 \$350 \$400	
A Trip to Walden Pond	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		One-Day by August 14 \$100	<u>Signature</u> <small>(Required for credit card transactions)</small>
Boston Harbor and Whale Watch (half day)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		One-Day after August 14 \$150	
<u>Accompanying Guest Tickets</u>					<u>Please return completed form and payment to:</u> Conference Services Office MIT Room 7-111 Cambridge, MA 02139-4307 USA
Welcome Reception and Dinner \$25					
Cocktail Reception at the Museum of Science \$25					

Please do not include my name/address on the attendees' list.

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## New Members

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The following list represents new SEJ members recorded from March 18 through May 22. Memberships recorded after May 22 will appear in *SEJournal* Volume 5, Number 3.

### ALASKA

- Steve Rinehart, *Anchorage Daily News*,
- Jillian C. Swope (Academic), Alaska Sea Grant College Program, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

### ARIZONA

- Joanne Bercu, *Hopi Tutuveni*, The Hopi Tribe, Tuba City

### CALIFORNIA

- Blake D. Edgar (Associate), *Pacific Discovery Magazine*, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco
- Doug Ramsey (Associate), News Backgrounders FACS, Los Angeles
- Marshall Wilson, *San Mateo Times*, San Mateo

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- Mark R. Bevis, Pacifica Network News, Pacifica Radio

### IOWA

- Amy Seirer (Academic), Drake University, Des Moines

### KENTUCKY

- Ramona R. Rush (Academic), College of Communications, University of Kentucky Lexington

### MARYLAND

- Christina E. Melander (Academic),

Salisbury State University, Salisbury

### MASSACHUSETTS

- Nancy E. Cohen, Cambridge
- Nancy Dickson (Academic), Harvard University Cambridge
- Andrew Hoffman (Academic), Civil & Environmental Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Brookline
- Ira Krepchin, *Demand-Sde Technology Report*, Cutter Information Corporation, Arlington
- Stephanie Gehlen South, *Environment Watch: Western Europe*, Cutter Information Corporation, Arlington
- Kathleen M. Victory, *Business & The Environment*, Cutter Information Corporation, Arlington
- Faith Yando, *Oil Spill Intelligence Report*, Cutter Information Corporation, Arlington

### NEW JERSEY

- Greg Groeller, *Bloomberg Business News*, Princeton
- Christina E. Melander (Academic), Lawrenceville
- Marty Parkes (Associate), *Golf Journal/USGA Green Section*, US Golf Association, Far Hills

### NEW YORK

- Esther D'Amico, Brooklyn
- Ann Goodman, New York
- Kathrin Day Lassila (Associate), *The Amicus Journal*, NRDC, New York

### OHIO

- Angela Spreitzer Charles, *Waste News*, Crain Communications, Inc. Akron
- Sari Padorr, News WBNS-TV, Columbus
- Jeff Solomon-Hess, *Waste News*, Crain Communications, Akron

### OREGON

- Lori Bettineski (Academic), School of Journalism, University of Oregon, Eugene

### PENNSYLVANIA

- Sandy Bauers, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, West Chester

### UTAH

- Mike Gorrell, *Salt Lake Tribune*, Salt Lake City

### VIRGINIA

- Anne Freeh, *Greenwire*, American Political Network, Alexandria
- Debbie Messina Robinson, *The Virginian Pilot/The Ledger Star*, Virginia Beach

### WISCONSIN

- Lisa Gaumnitz (Associate), Madison

### CANADA

- Lelani Arris, *Global Environmental Change Report*, Cutter Information Corporation, Dunster

### SWEDEN

- Kim Loughran, *Tomorrow Magazine*, Tomorrow Publishing AB, Stockholm
- Claes Sjöberg, *Tomorrow Magazine*, Tomorrow Publishing AB, Stockholm

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## Environmentalists...(from page 12)

on electoral activity.

Friends of the Earth is suggesting that Earth Day 1996 be moved to Election Day, to be preceded by an Earth Week of activity talking about the views of candidates for office at all levels. A League of Conservation Voters' poll last November revealed that 40 percent of those voting said they would be more likely to support

a pro-environment candidate and only 10 percent said they would be less likely. Furthermore, 65 percent said they wanted more discussion of environmental issues in the campaigns.

With such promising polling data, environmentalists should shed their fear or reluctance to get involved and start participating with vigor.

Failure to do so will only lead to further entrenchment of anti-environmental legislators and will doom us to a decade of defense at the very time we must make the greatest progress.

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*Brent Blackwelder is president of Friends of the Earth.*

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## Changing beat...(from page 21)

necessarily true.

The real problem may be that reporters become so interested in their stories that they think their editors understand these stories as well as they do. They don't. A good editor will listen and learn, and good reporters should be able to explain why their stories are important to readers. That's a reporter's job.

The answer is for reporters to culti-

vate patience. If editors are brought into the picture at the beginning, and if they value the time writers spend on environmental projects, they will find the time and space for the story.

News changes. What easily is today's top story may not be accorded much space tomorrow, simply for competitive reasons. However, no reporters worth their salt, working for equally wor-

thy editors, need worry about the "ultimate truth" finally seeing the light of day—in form and length sufficient to the needs of interested readers.

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*Robert W. Chandler is editor and chairman of The Bulletin, Bend, OR; former chairman of Western Communications Inc. and a director of ASNE.*

# Green Beat Correspondents

## Contribute to Green Beat

The Green Beat is designed as an idea exchange for environmental journalists and educators. It relies on information submitted by reporters about important issues, outstanding coverage, and developments in environmental education and the communications profession on a state-by-state basis. To submit ideas or copies of series for possible mention in The Green Beat, contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s). They are:

**Alabama** — Sean Reilly, *Anniston Star* Montgomery Bureau, 1621 Deatsville Hwy., Millbrook, AL 36054, (205) 264-8711.

**Alaska** — Vacant.

**Arizona and New Mexico** — Tony Davis at the *Albuquerque Tribune*, P.O. Drawer T, Albuquerque, NM 87103, (505) 823-3625, fax (505) 823-3689.

**Arkansas** — David Kern at the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, P.O. Box 2221, Little Rock, AK 72203, (501) 378-3862.

**California:**

Northern California — Laura Mahoney, BNA, 770 L St., Suite 910, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 552-6502.

Bay Area/San Jose — Jane Kay at the *San Francisco Examiner*, Box 7260, San Francisco, CA 94120, (415) 777-8704.

Southern California — Marni McEntee, *Los Angeles Daily News*, 20132 Observation Drive, Topanga, CA 90290, (805) 641-0542.

**Colorado** — Ronald Baird, *Colorado Daily*, 839 Pearl St., Boulder, CO, 80302, (303) 443-6272.

**Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts** — Bob Wyss at the *Providence Journal*, 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902, (401) 737-3000.

**District of Columbia** — Cheryl Hogue, BNA, *Daily Environment Report*, 1231 25th St., N.W., Room 361-S, Wash., DC 20037, (202) 452-4625, fax (202) 452-4150.

**Florida:**

North Florida — Bruce Ritchie at the *Gainesville Sun*, P.O. Box 147147, Gainesville, FL 32614, (904) 374-5087.

South Florida — Kirk Brown at the *Palm Beach Post*, 2751 S. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach FL, 33416, (407) 820-4400.

**Georgia and South Carolina** — Ron Chepsiuk, 782 Wofford St., Rock Hill, SC 29730, (803) 366-5440.

**Hawaii** — Peter Wagner at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, P.O. Box 3080, Honolulu, HI 96802, (808) 525-8699.

**Idaho** — Rocky Barker of the *Post-Register*, 1020 11th St., Idaho Falls, ID, 83404, (208) 529-8508 or Julie Titone of the *Spokesman Review & Chronicle*, (509) 459-5431

**Illinois** — John Wasik at *Consumers Digest*, P.O. Box 51, Wauconda, IL, 60684, (302) 275-3590.

**Iowa** — Perry Beeman at the *Des Moines Register*, P.O. Box 957, Des Moines, IA 50304, (515) 284-8538.

**Kansas** — Mike Mansur at the *Kansas City Star*, 1729 Grand Ave., Kansas City, MO 64108. (816) 234-4433.

**Kentucky** — Vacant.

**Louisiana** — Bob Anderson at *The Morning Advocate*, Box 588, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (504) 383-1111.

**Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont** — Robert Braile, *Boston Globe* correspondent, at P.O. Box 1907, Exeter, N.H., 03833, (603) 772-6380.

**Maryland and Delaware** — Tim Wheeler, at *The Sun*, 501 N. Calvert St., Baltimore, MD 21278, (301) 332-6564.

**Michigan** — John A. Palen, at Central Michigan University, Journalism Dept. Anspach 36, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859, (517) 774-7110.

**Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota** — Tom Meersman at the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 425 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55488, (612) 673-4414.

**Missouri** — Bill Allen, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 900 N. Tucker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63101, (314) 340-8127.

**Montana** — Mike Millstein of the *Billings Gazette*, P.O. Box 821, Cody WY 82414, (307) 527-7250.

**Nebraska** — Al J. Laukaitis at the *Lincoln Journal*, 926 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68501, (402) 473-7257.

**New Jersey** — Todd Bates at the *Asbury Park Press*, 3601 Hwy. 66, Neptune, NJ 07754, (908) 922-6000, ext. 4361.

**New York** — Vacant.

**Nevada** — Mary Manning at the *Las Vegas Sun*, 800 S. Valley View Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107, (702) 259-4065 or Jon Christiansen of High Country News, 6185 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704, (702) 885-2023.

**Ohio and Indiana** — Charlie Prince at *Ohio Environmental Reporter*, 516 Ludlow Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45220, (513) 221-0954.

**Oregon** — Terry Novak at the *Salem Statesman-Journal*, 280 Church St., N.E. Salem, OR 97309, (503) 399-6737.

**Pennsylvania** — John Bartlett, *Erie Daily Times*, 513 13th St., Franklin, PA 16323, (814) 437-6397.

**Puerto Rico/Caribbean Islands** — Albi Ferre at *El Nuevo Dia*, Box 297, San Juan, PR 00902, (809) 793-7070, ext. 2165.

**Tennessee and Mississippi** — Debbie Gilbert at *The Memphis Flyer*, 460 Tennessee St., Memphis, TN 38103, (901) 521-9000.

**Texas and Oklahoma:**

North Texas and Oklahoma — Randy Loftis at *The Dallas Morning News*, 508 Young St., Dallas, TX 75202, (800) 431-0010.

Central and West Texas — Robert Bryce at *The Austin Chronicle*, 3812 Brookview, Austin, TX 78722, (512) 454-5766.

East and Coastal Texas — Bill Dawson at *The Houston Chronicle*, Box 4260, Houston, TX 77210, (713) 220-7171.

**Utah and Wyoming** — Rod C. Jackson, KTVX-TV, 1760 S. Fremont Dr., Salt Lake City, UT 84103, (801) 975-4418.

**Virginia and North Carolina** — Mark Divincenzo at *The Daily Press*, 7505 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, VA 23607, (804) 247-4719.

**Washington State** — Rob Taylor of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* at 18719 S.E. 58th St., Issaquah, WA 98027, (206) 488-8337 and Julie Titone of the *Spokesman Review & Chronicle*, Box 2160, Spokane, WA 99210-1615, (509) 459-5431.

**West Virginia** — Ken Ward at the *Charleston Gazette*, 1001 Virginia St. East, Charleston, WV 25301, (304) 348-1702.

**Wisconsin** — Chuck Quirnbach of Wisconsin Public Radio, 111 E. Kilbourn Ave., #1060, Milwaukee, WI 53202, (414) 271-8686 or (608) 263-7985.

*Please note openings for correspondents for several states. If you are interested, please contact Kevin Carmody at (312) 229-2814*

## CALIFORNIA

► *Los Angeles Daily News* reporter Tony Knight reported in April that after nine years of trying to get their \$50 million Carver-Greenfield facility for drying sewage sludge to work properly, Los Angeles City officials declared the effort a failure in February. The action prompted Los Angeles County officials, who had never even turned their Carver-Greenfield system on, to scrap their entire \$166 million sludge-to-energy system without ever using it. For copies of the article, call Knight at (818) 713-3769.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► What does a city in a severe financial crisis do to save money? It cuts its curbside recycling program. But just for a few weeks, until it gets hauled to court by the Sierra Club. Then it suspends the program again, arguing that collecting recyclables is costing too much. In mid-June, the District's curbside recycling program was underway again, with the contractor doing the job without costing the city a cent for the rest of the fiscal year. The curbside recycling program, which began in 1992, reportedly lost \$2 million since its inception. The Sierra Club contends that if the program was run properly, it would produce badly needed revenues for the city coffers. Meanwhile, questions are arising over why the company that has the recycling contract with the District got it in the first place. Another recycling firm that initially got the highest marks in the contract selection process is suing the city saying it should have won the bid in 1992. This morass is journaled in a series of articles that appeared during April, May, and June in *The Washington Post* and in a Washington weekly alternative, *City Paper*. A number of *Post* reporters—Hamil R. Harris, Michael A. Fletcher, and Linda Wheeler—at different times have covered the day-to-day status of curbside recycling in the District. *City Paper's* anonymous "Loose Lips" column is tracking the political (and legal) arguments over the alleged contracting irregularities. Loose Lips has also reported that freelance recyclers are picking up some of the materials from curbside bins in the early mornings before the official contractor arrives. *Post* articles are avail-

able via Nexis. Contact the *Post* D.C. Metro department at (202) 334-7300. Loose Lips' voice mailbox is (202) 332-2100, extension 302.

► Crime takes a bite out of the environment, according to an article by Paul Ruffins in the April 1995 *Green Calendar and Environmental News Digest*. Ruffins argues that fear of assault crimes such as rape, robbery and murder threaten the environment "by forcing people to make lifestyle choices that poison the Earth and consume more resources." Instead of walking or bicycling or even using public transit, people opt for private cars and taxis. Merchants overpackage goods to deter theft. He contends that the biggest environmental impact of crime is to drive people out of the city to suburbs and rural areas. There, people are often forced into dependence on automobiles. And flight from cities spurs development of woodlands and farmlands. Ruffins, an African American environmentalist, is writing a book about the black community's response to crime. He can be reached at (202) 296-9626. Copies of the *Green Calendar*, a four-page monthly broadsheet which lists environmental events throughout the greater Washington area, are available by calling the Metro D.C. Environmental Network at (202) 544-5125.

## GEORGIA

► The Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint navigational waterway is handling less than one-third its projected traffic and is among the nation's most subsidized river systems, the *Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Enquirer* reported in April. Once projected to handle 1.8 million tons a year by 1990, the waterway's cargo numbers topped off at 1.2 million tons in 1985 and dropped to less than half that amount by 1993. Taxpayers spent 225 times more per ton-mile on the waterway than they did on the Lower Mississippi. Internal U.W. Army Corps of Engineers study found that to handle barge traffic, such relatively small rivers must be dredged, dammed and otherwise manipulated, the *Ledger-Enquirer's* Ken Edelstein reported. With a budget squeeze at the Corps and new environmental restraints on river projects, small waterways could be targeted for cutbacks or privatization. But a coalition of

farmers, agribusinesses and barge operators had fought off similar efforts in the past. The environmental issues aren't simple either: water releases for navigation help maintain the health of Apalachicola Bay, Fla., an important fishery. And a major Corps study on water supply, which could influence growth patterns from Atlanta to the Florida panhandle, assumes that navigation will continue indefinitely. For more information, contact Ken Edelstein, (404) 523-3073.

## IDAHO

► In the competition for complex environmental stories, the recovery of Snake River salmon ranks way at the top. The science and geography, to say nothing of the politics, are daunting. To make the subject understandable, *The Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, WA) started by asking readers what they wanted to know about the issue. They were invited to call the newspaper and leave a recorded question. The response was enthusiastic. Readers wanted to know such things as why channels aren't just being built around the dams to help salmon downstream, and if it weren't true that ocean drift nets are killing most of the salmon. A question-and-answer story by Julie Titone was published March 26. An adjoining page produced by Titone and artist Warren Huskey carried a map, chronology and explanation of the newly released draft version of the federal recovery plan for the fish. For information, call Julie Titone at (208) 765-7126.

## ILLINOIS

► Since last fall, *The Chicago Tribune* has published a string of stories exploring the anti-government militia and property rights movements in the West and Midwest. The pieces continue to appear every few weeks and have been written by a variety of reporters including veteran columnist John Margolis, who left the paper at the end of March, George de Lama, Hugh Dellios, Howard Witt and Rogers Worthington.

► Chicago's *Daily Southtown* newspaper has been reporting on a long string of pollution releases and accidents, including one that killed two workers in March at the Clark Oil refinery in the

Chicago suburb of Blue Island. One analysis piece by environment writer Kevin Carmody traces the problem to the former owners, who may have neglected basic maintenance. But the current owner, Toronto-based Horsham, was recently hit with a 52-page lawsuit in which the Illinois attorney general alleges dozens of pollution violations at the refinery since early 1994, including some the company failed to report. Meanwhile, Robert Steyer of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* has been reporting about problems at Clark's downstate refinery in Hartford, including a federal grand probe into possible deceptive reporting about a major petroleum spill affecting the Mississippi. For more information, contact Carmody at (312) 229-2814 or Steyer at (314) 340-8208.

► Both the *Tribune* and the *Southtown* have reported on the impact of the June ban on yellow perch fishing in Lake Michigan. The four states bordering the lake agreed to the month-long ban on both commercial and recreational fishing, and a reduction in bag limits for the rest of the season, because young perch have not been surviving to adulthood in sufficient numbers. Fisheries biologists are not sure why. But invaders such as the zebra mussel and the goby could be a factor. For more information contact Carmody at (312) 229-2814 or Casey Bukro at (312) 222-3531.

► Leading Illinois ecologists Stephen Packard of the Nature Conservancy and Dr. Robert Betz, formerly of Northeastern Illinois University, were profiled in William Stevens' *Miracle Under the Oaks*. The book portrays the efforts of people like Packard and Betz, whose forté is restoring prairies and savannas. The Nature Conservancy alone has been active in recruiting several thousand volunteers throughout the state to restore sites in metropolitan corridors. Restoration—as opposed to conservation—is a carefully planned process that reduces non-native flora and encourages the growth of native plants and animal habitat. To date, the Illinois restoration sites have been a success and are models for restoration efforts across the continent. In a separate report, the Nature Conservancy found that northeastern Illinois—Chicago and its “collar” counties—is home to several

endangered ecosystems (mostly wetlands and prairie/savannas) that are found nowhere else in the state. The report was in their most recent newsletter. Call (312) 346-8166.

### IOWA

► *Des Moines Register* reporter Larry Fruhling, in a series May 5-10, took a comprehensive look at the debate over what to do with aging locks on the Mississippi River system. The series describes the slow strangulation of some habitat, which environmentalist and biologists blame on the lock and dam system. Fruhling describes as a case study the huge fight over the Mel Price lock and dam near Alton, Ill. He gives the perspectives of people who have lived near the river and watched it change over the decades since the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers turned the Upper Mississippi system into a series of pools. Fruhling also lays out the present battle over the hugely expensive study of updating and expanding the locks and dams, and the stakes for both the barge industry and environmental preservationists. Call Larry Fruhling at (515) 284-8000.

### MASSACHUSETTS

► A new requirement that took effect March 31 requiring inspections of cesspool and septic systems before a home is sold is creating controversy in Massachusetts. Developed by the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection and called Title 5, the new regulation is designed to reduce the number of leaking septic systems which cause bacterial contamination to waterways and groundwater. The state says such pollution is fouling drinking water and causing people to become sick after swimming or eating contaminated clams. However, the rule has created a backlash of opposition because inspections can cost \$1,000 and repairs can climb to \$40,000. About 660,000 homes in the state have backyard septic systems and an estimated 21,000 are sold each year and must be inspected. A number of Massachusetts newspapers have been reporting on this issue. One excellent summary was written by Eric Niiler of the *Patriot Ledger*, (617) 786-7323.

► You've heard of and probably written about some of the horror stories associated with Superfund. But there are also success stories and the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* in May reported one. For years young children living in a group of rowhouses in Northbridge, Ma., were becoming lead poisoned, even though the state's tough lead law had forced landlords and homeowners to strip off paint inside many of the houses. The EPA in Boston did some testing and found soil levels up to 6,700 parts per million. Even though the site was never determined to be a Superfund site, EPA said that emergency Superfund money could be used. With very little red tape under the emergency status, testing, assessment and soil removal began and was expected to be finished in about two months. For more information, contact the writer, John Monahan, *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, (508) 793-9172.

### MINNESOTA

► It has been a decade since the government embarked on a \$19.5 billion experiment: paying farmers across the country to set aside up to 40 million acres of their land for 10 to 15 years. Agriculture Department officials, who have enrolled 36.4 million acres of cropland in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), rave that it is one of their most successful efforts. They say it has saved fragile land and pleased both farmers and environmentalists. But critics, including several University of Minnesota researchers, say the CRP is another example of a federal program with noble aims that has been victimized by waste and abuse. They charge that the CRP has squandered billions of dollars by paying many farmers and land owners double or more the market rental rates to idle their land, hurt rural economies by limiting farming and undermined its own mission by giving farmers incentives to plow up new land. The *Star Tribune* of Minneapolis published a three-part series in late June. Contacts: Dean Rebuffoni and James Walsh, (612) 673-4414.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

► In an unusual journalistic venture, 19 reporters and photographers from five East Coast newspapers, including the

*Maine Sunday Telegram*, are hiking the Appalachian Trail and writing about their journey. Their 2,158 mile trek through 14 states, from Georgia to Maine, began in March and will end in October. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Raleigh News & Observer*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and *Hartford Courant* are also represented. The journalists are filing weekly reports to their papers, some of which are written in the first person and bring home the on-the-ground experience of what *Telegram* staff writer Lloyd Ferriss called "the last vestige of continuous wilderness in eastern America."

## NEW MEXICO

► In a special report published May 24 in *The Albuquerque Tribune*, reporter Tony Davis explored the "The Roots of Anger" in Catron County, the wise-use hotbed where opposition to the federal government is virtually a way of life. For copies of the eight-page section, contact Davis at (505) 832-3625.

## NORTH DAKOTA

► A North Dakota coal association says that Minnesota efforts to put a dollar value on various power plant air emissions "borders on the absurd" and threatens the future of a \$1 billion industry. Minnesota is developing what are called "externality costs" that would place a price per ton on carbon dioxide, mercury and other pollutants from power plants. The costs would not be a tax, but rather a planning estimate that would be used to determine what kinds of power plants should be built in the future. The North Dakota Lignite Council opposes the costs, which they say will eventually raise consumer electric rates unnecessarily. But environmentalists say the pollutant prices will show the true costs of using fossil fuels to generate electricity, and will assist efforts in the Midwest to develop more economical windpower and biomass energy projects. Contact: Tom Meersman, *Star-Tribune*, (612) 673-7388.

## OHIO

► Cleveland *Plain Dealer* reporters, T.C. Brown and Molly Kavanaugh, broke a story in May that detailed the City of Cleveland's Division of Water's mishan-

dling of mercury. Brown and Kavanaugh discovered that until August 1993, the Division didn't have a written policy for handling mercury spills and clean-ups. Mercury, used in manometers, was routinely transported in household containers in Division vans. Some spills, according to Division employees, were just washed into drains. Ultimately, four Division vans had to be destroyed due to mercury contamination. The price may have been much higher. The family of a deceased employee contends that his death was caused by exposure to mercury. He had worked with the manometers for years and had cleaned up a 50 to 70 pound spill that had occurred in his city van. Brown and Kavanaugh continue to cover developments as the deceased employee's home has tested positive for mercury contamination, his family has filed a suit against the City claiming negligence, and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District has found elevated levels of mercury in the sewers at the Division of Water's headquarters. Brown works out of the Columbus Bureau at (614) 228-8200. Kavanaugh, in the Lorain Bureau, can be reached at (800) 767-2821.

## RHODE ISLAND

► Five years ago the Providence *Journal-Bulletin* reported that environmentalists were so optimistic about their prospects for making change in the 1990s that they were calling this the Green Decade. This year, the *Journal-Bulletin* did a mid-decade report. In a broad survey of environmental trends in Rhode Island and to a lesser extent nationally and internationally, the newspaper concluded that there have been significant improvements in the environment. However, the mood for further change in the next five years is decidedly less upbeat. As the newspaper reported: "Environmental issues that remain to be solved are more complicated than originally perceived, money is becoming more difficult to find, there is greater distrust in government." The report was based on interviews with experts on a number of subjects—air pollution, wildlife, waste—along with summaries of what was found on each issue. Excerpts from three key interviews with U.S. Sen. John Chafee, the director of the state's environmental agency, and a Brown University scholar on the environment, were also included.

The hope now is that the newspaper can do a similar report in another five years. For more information, contact Bob Wyss (401) 277-7364 or Peter Lord (401) 737-3070 at the *Journal-Bulletin*.

## TENNESSEE

► In the May 28th edition of Memphis' *The Commercial Appeal*, Tom Charlier reported that in many cases, state and federal agencies that destroy wetlands while developing public-works projects are not doing the mitigation required by the Clean Water Act, or the mitigation is improperly done and never corrected. Commercial developers appear to have a better track record than the government on wetlands compensation, perhaps because they hire private consultants to help them do it right. Contact Charlier at (901) 529-2572.

► At the 70-acre Hollywood Dump, a notorious Memphis Superfund site contaminated by pesticides from Velsicol Chemical Company, fish in a dredge pond were deliberately killed as part of an \$8 million cleanup effort. EPA had determined that the fish contained unacceptably high levels of pesticides, posing a threat to the low-income residents nearby who often fished in the pond. Cleanup officials were impressed with the healthy "size, abundance, and diversity" of the erstwhile fish population. Residents, disgruntled by the loss of their favorite fishing hole, hurled insults at cleanup workers and vandalized their equipment, as reported by Tom Charlier in the *Commercial Appeal* June 13th.

## WEST VIRGINIA

► Through a series of Freedom of Information Act requests, Ken Ward Jr. of *The Charleston Gazette* revealed that scientists from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency believed Corridor H, a highway from Central West Virginia through national forest lands to Washington, D.C., would be an environmental disaster. The *Gazette* investigated after allegations that EPA Region III Administrator Peter Kostmayer was fired for his opposition to the highway project, which has the support of Sens. Robert C. Byrd and Jay Rockefeller. A series of stories published by the *Gazette* showed

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## The Green Beat

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EPA reports on the road were watered-down after complaints from Byrd and Rockefeller. For copies of the stories, call Ward at (304) 348-1702.

➤ Several West Virginia newspapers have reported extensively on efforts to clean up acid mine drainage problems on the Cheat River, a prime whitewater rafting stream in the northern part of the state. State and federal agencies are teaming up with private industry on the project, which gained momentum when the group American Rivers Inc. listed the Cheat as among the 10 most endangered rivers in the nation. For more information or copies of stories, call Lee Chotiner of the Morgantown Dominion Post at (304) 292-6301 or Rick Steelhammer of *The Charleston Gazette* at (304) 348-5169.

➤ Reports over the last two months have explored efforts by Gov. Gaston Caperton's administration to offer private industry lucrative leases on state public lands for oil and gas and timber purposes. The *Dominion Post* has reported on a now aborted plan to trade oil and gas drilling rights at Coopers Rock State Forest for a prime viewshed across from the forest. Chottiner reported about Caperton's reluctance to offer direct state support for buying the land across from Coopers Rock. The first reported that Caperton's Division of Natural Resources refused to release its estimates

of the value of oil and gas at the forest so the public could decide if the trade was a fair deal. Later, the *Gazette* also reported that Caperton wanted to trade \$800,000 worth of state-owned timber rights for a \$300,000 piece of property that could be used as a National Guard shooting range.

➤ Paul Nyden, investigative report for *The Charleston Gazette*, has continued his series of stories showing that the West Virginia Tax Department's procedures for taxing coal and other natural resource properties are flawed. Call Nyden at (304) 348-5164.

➤ Also, *The Gazette* and the *Dominion Post* have both profiled Eli McCoy, the new director of the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection. McCoy succeeded David C. Callaghan, who retired this spring. Chottiner of the *Dominion Post* focused on McCoy's support for Corridor H, while the *Gazette* discussed environmental groups' misgivings about McCoy's willingness to stand up to industry.

### WISCONSIN

➤ Environmental coverage has taken on a different look, as the *Milwaukee Journal* and *Milwaukee Sentinel* have merged news staffs to form the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. The new morning paper has an environment focus page each Tuesday, consisting of one

lengthy feature from environment writer Don Behm and a round-up of environmental news from the past week. Behm and other staffers also cover breaking environmental stories on other days. For details, contact Behm at (414) 224-2000.

➤ News media in the Milwaukee area have generally cooperated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to publicize an air pollution reduction effort known as "Ozone Action Days." On days when the DNR believes conditions are right for the formation of high levels of harmful ozone, media are asked to help encourage local residents to use mass transit or carpool and reduce the use of gas and oil burning small engines. One conservative radio talk show host has questioned the value of the \$180,000 effort.

➤ Environmental groups have asked the Wisconsin news media for "sound, reasoned reporting on the facts" about reformulated gasoline. That plea came after a Wisconsin telephone survey found the fuel is not causing health problems in the Milwaukee area. An earlier probe showed the fuel is not causing unexpected drops in gas mileage. Allegations of the new gas leading to dramatically lower mileage and poor health were the focus of many media stories earlier this year. Wisconsin is still looking at the complaints of about 1400 people who told health officials the gas makes them ill.

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## SEJournal

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