

SEJ Journal

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Toxic reports due Industries must reveal their “doomsday” possibilities

By ANDREW BRENGLE

By next summer, thousands of industrial operations across the nation using high-hazard chemicals must describe their worst-case accident scenarios to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and create plans for reducing the potential consequences for neighbors.

EPA, formerly intent on publicizing these disaster scenarios on the Internet for easy public access, has decided to disseminate the same in the traditional manner—e.g., by answering specific requests for the “worst case” information made directly to EPA or to local emergency planning authorities. Fears of ter-

rorism, voiced in chemical industry arguments and in warnings from the FBI, influenced EPA’s decision.

All accidental release data will be available to the public, including most of it on the Internet; disaster information, nevertheless, will not be just a click away. At the latest, information should become available one way or another by June 21, 1999. EPA, which officially refers to a worst-case accident scenario as an “offsite consequence analysis,” plans to start accepting and publicly disseminating Risk Management Plans starting in January 1999, despite the June

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USDA seeds would make crops sterile

By LEORA BROYDO

In a practice as old as farming itself, many farmers save seeds from one growing season and plant them in the next. In South America, poor farmers use knowledge passed down over centuries to select seeds best suited to the local climate and soil.

Across the equator, their counterparts in South Dakota do it too; 80 to 90 percent of wheat farmers there save seeds from harvests. Also in wheat-producing Kansas, seeds are carefully cleaned and conditioned and then planted.

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Memo to your editor

Olympics may be your beat

By TIM WINKLER

In Barcelona a flaming arrow lit the gas cauldron. In Atlanta, Muhammad Ali risked a singed forearm by carrying out the ignition honors. In Sydney, a kangaroo will jump into a cauldron and flick the flint on a cigarette lighter to reduce greenhouse emissions.

Well, the part about the kangaroo is not true—everybody knows kangaroos do not smoke—but it captures the spirit of the 2000 games. The Sydney Olympics should be more environmentally conscious than any other games in history, and the Australian environment is destined to be the long-term benefactor.

The centerpiece of the green push is the Olympic village, to be named

Newington, which will be the largest solar-powered suburb in the world. Mirvac Lend Lease Village Consortium CEO Hugh Martin said roof-mounted solar panels installed on every house in the new suburb would collectively generate more than one million kilowatt hours annually. “The electricity generated by these photovoltaic PV panels will be fed into the grid—in effect making Newington a clean, green mini-power station,” Martin said.

The 665 houses built for the games will be sold to residents after the games and each will annually save about \$800 in power costs. In the six years following the games, another 1335 homes will

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An idea that bore fruit

Father of SEJ, David Stolberg, honored at conference

In September, I returned to Memphis, where I long ago worked as a medical and environment writer. There, at an old friend's wedding, I ran into a Memphis eye doctor that I knew. Years ago, I had written of his efforts to bring eye care to undeveloped parts of the world.

"The connection you made," he said. "You're not going believe how significant it was."

This connection occurred after my wife and I had left Memphis for China to teach English to Chinese doctors chosen to study in America. A student came to our apartment one day. "I have a problem," he said. "I have lost my sponsor."

For some reason, the arrangement he had made to study with an American eye doctor had fallen apart. I tried to calm him. And I promised to write to the Memphis eye doctor I had met while reporting.

Well, our student went to Memphis and studied with the eye doctor. But I hadn't seen the student or the eye doctor in nearly eight years—until my old friend's wedding.

"Meng returned to China," the doctor said. "And he opened the first fee-for-service eye clinic in China. It's had a tremendous impact. You don't know what a difference you made."

I hadn't done anything that anyone else wouldn't have done. I just wrote a letter to an acquaintance. It was a simple, easy thing.

And this brings me, finally, to SEJ.

Many years ago, before our organization's birth, David Stolberg took an extra step that resulted in a substantial leap for environmental journalism. While overseeing Scripps-Howard's journalism awards, he suggested to the Edward Meeman winners that they start an association of environmental journalists. The first year, no one responded. The second year, the response was overwhelming. And SEJ soon was born.

He also made sure Scripps-Howard helped with the new group's early legal fees. Nine years later, in Chattanooga this October at SEJ's national conference, SEJ members stood and applauded Stolberg who attended his first SEJ conference

since his simple act of kindness toward environmental journalism.

Stolberg, now retired, expressed amazement at what had become of his simple idea to create an organization. Today, SEJ can boast of 1,100 members, 500 in attendance at a national conference, its eighth, with such notable speakers as Ted Turner and such substantive presenters as marine biologist Sylvia Earle.

Jim Detjen, who was one of those

Report from the society's president

By
Mike
Mansur



who responded immediately to Stolberg's suggestion years ago, presented Stolberg with a special plaque to commemorate his service. And Detjen announced a new SEJ award, a volunteer service award named for Stolberg that will be presented each year at the SEJ national conference.

Stolberg stood holding his plaque close to his chest and surveying the members. He searched for words—something he would later admit to having seldom experienced. And he told the SEJ members that this simple suggestion he had made years ago was the best thing he had ever done in his journalism career.

Later, in a letter to Beth Parke, SEJ's executive director, Stolberg wrote: "while it seemed pretty easy a decade ago, my midwifery effort in the creation of SEJ was undoubtedly the most important and proudest of my 45-year journalism career, and that this October 10th was the happiest of my seventy-one birthdays because of the recognition you bestowed."

That presentation in Chattanooga, undoubtedly, was the most moving SEJ

moment I had witnessed. I thought later of that Memphis eye doctor, of the simple things that we all know we should do every day but often don't. And it made me want to thank all SEJ members, past and present—including such notables as Stolberg, Detjen, Bud Ward, Rae Tyson, Emilia Askari, Kevin Carmody, and so many others—who've hoisted major tasks and also done a lot of what at times may seem like minor things for SEJ.

We know now that, in sum, they've built something that has had a tremendous impact. As for that new award, it will be presented during next year's national conference at UCLA to a member whose service to SEJ epitomizes the volunteer spirit. Current board members, of course, are not eligible. A call for nominations will go out to members. A committee of three judges, appointed by the SEJ president by July 1, will select the Stolberg winner.

In his letter to Parke, Stolberg summed up how important this award will be:

"By my lights, the annual David Stolberg Award is akin to the Congressional Medal. Each year, from now on, it will reflect outstanding service to the Society of Environmental Journalists. The Medal honors sublime heroism in combat. In our context, can there be achievement of greater importance than service to that journalism which monitors and enhances the battle for the survival of the planet?"

Thank you, David Stolberg, for your simple act of caring. It has produced so much.

◆◆◆

I am greatly honored to succeed Kevin Carmody as SEJ's new president. Kevin deserves much credit for all he has done for SEJ. Before becoming president, he served for years as SEJ's secretary and resident encyclopedia for SEJ bylaw questions and historic details. He was the catalyst behind our national conference in St. Louis.

Kevin remains on the board and hopes to spend a little more time attending to his new daughter, adopted recently in China. Congrats to Kevin and his wife, Pat Tanaka.

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

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Election results

The Society of Environmental Journalists annual meeting was held in conjunction with the Eighth National Conference, October 10, 1998 in Chattanooga, Tennessee. During the meeting, the membership elected to SEJ's Board of Directors Peter Thomson, senior correspondent & West Region bureau chief for National Public Radio's *Living on Earth*, and re-elected Russ Clemings, computer-assisted reporting specialist with the *Fresno Bee*, and David Ropeik, reporter for *WCVB-TV*.



Colony Brown

Colony Brown, senior project director for the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, was elected as Board representative for associate members, and Kris Wilson (photo unavailable), journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, came onto the board representing academic members. All newly elected Board members will serve for three-year terms.



Russell Clemings

The Board elected its officers during a Board meeting held October 11, 1998. Mike Mansur, 18-year veteran in environmental reporting for the *Kansas City Star*, takes the helm as president. Mansur was part of the *Star* team responsible for the series "Failing the Grade," about the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The series won numerous awards in 1992, including the Pulitzer Prize for national reporting. David Ropeik and Jim Bruggers are, respectively, first and second vice presidents; Sara Thurin Rollin will continue as treasurer; and Gary Polakovic remains as secretary. Board officers serve for a one-year term.



David Ropeik

SEJ Board meetings are open and members are encouraged to attend.

Any active member in good standing (that is, members who have paid their dues and have returned their annual survey indicating that they are still eligible for active membership) may run for the SEJ Board. Any academic and associate member in good standing may run for the academic or associate representative, ex officio Board seats. A call for candidates will be mailed to all members during the first two weeks of June 1999.



Peter Thomson

Absentee ballots are provided for members in good standing who are not able to attend the annual meeting to cast their vote. Absentee ballots for the next annual meeting will be mailed to all members in good standing between July 30 and August 19.

In order to vote in the 1999 election, members must be in good standing as of July 20, 1999. Members who are late paying membership dues as of this date will not be eligible to vote in the 1999 election.

Members are encouraged to contact the SEJ office to determine whether they are in good standing. Call (215) 836-9970, or email sejoffice@aol.com.

'98 Conference: Remembering Chattanooga

Chattanooga rolled out the red carpet Oct. 8 for the Society of Environmental Journalists' Eighth Annual Conference. Some 450 reporters, editors, grassroots advocates, government officials, and others attended sessions of a packed agenda.

Following are summations and reactions by SEJers who attended various sessions:

TOURS

Marla Cone: One of the half-day tours—"Blue, Gray and Green"—treated tour participants to a nice blend of history and environment in the half-day trip to the Chickamauga/Chattanooga National Military Park. A major thoroughfare cuts through the park and federal officials are in the process of rerouting it outside park boundaries to preserve the feel of historic battle sites. Jim Ogden of the National Park Service (NPS), and Robin Rudd and Lee Anderson of the *Chattanooga Free Press* explained the park's importance to Civil War history and the local area.

Chris Rigel: Another half-day tour: "A New Approach to Urban Revitalization" bussed attendees through Chattanooga to the city's Southside for a look at revitalization in a 640-acre area of brownfields and decaying neighborhoods. The tour wound up at the new Max Finley Stadium—one of the Southside's improvements already up, running, and providing jobs—where attendees listened to and questioned experts.

Speakers discussed an overview of plans for the Southside that sprouted from initial discussions four years ago. Southside projects were personalized with examples of people—single mothers, senior citizens, low-income families—whose lives have been improved through outreach and cooperative effort. David Crockett, chairman of the Chattanooga City Council, explained plans for an eco-industrial center with a cooperative waste-to-raw-material feedback loop which would provide jobs for Southside residents without polluting the neighborhoods. Jim Schwab of The American Planning Association gave the national perspectives on urban planning, and David Flessner (*Chattanooga Times*) offered a reporter's perspective.

Noel Grove: In one of the full-day tours, "Managing the People's Forests" the USDA Forest Service demonstrated its changing priorities by concentrating on watershed management instead of growing trees. At a dairy farm, tour-goers saw buffer strips of natural vegetation that separate croplands from the Conasauga River to prevent siltation and provide wildlife habitat. Next was an innovative cattle crossing on a feeder stream that hurries bovines through a graveled wade-through section eight feet wide. Later, members of a volunteer aquatic research group released a thousand "blue shiner" minnows, a threatened species found only in a 15-mile stretch of the Conasauga.

"Seventy per cent of the public say they want to see less logging," said Regional Forester Elizabeth Estill. "But we are still funded by an antiquated allocation system in which we get money for timber production that really should go toward multi-

ple use and protection of fisheries."

In one of the mini-tours offered Friday and Saturday afternoons, representatives of the Chattanooga transportation system proudly welcomed journalists aboard a hybrid bi-fueled bus manufactured at the outskirts of the city. Electricity now powers most of the city's popular downtown fleet. With the new propulsion method developed by the local firm Advanced Vehicle Systems, an internal combustion engine fueled by compressed natural gas runs a generator that recharges dry-cell batteries that actually move the vehicle. The nearly pollution-free power source is seen as the next generation of alternately fueled vehicles and may be sold abroad.

OPENING PLENARY

In the opening plenary on Friday morning panel members commenting on the influence of business on environmental news chastised reporters for not taking advantage of opportunities. *CNN's* Teya Ryan said environment news should be tied in more with business matters, since the former is too often seen by editors as "soft news." David Anable of the International Center for Journalists said the media are falling behind the politicians in recognizing the importance of the environment, as evidenced by the power of the Greens in Germany. Robert Mong, *Dallas Morning News* executive, said statistics show growing public anxiety about environmental matters but a mixed performance by journalists in making those matters important.

Anable added that the U.S., with its two-year Congressional terms and corporate quarterly reports, looks too much at short-term goals and is too influenced by polls. Journalists should lead the way in looking at environmental matters decades ahead, he added.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The following comments were made on the many discussion sessions that took place Friday, Saturday, and Sunday:

Lee Johnson: "Is Science for Sale?" What's good science? What's bought-and-paid-for science? The distinction can be crucial when trying to assess the value to place on a source in an environmental story. The discussion was lively; the suggestions on how to tell the difference were useful.



Casey Bukro, Michael Keating, and Paul MacClennan are builders of the environmental journalism beat.





(above) Jim Detjen prepares to bring up either a critical point to JoAnn Valenti, or his lunch.

(right) Scott Miller, left, and Jack Hamann, highly amused.

(below) From left, Gary Polakovic, JoAnn Valenti, and Russ Clemings attend to business while Jim Bruggers works one-handed.



ardous materials at a local military base stemmed from a topic that most editors and reporters thought had already been well explored although the problems were much more severe than anyone thought.

Noel Grove: In a session he conducted alone, environmental author Mark Dowie predicted that the next 100 years will overshadow the last as the true Environmental Century. Tracing the environmental movement from the “hook and bullet” people through the environmental PACs, he predicted that future environmentalism will be characterized by more grassroots activity than national action.

“Greens have to recognize that land in Indiana is as precious as that in Yellowstone, and that water from a tap in Chester, PA, is as important as that coming over Bridal Veil Falls,” he said. “I foresee more environmental militancy—but boycotting products and bringing more litigation.”

Lee Johnson: “North Carolina: Ground Zero in the Hog Wars” panel discussed how hogs, once common on every farm, have become big business, and the changes in the industry—and state attempts to regulate it—may mean the difference between sustainable agriculture and serious air, ground, and water pollution. North Carolina is a leader in the struggle to balance industry needs and the public good in a business that is quickly spreading to states across America.

Chris Rigel: The SEJ membership meeting may have been more successful than in past years because SEJ catered it. Washing down hors d’oeuvres with beer, members got to watch David Stolberg’s beaming smile as he received recognition for bringing SEJ into being.

Board elections went the way elections usually do, except for a few interesting moments at the ballot table where the elections committee had to tell a couple board members they couldn’t vote because they were late with their dues. Members take note: no favoritism here!



Orna Izakson swallows either a goldfish or SEJ catering fare.



Marla Cone: “The Builders of the Beat” panel offered the perspective of veterans on our beat—Casey Bukro, *Chicago Tribune*, Michael Keating, freelancer, and Paul MacClennan, *Buffalo News*. They offered examples of how to stay fresh and invigorated while covering the environment. They also traced the beginnings of environmental journalism back to grassroots reporting on such issues as pollution in the Great Lakes. They emphasized that the best environmental stories are local stories, and that stories need some historical context.

The “1998 Award Winners” panel included a blend of exemplary journalism from large as well as small media outfits. Dale Willman showed how he had to struggle for time and air space at *CNN Radio* after discovering a health threat to musicians from pyrotechnics at the *Beauty and the Beast* production. Gary Cohn of the *Baltimore Sun* described the international work and paper chasing that went into the Pulitzer Prize-winning project on the deplorable conditions of the shipbreaking industry. Bill Mills of the *Cape Cod Times* talked about how their investigation of haz-



David Stolberg, far left, receives a plaque of appreciation from Jim Detjen.

Page 5 photos by Peter Dykstra



'98 Conference...continued

Bud Ward: In a Sunday morning "Is Seeing Believing?" seminar at Chattanooga's Hunter Museum, photo-journalists Gary Braasch and Daniel Dancer took reporters behind the lens and explained how they can work more effectively with photographers in telling important environmental stories. Projecting slide images of their work from national magazines, Braasch and Dancer provided insights on steps photographers can take to accurately reflect the essence of a story in a way that remains loyal to the partnering reporter's reportage, and they also illustrated how photos can best be used to support a particular editorial perspective.

Each discussed emerging photo-ethics issues in the context of new technologies providing increased capabilities for manipulating an image, and each also outlined steps the media can take to assure that their audiences know when an image has been manipulated. Dancer, a photographer who also uses his skills as an artist in promoting environmental issues, explained how he feels the camera's eye, in the hands of skilled photographer, can send a strong message going beyond the written or spoken word.

SMOKY MOUNTAINS TOUR

This year's post-conference tour took 22 reporters to the Smoky Mountains National Park to look at sprawl issues surrounding the park and ozone problems and dying firs in the most heavily visited park in the U.S. Participants found it a good blend of serious study and jolly fun in a beautiful setting, although most found the route to the park sobering with heavy development.

Debra Schwartz noted that while stopping for lunch in a suburb of Knoxville, TN, it took one SEJ member 10 minutes to cross the street due to traffic. Once rolling hills are sprouting large houses and subdivisions, whose residents strain city services for miles between Knoxville and the music theaters, tourist shops, and entertainment complexes of Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg.

One facet of development is, according to National Park Service's Jim Renfro,

an increase in the number of automobiles and factories—heavy producers of nitrogen oxides. NOx, one of the necessary ingredients to form ground-level ozone, is then carried to the Smokies on prevailing winds.

After a three-hour ride, SEJers learned how rangers and scientists are attempting to gather more information about the varied species in the Smoky Mountains through the park's All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory project. A two-year period of pilot work will begin in March 1999 to refine sampling and data protocols before beginning full operations. (Check www.discoverlife.org or www.nps.gov/grsm/index.htm for more info.)

A two-hour rugged trail walk through a forest canopy to a three-tiered water fall preceded a discussion of the disappointing reintroduction of red wolves to the park. The evening moved onto a campfire dinner followed by stargazing and tall tales, legends, and folk stories dramatically told by Methodist minister and Appalachian yarn spinner Charles Maynard, leaning on his walking stick.

In the gathering darkness the lack of a single lantern became obvious, and food was further spiced by the inability to tell condiments apart. "Mayonnaise! Yuck! I



Photo by Debra Schwartz

Des Keller, business editor for *Progressive Farmer*, collecting quotes.

Photo by Gary Braasch©



Clingman Dome, Smoky Mountains National Park, shows evidence of air pollution damage and insect infestation.

thought that was mustard!" Bruce Ritchie, camping a half mile away with his wife, retrieved a light from his tent and led all out of the darkness.

Next morning the group walked a steep paved trail above the cloud line to the top of the Great Smoky Mountains' highest peak and saw where pollution meets the stratosphere. Sources from the National Parks Service and Tennessee Valley Authority showed dramatic examples of the degree that visibility is impaired by smog from coke refining, coal mining, and vehicle exhaust.

Later, sitting on logs, participants had a lesson in the death of many of the conifers in the park. Acid rain, 10 times more acidic than normal rainfall, affects the fragile spruce/fir forest that covers 74 percent of the Smoky Mountains National Park, as does ground-level ozone pollution, which is high enough to threaten the health of park employees and visitors. Smoky Mountains National Park air quality research information is available at www.aqd.nps.gov/natnet/ard. ❖

Most sessions are available on tape

Cassettes of SEJ's 1998 National Conference are available from Goodkind of Sound.

Call the SEJ office at (215) 836-9970 or Goodkind of Sound at (800) 786-8446 for information.



Can't find a new job? Then create your own. That's the technique used by **Monica Allen**, the former coastal assignment editor of the *Bangor* (ME) *Daily News*. For personal reasons Allen wanted to move south. She walked into the editor's office at *The Standard-Times* in New Bedford, MA, seeking to fill a part time opening. She came out in a newly created full-time beat as a science, environment and health reporter.

That's not all. Allen is spending a large part of November in Krakow, Poland. There she will meet up with **David Helvarg** and together they will train local environmental reporters. The team is sponsored by the International Center for Journalists based in Washington, DC.

If you can't pitch 'em, join 'em. Infiltrating the ranks of management is **Carol Hartman**. A former health reporter at the *Auburn Journal*, Hartman is moving to the *Roseville Press Tribune* as the news and features editor. Both papers are in California. We will keep an eye out for increased enviro coverage!

Just back from an overseas teaching assignment is the *Sacramento Bee's* **Christopher Bowman**. He spent three months in Zimbabwe helping local journalists learn how to cover environmental stories. "It was like coaching," he says of the fellowship which was sponsored by the Heinz Foundation through the

International Center for Foreign Reporters. Look for Chris's report on his experiences in an upcoming issue of *SEJournal*.

After earning her Ph.D. in Mass Media at Michigan State, **Elizabeth Burch** headed west to join the faculty of Sonoma State University in Rohnert Park, CA. In addition to her job as an assistant professor in

Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsy

the Communications Study Department, Burch works as a reader and consultant to the school's "Project Censored" report, which highlights the 25 most under-reported stories of each year.

JoAnn Valenti is trying her hand at becoming an academic entrepreneur. As a visiting professor at the Russell Sage Colleges in Troy, New York, Valenti is helping to build the school's journalism program. "It's fun," she reports, "except that I'm used to schools with 30-40,000 kids." The upstate New York school has only a thousand students. Her stay in the Empire State will only last a year, then she is back among the throngs of learners at Brigham Young University.

Business Week science editor, **Paul Raeburn**, has a new book that's been out since August. *Mars: Uncovering the Secrets of the Red Planet* takes a behind-the-scenes look at last year's

Pathfinder mission. Among the many pictures included is a 3-D panorama of the red planet, complete with tear-out glasses for viewing it.

Radio producer **Jim Metzner** has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for his "Pulse of the Planet" radio series.

"Pulse" encourages listeners to share the ways that they observe and celebrate the seasons of their year. For his latest project Metzner wants listeners to tell their stories for a series entitled

"Tracking the Seasons," so he is seeking people who have interesting ways of marking seasonal change. Perhaps they take a family ice fishing trip every winter. Maybe they band birds for migration studies every spring. Metzner will work with a number of listeners to produce their seasonal events into short radio features. The segments will air on his own program, "Pulse of the Planet," as well as *NPR's* "Living on Earth" and *PRI's* Savvy Traveler.

Has your book been published? Land a new position? Finally had your work recognized by the Pulitzer (or some other awards) committee? Don't be shy. Keep your colleagues informed. Send all professional news to George Homsy, email: ghomsy@world.std.com, fax: 617-868-8659, address: Living on Earth, 8 Story Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Journalists discuss beat problems at IFEJ conference

More than 70 journalists from almost 40 nations met October 19-23 near Colombo, Sri Lanka, for the sixth world conference of environmental journalists. The conference was organized by the Sri Lanka Environmental Journalists Forum, the Asia Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists, and the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ).

Attendees adopted an international ethics code for environmental journalists. The Asia Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists adopted an ambitious five-year plan for Asian countries. A new international organization for environmental journalists living in countries of the British Commonwealth was created.

The Sri Lanka Environmental Journalists Forum gave its International Green Pen Award to nine journalists for their contributions to environmental journalism. Honored were Aditya Man Shrestha of Nepal, Darryl D'Monte of India, Valentin Thurn of Germany, Jim Detjen of the USA, Vijay Menon of Singapore, Manuel Satorre of the Philippines, Quamrul Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Yang Mao of China, and Marta Sarvari of Hungary.

The IFEJ administrative council selected Bogota, Columbia, as the site of the seventh world conference, planned for October 1999. The 2000 conference will be held near Cairo, Egypt. During the five-day

conference the journalists discussed ecotourism, biodiversity, climate change, water issues, urban development, environmental journalism education, broadcast journalism and investigative reporting in newspapers. Also discussed were problems faced by environmental journalists worldwide, including censorship, intimidation and imprisonment.

IFEJ is an umbrella organization representing about 40 national organizations of environmental journalists with more than 6,000 members worldwide. The organization also has individual members from more than 60 countries. Jim Detjen of Michigan State University, founding president of SEJ, serves as IFEJ president. ❖



It all comes down to defining terms

When all's been said and done, maybe it shouldn't have been

► Everything these days seems to depend on how you define your terms, whether you are President Clinton questioning the meaning of "is": or Debbie Schwartz asking about musical instruments.

Musical instruments?

Recently Debbie of *Pioneer Press* in Chicago innocently posed the following message on the SEJ listserv: "Hi all. Do any of you play any musical instruments?"

"I had thought maybe some of us could get together at Chattanooga and jam during the SEJ conference," reports Debbie. "About six people responded, but none of them were going to conference."

It's doubtful that what she had in mind was what she got from Merritt Clifton of *ANIMAL PEOPLE* and Jim Schwab of the American Planning Association, although, says Debbie, "They cracked me up."

Merritt responded: "The flaks bang the drums, freelancers blow their own horns, academics fiddle around, and major media folks pull strings. The White House corps seems to be preoccupied with somebody's organ. I'm on a keyboard myself, but will admit to rarely contributing much to harmony."

Then Jim got into the act: "*Cello*, everyone. Thought I'd mention in response that, long ago when I had a summer job during college in a chemical plant, they had me on the 55-gallon *drums*. Like me, however, those are probably rusty by now. Like most authors and journalists, I've never really succeeded with the *lute*. Guess I'll just have to stick to the *bass*-ics. That's just the *tenor* of the situation. I'm just not a *cymbal* of musical excellence. —Jim Schwab (on a sour note).

Thanks a lot, guys.

► Maybe some people don't understand the optional ethnicity question on SEJ's member survey. Then again, maybe they understand all too well. Many don't answer, but when they do, we find we're made up of all kinds. Among the straight-forward answers recently received are a few less-easily categorized.

Many answer with the acronym "WASP," reports Chris Rigel from SEJ headquarters in Philadelphia. But one answered "Texas WASP," apparently a sub-species that may be whiter and more protestant than the others.

One answered "white guy."

Another announced, "entirely, catastrophically Irish."

Ethnicity? We have one "earthling."

And finally, after "ethnicity" one member answered "yes."

We hope it's not contagious.

► Sometimes it's not a matter of misunderstanding terms, just plain bad timing.

Steve Pomplun of *Earthwatch Radio* at the University of Wisconsin-Madison says he heard *CBS Radio* close an hour of

news recently with a story about lobsters dying and sick in the waters off Maine. The reporter said the cause was unknown, but that scientists had found bacteria in the blood of some of the animals.

Cut to commercial: an ad for Red Lobster promoting a special on Maine lobsters.

Yum.

► And finally, the brevity of this issue's column can be traced to the fact that the conference in Chattanooga failed to produce the rich, amusing gaffes that usually color these pages after the annual SEJ rendezvous. GABI fired off an e-mail to Peter Dykstra of *CNN*, berating him for chairing an SEJ conference that produced no flukes and funnies for publication. His reply by e-mail:

"My apologies for the lack of comic mishaps in Chattanooga. As God is my witness, it won't happen again."

In the previous issue, GABI threw down a challenge for environmental limericks, giving two examples. Only two people responded, with entries that will probably carry PG-13 warning labels when published.

GABI regrets that the sample limericks offered in the last issue were so terribly clever that *SEJournal* readers have been intimidated. GABI will therefore dumb down with another sample.

Submitting a limerick to GABI,

Keeps minds from growing too flabby,

Take a break from the news

And hark to the muse

And try to finish with a rhythm that is not this shabby.

There. Feel better? Join the fun, by snail or e-mail.

Limericks, or any humorous stories that relate to the environmental beat and might be part of a future Grin and Bare It (GABI) column, should be submitted by email to Noel Grove at ngrove1253@aol.com or by regular mail to Noel Grove at Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 20118.

SEJournal deadlines

Winter 1999.....January 15, 1999
 Spring 1999.....April 15, 1999
 Summer 1999.....July 15, 1999
 Fall 1999.....October 15, 1998

Send submissions to Noel Grove, editor, at email ngrove1253@aol.com, P.O. Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 20118.



Application for Membership Society of Environmental Journalists

P.O. Box 27280
Philadelphia, PA 19118

Phone: (215) 836-9970 Fax: (215) 836-9972 Email: sejoffice@aol.com
http://www.sej.org

READ AND FOLLOW ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY.

Return completed application with \$40 (students: \$30) to the SEJ office.

Fill out both sides of the application completely. Please include a résumé. Attach a business card if available.

Incomplete or unsigned applications will be returned.

Sign the application and return to the Society of Environmental Journalists. Include a check for \$40 (students, \$30), or, to pay with VISA or Mastercard, fill in your card number, expiration, and signature on the last page of this form.

Please note: SEJ precludes from membership persons who lobby or conduct public relations on environmental issues.
SEJ expects applicants to be honest and complete in filling out this application.

These are our categories of membership:

Active: Persons primarily engaged in the gathering, reporting, editing, photographing, producing or cartooning of news for dissemination by regularly published, general circulation newspapers, magazines, and newsletters, radio and television stations and networks, syndicated news services, and other media available to the general public.

Associate: Those individuals, such as part-time freelancers, who do not qualify for Active or Academic membership but who, in the majority opinion of the SEJ board, will contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the SEJ. Applicants must be substantially engaged in journalistic pursuits.

Academic: Persons on the full-time faculty or enrolled as students of an accredited college, university, or other school who have an interest in environmental issues.

You will be notified about your category of membership upon your acceptance into SEJ by the membership committee.

Please print legibly.

Name _____ Business Title _____

Employer (students, list school currently attended) _____

Publication or Department _____

Position _____
(Editor, producer, freelance journalist, photographer, student, etc.)

Mailing Address* (work Home) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Alternate Address (work Home) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip/Postal Code _____ Country _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Work Phone* (_____) _____ Fax* (_____) _____
Not for publication in annual directory

E-mail Address* _____
Primary Other

World Wide Web address _____

* For publication in annual directory



Which of the following most accurately describes your employment. SELECT ONE ONLY.

- Author
- Faculty
- Freelancer
- Magazine
- News service
- Newsletter
- Newspaper
- Nonprofit
- Online Media
- Photographer
- Publisher
- Radio
- Student
- Television

Answer the following questions completely and accurately. Incomplete or unsigned applications will be returned for completion.

1. Are you reporting or editing stories for the print or electronic media? Yes No
2. Are you working for a publication that is generally available to the public, either through subscription, newsstands, TV, radio, or on the internet? Yes No

2a. Is your publication restricted only to members? Yes No

3. Is this your primary employment? Yes No

3a. If no, please describe your primary employment. _____

4. Who pays you to report or edit stories? _____

5. Please describe duties: _____

6. Are you an educator on the full-time faculty at an accredited college, university, or other school? Yes No

If yes, please describe duties: _____

6a. Do you have any other employment? Please describe: _____

7. Does any part of your job include public relations on environmental issues? Yes No

If yes, please describe: _____

8. Have you received pay to write press releases? Yes No

8a. If so, who has paid you to write press releases? _____

8b. Is this work a substantial or small part of your job responsibilities? _____

8c. What percentage of your income comes from this work? _____%

9. Have you done freelance work, either editing or reporting of environmental stories? Yes No

9a. Who has paid you for this work? _____

9b. Does any of this pay come from an organization, institution, or business that engages in extensive lobbying or public relations work on environmental issues? Yes No

9c. If yes, what percentage of your work comes from such an organization? _____%

9d. As a freelancer, do you have any other employment that is not related to journalism? Please describe: _____

I hereby apply for membership in the Society of Environmental Journalists and do attest that the information I have provided on this form is true and complete. I understand the Board of Directors retains sole authority in determining eligibility for membership in any category. I understand that my continuing eligibility depends upon my employment being acceptable for membership by the terms of the SEJ bylaws, and upon my returning a completed survey each year to the membership committee. I further understand that if I engage in professional activity which renders me ineligible for membership in SEJ, I will notify the membership committee and have my name withdrawn from the membership rolls.

Signature _____ Date _____



For Visa or Mastercard payment:

Please circle one

Card Number _____ Expires _____

Receipt Requested

Signature _____ Date _____

Office use only

Date of acceptance: _____

Status assignment: _____

Screening committee notes _____

Membership committee notes: _____



New SEJ members from 7/16/98-11/16/98

ALABAMA

- Desmond Keller (active), *Progressive Farmer Magazine*, Birmingham

ARKANSAS

- Gregg Patterson (active), *ESPN*, "The Patterson Report" Little Rock

ARIZONA

- Diane Raab (active), *Sedona Red Rock News*, Sedona

CALIFORNIA

- J. W. August (active), McGraw Hill Broadcasting, *KGTV*, San Diego
- Thomas Harris (associate), Ben Lomond
- Alanna Tarkington (associate), Malibu
- Lisa Vorderbrueggen (active), *Contra Costa Newspapers*, Martinez
- Anastacia Wyatt (academic), Monterey Institute of International Studies, International Environmental Policy, Monterey

CONNECTICUT

- James Simon (academic), Fairfield University, Department of English, Fairfield

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- Seth Borenstein (active), Knight-Ridder Washington Bureau,
- Bonner Cohen (active), *EPA WATCH*,
- Roger-Mark De Souza (associate), Population Reference Bureau, *Population Today*
- Jocelyn Kaiser (active), American Association for the Advancement of Science, *Science Magazine*
- Cristine Romano (active), *Greenwire-National Journal*
- Joby Warrick (active), *The Washington Post*,

FLORIDA

- Herb Allen (active), Dunedin
- Ron Matus (active), *Gainesville Sun*

GEORGIA

- D. Bruce Conn (academic), Berry College, School of Mathematical & Natural Sciences, Mount Berry
- Bill Davin (academic), Berry College, Department of Biology, Mt. Berry
- Viviana Fernandez (active), *CNN*, *CNN en Espanol*, Cumming
- Lee Hughey (active), *CNN*, Earth Matters, Chamblee
- Stephanie Ramsey (academic), Southern Polytechnic State University, Technical Communications, Decatur
- Mark Stevenson (active), *CNN*, Environmental Unit/Earth Matters, Atlanta

IOWA

- Jennifer Dostal (academic), Iowa State University, Greenlee School of Journalism, Ames

ILLINOIS

- Lester Graham (active), University of Michigan, Great Lakes Radio Consortium, Jerseyville

- Diana Steele (active), Chicago

LOUISIANA

- Christi Daugherty (active), New Orleans

MASSACHUSETTS

- Joyce Hackel (active), World Media Foundation, *Living on Earth*, Cambridge
- Clay Morgan (active), MIT Press, Cambridge

MARYLAND

- Kris Christen (associate), Burtonsville

MAINE

- Traci Hickson (active), *Every Living Thing*, Bar Harbor

MICHIGAN

- Jyl Barnett (academic), Michigan State University, *The State News*, East Lansing
- Annelise Carleton (academic), Michigan State University, Fisheries & Wildlife, Lansing
- Kristina Derhammer (academic), Michigan State University, East Lansing
- Janelle Hohm (academic), Michigan State University, Environmental Toxicology, Lansing
- Erin Martin (active), *Detroit Free Press*, Royal Oak
- Amanda Mourey (academic), Michigan State University, East Lansing
- Kathryn Reis (academic), Michigan State University, Department of Fisheries & Wildlife, East Lansing
- Carrie Spencer (active), The Saginaw News, Editorial Department, Saginaw
- Thomas Springer (academic), Michigan State University School of Journalism, Three Rivers

MINNESOTA

- Ron Meador (active), *Star Tribune*, Minneapolis

MISSOURI

- Gary Grigsby (associate), University of Missouri, School of Journalism, Columbia

NORTH CAROLINA

- Susan Booker (associate), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), Environmental Health Perspectives, Triangle Park
- Brian Feagans (active), *Wilmington Star News*, Wilmington
- Christopher Hammond (Academic), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Carrboro
- Christopher Schwarzen (active), High Point Enterprise, News Department, High Point

NEW JERSEY

- Robert Taylor (academic), Montclair State University, Department of Earth and Environmental Studies, Upper Montclair
- Bruno Tedeschi (active), *The Record of the Hackensack*, Trenton

NEW MEXICO

- Sue Vorenberg (active), Business Publishers, *Albuquerque Tribune*, Albuquerque

NEVADA

- Kim Erickson (active), Las Vegas

NEW YORK, NY

- Donat Agosti (associate), American Museum

- of Natural History, Department of Entomology
- Carin Gorrell (academic), New York University

- Naomi Lubick (academic), Columbia University, Earth & Environmental Science
- Jennifer Nagel (academic), Columbia University, Earth & Environmental Science and Journalism Department

- Larry Schnapf (associate), New York Law School, Environmental Law

OHIO

- Katie Ferrell (academic), Ohio University, Athens

- Pat Forgey (active), *The News Register*, McMinnville

- Allan Gerlat (active), Crain Communications, *Waste News*, Akron

- Susan Jaffe (active), *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland, Heights

OREGON

- Leonard Reed (active), *The Oregonian*, Portland

- Gloria Wright (active), Ohio Environmental News Service, Buckeye Lake

PENNSYLVANIA

- Beth Herzberger (active), Mealey Publications, *Superfund*, *Asbestos Litigation Reports*, King of Prussia

TENNESSEE

- Anne Dadds (academic), University of Tennessee, Chattanooga

- John Gerome (active), *The Chattanooga Times*

- Elise Lequire (associate), University of Tennessee, Forum for Applied Research & Public Policy, Knoxville

- Reid Sisson (academic), University of Tennessee, Biological & Environmental Sciences, Signal Mountain

- Pam Sohn (active), *The Chattanooga Times*,

- Glynn Wilson (academic), University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Department of Journalism, Knoxville

- Chris Vass (active), *Chattanooga Free Press*,

TEXAS

- Marc Airhart (active), Byrd and Block Communications, "Earth and Sky Series", Austin

VIRGINIA

- Penny Loeb (active), *U.S. News & World Report*, Great Falls

WASHINGTON

- Daniel Dancer (associate), Underwood

GUATEMALA

- Luis Grimaldi (associate), Guatemala City

INDIA

- Moiz Mann Hague (active), *The Indian Express*, Nagpur

NEPAL

- Bishwa Thapa (active), *ToDay National & Internatioal Magazine*, Kathmandu

SOUTH KOREA

- Chungnam Nyree Gracey (academic), Joongbu University, Department of English Language, Kumsan-Gun

Hunting Hazards

How safe is the common chemical?

By SARA THURIN ROLLIN

When local planning committees try to draft risk management plans under Section 112 of the Clean Air Act, they are met with one rather significant problem: not much is known about the safety of the chemicals stored at facilities in their town.

Some environmentalists call it a bad case of "toxic ignorance." The Chemical Manufacturers Association agrees "gaps in publicly available data still exist and some of the data are not easy to find." Leaders from the Environmental Protection Agency offer this quote: "What you don't know might hurt you." Not much comfort.

This is the story. There is no public record or "safe list" of common industrial chemicals that might be in products you might use in your own home. There is no public proof whether industrial chemicals are safe, hazardous or risky. Hence, the "hunt for hazards" is about to begin.

Industrial chemicals are not like other highly regulated chemical substances. They are not like pesticides, which are designed purposefully to kill something. They are not like food additives, which are meant to be ingested. They are not like pharmaceuticals, which are meant to invoke a biological response. Industrial chemicals are meant to be used and to be useful.

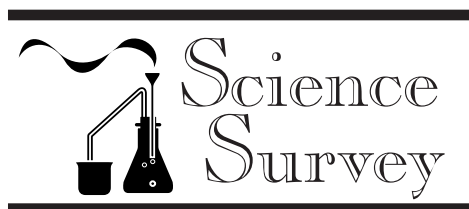
Pesticides, food additives, and pharmaceuticals must have toxicological data showing safety to be sold legally in the United States. That requirement does not extend to industrial chemicals, even for those made in excess of 1 million pounds annually that are called high production volume (HPV) chemicals.

What are they? Simply the building blocks of virtually everything made that does not occur naturally. Turpentine, for example, commonly used in paints and in the home, lacks three of eight types of basic studies.

Politically, no one can argue against the public's right to have basic health and environmental safety data on the 2,800 HPV chemicals. Congress passed a law 22 years ago directing EPA to manage industrial chemicals, but existing chemicals in commerce were grandfathered in, allowed

to stay in the market without any scheduled safety reviews.

So, starting in February 1999, a very public and voluntary process to remedy this so-called toxic ignorance is set to begin. Known as the HPV Challenge Program, it is scheduled to end by 2004. Toxicological (hazard) data generated by U.S. companies, following internationally accepted test protocols, are expected to pour into the public's view. Because no exposure data will be gathered only "pos-



sible hazards" can be identified by this effort. Hundreds of "robust study summaries" describing these hazards are expected to be posted on the Internet.

The HPV Challenge Program was announced Oct. 9, 1998, at Boston's Logan International Airport. The program is an unprecedented pledge by companies to assemble available test data from corporate files, conduct a batch of basic health and ecological tests to fill in missing studies, and make all of their findings publicly available—even to their international competitors. The pledge has been made by U.S. chemical makers, petroleum refiners in conjunction with the Environmental Defense Fund, EPA, and Vice President Al Gore.

News outlets did not pick up the HPV Challenge Program announcement, so-called because Gore challenged industry to supply the missing data voluntarily. (Perhaps the lack of coverage was because 250 environmental journalists were in Chattanooga, TN at the SEJ national conference.)

Since nothing has started yet, this national story with local angles on environmental health, science, business, and emergency response issues is ripe for you to cover.

Start by checking the Environmental Defense Fund's electronic database called the "ChemicalScorecard," which can be

used to identify the HPV chemicals that are being used, made, or released near you. Then, use it to figure out which ones lack publicly available hazard data. EPA and chemical trade groups also have World Wide Web sites about chemical testing.

EDF gets credit for pointing out the dearth of data—a fact the government and companies have known since at least the mid-1970s. EDF in July 1997 announced it had "discovered" that most HPV chemicals lacked even basic safety information. EDF issued its report, Toxic Ignorance, after a decade of ignoring this area of environmental advocacy.

EDF's findings were confirmed in similar reports by the Chemical Manufacturers Association and EPA. While the statistics and methods varied, the conclusions were comparable—most common chemicals (about 70 percent) lacked basic safety data.

There are exceptions to that statement, of course. It is usually dual use HPV chemicals that have data (e.g. industrial chemicals are used in pesticide formulations or as food additives). At the other extreme, the toxicity of some chemicals, such as solvents, have been studied extensively.

This story has elements for news segments and feature stories. The 2,800 HPV chemicals are everywhere. U.S. manufacturers makes billions in profit from making, using, and selling products that depend on using the industrial chemicals. EPA says at least 900 companies made or imported 10,000 pounds or more of some of these chemicals.

But can anyone say publicly that these chemicals are safe?

If the HPV challenge program works, the public should be able to answer this question: how safe is the common chemical? ❖

Web Resources

<http://www.cmahq.com>
<http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/chemrtk>
<http://www.socma.com>
<http://www.scorecard.org>

When fission for stories

Web site a useful tipster on nuclear reactors

By TOM HENRY

One of the more useful web sites I've come across when looking for a quick daily story or an idea for a long-range project is the one maintained by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) office of public affairs, <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/>.

In addition to glancing through the latest press releases, you can spot-check the level at which each of America's 110 nuclear reactors are operating each day.

Information about the most recent 24-hour period is usually posted by 7 a.m. EST, which means you can do a routine check as you're getting settled into your desk with your morning coffee. Simply go to the home page, click on "Plant Status," and scroll down to the one (or, in my case, the pair) of nuclear power stations in your region.

This may seem like a trivial pursuit, since you're likely to find most of the plants operating at or near capacity. But, if for some reason you see your plant operating at, say, 26 percent power or shut down when you know it isn't off line for an ordinary refueling, a red flag should go up.

You'll likely find a brief narrative on the log, probably only a few words in NRC jargon. Either way, go back to the home page and click on "Event Reports" to see if there is more.

At the minimum, finding your plant operating at reduced power or not at all is enough to tip you off that something isn't right and should be checked out with at least a couple of phone calls—one to the NRC regional office in your area and another to the utility.

This scenario occurred when I went on line the morning of July 20 and found that one of the nuclear power stations I cover, Detroit Edison Co.'s Fermi II plant in Michigan's Monroe County, was shut down after operating temporarily at reduced power the night before. I got a 10-inch story by making a couple of calls and finding that the plant had been taken off line manually by control room operators who noticed an unexplained fluctuation in power. The facility stayed shut down for a couple of days until the apparent problem was fixed.

A blockbuster? No, but it was one of those nifty little stories your competition might not pick up on. Or, it was the kind of thing you might note if you're keeping track of how often your plant is being shut down unexpectedly.

Jan Strasma, senior public affairs officer at NRC's Midwest regional office in Lisle, IL, said the daily plant status reports get more hits than anything on the agency's web site. Journalists are only a fraction of the users; many who click on plant status reports are tracking patterns for the financial community.

Strasma said the agency gathers information about each plant in the wee hours of the morning while most of the country is asleep. Plant status reports were initially circulated just within the agency. They eventually were posted on an electronic bulletin board, then an e-mail listserv and, then, on the NRC's web site.

"It's essentially an automatic process. It's a fairly simple, straightforward document. We've gotten a very positive response from web users," he said.

Utilities aren't always quite as thrilled about having the status of their plants made instantly available to the general public. Richard Wilkins, spokesman for FirstEnergy Corp., explained that it can put a utility at a disadvantage when it is forced to buy bulk electricity on the open market, especially when it's summer and there is a shortage due to all the power being used to run air conditioners. Potential suppliers can get bargaining leverage in a flash, if they see that a utility's nuclear plant is idle or operating at reduced power, he said. "It affects your negotiating position."

FirstEnergy is based in Akron, Ohio and has two subsidiaries—Toledo Edison Co. and Cleveland Electric Illuminating—licensed to operate northern Ohio's Davis-Besse and Perry 1 nuclear plants, respectively. The parent company experienced a temporary shortage last summer after a June 24 tornado ripped apart Davis-Besse's electrical switchyard, knocking down 11 distribution towers and causing the plant to lose its off-site power.

By clicking the NRC's "Selected Reports" category, I was able to read a 34-page report that the agency's inspection team had filed on the matter before the hard copy had made it to the utility's headquarters. I know that, because Wilkins told me at the time they were still waiting for it to come in overnight mail. But by finding it on the NRC's web site, albeit with Strasma telling me where to look, I was able to show the utility spokesman where he could find it so that he could get me a company statement that day.

Strasma defends the agency's decision to post some of the information it collects almost as soon as it gets it. Obviously, some ultra-sensitive information may still be guarded closely.

But if you had scanned across the NRC web site recently, you could have found out about a draft report the agency is circulating about the pros and cons of stockpiling potassium iodide pills for the general public in the event of a nuclear accident.

You could have found out if a nuclear plant in your area is one of 21 the agency has cited for failing to move quickly enough on replacing faulty fire barriers called Thermo-Lag 330-1. The nuclear industry spent \$58 million on the product years ago without knowing the government would someday go after the manufacturer on charges related to allegedly falsifying lab tests.

You could have found out where the agency is with auditing computers at nuclear plants as part of the government's Year 2000 program.

"Why go to a web site?" Strasma asked. "Because information is fresh and different. If it's not, you're not going to go there."

Tom Henry is the Toledo Blade's environmental writer. Among other things, he covers Toledo Edison Co.'s Davis-Besse nuclear plant in northern Ohio and Detroit Edison Co.'s Fermi II nuclear plant in southern Michigan. Both plants are about 25 miles from Toledo.

Mud-slinging at its best

Seeking the muse along the Neuse

By JAMES ELI SHIFFER

This time, we thought, we just might die.

The two guys who pulled up in their camouflage jet-boat had a 12-gauge shotgun mounted muzzle down in the back. One of them wore wraparound shades, the other carried a beer in his hand. Here were the dangerous Neuse River rednecks everyone had warned us about, facing two unarmed city slicker journalists camped on somebody else's riverbank in the middle of Eastern North Carolina.

"Are you the two guys from the *News & Observer*?" said the one with the shades. "We've been looking for you all day. Y'all want a beer?"

He turned out to be Allen Mitchell, a volunteer with an environmental group called the Neuse River Foundation. Photographer Chuck Liddy and I had again miscalculated the winding waterway called Neuse.

Such was the story of the River Chronicles, a seven-part series that ran in August the *News & Observer* of Raleigh, NC. With my stories and Liddy's pictures, the chronicles aimed to capture the spirit of a tarnished natural resource by telling the story of an unpredictable canoe trip down North Carolina's 235-mile Neuse River.

Serialized accounts of wilderness

journeys have been standard fare in newspapers for years, but I had different goals than merely describing a landlubber's river follies. Despite our newspaper's historically strong coverage of the Neuse River's problems, something was missing: a sense of what this river means to the communities around it. If I had no idea who were the people of the Neuse River, my readers certainly didn't.

So I pitched the series as a way to reacquaint my readers with the Neuse. The stories would draw on history to reveal the river's past glory and present decay. I was committed to keeping the stories short, sharp and free of jargon. Thanks to the paper's summertime hunger for well-illustrated tales, the editors jumped on the idea.

The dangers were many: the brutal heat of the South in August, the famed water moccasins dangling from branches, my own inexperience in paddling. But the writing and reporting challenges frightened me more than anything. Could I use first-person narrative without falling into self-indulgent, navel-gazing claptrap? How would I blend my background reporting into the river's history and environmental problems with whatever I discovered during the trip?

No story I have ever undertaken required so much preparation. Not want-

ing to carry any excess paper with me, I typed all of my background interviews, article and book excerpts and scientific data into a database that I installed on a laptop computer. Then I found a waterproof, shockproof, floating case to store the computer and three rechargeable batteries.

Though I had covered the cop beat in the past, sometimes getting close to agitated felons and burning houses, no assignment had ever gotten so many of my friends, relatives and co-workers worried for my safety. All of them were convinced the pfiesteria that lurks in the lower Neuse would eat holes in my skin. Or I would capsizе, drown, starve or get shot by the mythical river yahoos.

Instead, from the moment we shoved off August 8 from the foot of a dam north of Raleigh, Liddy and I found the unpredictability of the river our best ally.

Angry beavers gave us a valuable anecdote and great pictures by slapping their tails around an island where we set up camp that first day. A pair of bulls ran us off our second campsite, while flotillas of garbage, currents of muddy runoff, curious wading birds and plenty of riverside characters appeared around every curve. And I had the good fortune of having a truly unique person as my pho-

(Continued on next page)



Photo by Robert Willett

James Shiffer, in bow, and Chuck Liddy embark August 8 on the Neuse beat.



Seeking the muse...(continued)

tographer. Though most of what he said could never have been published in a family newspaper, Liddy, a short fellow who shaves his head and eats cold Pop-Tarts for breakfast, became a character in the stories as he railed against my pathetic canoe-handling and once even rapped me in the head with a paddle.

The stories demanded flexibility in my writing habits. I once had to rewrite a story behind the snake cages in a nature center, with the resident timber rattler getting into hissy fits right next to me. Twice I suffered through half-hour-plus editing sessions via cellular phone as we paddled down the river. At one point, my editor shouted so the whole newsroom could hear: "Stop paddling the canoe so we can edit your story!"

Every night, I phoned in a few hundred words updating the trip to our call-in news service. The "postcard" was then posted to the web site, where folks could hear me reading my report of the day's adventures through a crackling cellular phone connection.

Every few days we reached a town where we would repair to a hotel to file stories and photographs. Only then did I begin to appreciate the amount of filth we had accumulated on our bodies. It was then that I began to appreciate the accumulated response as well. Readers crowded onto the on-line forum, badgered me

via voice-mail and e-mail and sent letters wishing us well.

Folks like Allen Mitchell met us along the way with beer, food and tales about their favorite stretch of the river. In Kinston, about 10 days into the trip, the city put up a banner on a sandbar ordering us to stop for barbecue. Eighteen powerboats welcomed us to New Bern.

In the end, nature got the best of us, however. Hurricane Bonnie prevented us from paddling the last 35 miles, so we chartered a motorboat instead to keep us ahead of the storm. But the series did not founder, because its peculiar blend of personal narrative, history and environmental reporting seemed able to weather even natural disasters.

Covering an environmental story in such an intense and personal way reminded me that rivers are complex creatures, more than the sum of their fish, dissolved oxygen levels, and flood stages. They change over time, mean different things to different people, and provide a playground both for beer-swilling redneck environmentalists and reporters on the lam from legislative coverage.

One other thing: we environmental writers take ourselves far too seriously. We should never forget that a refrigerator marooned on a sandbar is not just ugly. It's funny. When our readers laugh, they remember.

Read the series, the daily dispatches

Grant expands MSU programs

The School of Journalism at Michigan State University has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to expand its environmental journalism programs.

The funds will be used to increase the size of the endowment of the Knight Chair in Journalism held by Jim Detjen, who also is the director of the Environmental Journalism Program. The funds also will be used to establish the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at MSU.

"These funds will enable us to increase the size of programs that have already been launched and to initiate new ones," said Detjen, who will direct the center.

Possibilities for new projects include:

- National workshops in environmental reporting
- Targeted one-day seminars on computer-assisted reporting, nature photography, and journalism ethics
- Creation of new scholarships for students enrolled in the environmental journalism program
- Expansion of the Environmental Journalism Program's World Wide Web site to provide more resources for journalists in the US and internationally
- Development of web-based continuing education courses for journalists and journalism students who cannot attend workshops on the MSU campus. ❖

and forum comments and view more than 60 pictures at the River Chronicles' web-site: www.news-observer.com/nc/neuse

James Eli Shiffer, 31, has covered environmental issues for the News & Observer of Raleigh, NC, since May 1997. A New York native transplanted to North Carolina, he qualifies in local eyes as a "damned Yankee."

Classified Ads

1999 Science Writing Fellowships Program

The Marine Biological Laboratory's (MBL) Science Writing Fellowships Program offers summer residencies at the MBL of one to eight weeks for professional science writers and editors—print and broadcast journalists and other science reporters and editors whose audience is the general public.

Most fellows concentrate attention on the concepts and methodologies of a single biological discipline, usually through an affiliation with one of the MBL's graduate-level summer courses. Fellows are also placed in laboratories at the MBL or other Woods Hole institutions, observing the investigator's progress and, when possible, participating in experiments. A limited number of fellows participate in offsite environmental research programs of the MBL's Ecosystems Center.

The Science Writing Fellowships Program is introduced by either of two one-week laboratory courses (both demonstration and hands-on). One course will acquaint fellows with molecular and cellular biological techniques currently in widespread use in biomedical research. The other course will acquaint fellows with techniques used in environmental and ecosystems research. Fellows choose which course to take according to their interests. Both courses are offered concurrently at the MBL from June 4 to June 12, 1999.

The Program is designed for professional science writers and editors with at least two years experience. Preference is given to print and broadcast journalists with staff positions and to journalists at the editorial or news director level. Freelancers are also considered.

Advanced degrees in biology are
(Continued on page 19)

Sniffing out groundwater toxics

Newsday reporter offers blueprint for action

By DAN FAGIN

Like most interesting stories, this one started with a tip. Two tips, actually. A homeowner called to complain that his neighbor's oil tank was leaking and that no one was solving the problem. The call took on added significance when a second call came a few days later.

This time the tipster was a longtime source, a former activist who runs an environmental data-collection company. He had heard that state officials aren't enforcing their own safety standards in overseeing cleanups of leaks from buried gasoline and oil tanks.

In *Newsday's* primary circulation area—Long Island and Queens—groundwater contamination is a huge issue because aquifers are the only source of drinking water for almost four million people, and because contaminants readily slip through our sandy soil and penetrate into groundwater. In between working on other stories, I began collecting string on the buried tank issue, saving good examples of local impacts and making some preliminary calls to assess the performance of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

My tipster was right. The DEC had gradually, and without any disclosure, shifted to a cleanup system that frequently allows benzene, MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether) and other hazardous chemicals in gasoline and oil to remain in groundwater even if the concentrations were well above the safety limits specified in state law. The DEC had unilaterally decided that the standards the agency had followed for years were just too expensive and technically difficult to enforce.

At the same time, I began hearing more about MTBE. The chemical has been added to gasoline in ever-increasing concentrations since the 1980s, first as a substitute for lead and then as an oxygenator that reduces tailpipe pollution because it causes gasoline to burn more completely.

Experts say that MTBE's unique ability to move much faster and last longer in water than benzene and other components of conventional fuel make it extraordinarily difficult to clean up.

I proposed a two-day series: one day

on the state's cleanup problems and the second on MTBE. When my idea was accepted, I set about looking for the data and examples I needed. For the data, I convinced the paper to hire my tipster, Walter Hang of Toxics Targeting Inc. in Ithaca, NY., for a small fee to analyze the state's enforcement records. We could



have used *Newsday's* own computer-assisted reporting team, but settled on Toxics Targeting instead because of its expertise on the subject.

Over some five months we constructed a database that showed that the state often doesn't enforce its own cleanup standards. We found that at least 9,266 of the 41,901 spills in the state's database for Long Island and Queens don't meet standards for clean groundwater, and that in many of those cases the state has allowed tank-owners to abandon cleanup efforts.

We also found that enforcement is rare, even when a spill isn't accidental. For the 2,506 fuel spills classified by the state as "deliberate," the state DEC pursued penalties in just 32 cases.

Meanwhile, I was reporting out a series of stories about neighborhoods in our region that were disrupted by fuel leaks. Many people, I learned, drank water tainted with benzene or MTBE from underground spills. I also went to southern California, the epicenter of the growing opposition to MTBE, to talk to people in Santa Monica and in the tiny Sierra town of Glennville about severe MTBE contamination there.

The final element that we added to the stories was a series of 10 customized maps, coinciding with the 10 zoned editions of *Newsday*. The maps showed the type and precise location of more than 1,000 large fuel spills that don't meet state cleanup standards. In addition to running them in the paper we also posted all 10 maps on the *newsday.com* website.

The stories had immediate impact.

Within the first four days after their publication in August, the web pages recorded more than 5,000 hits and both *Newsday* and the DEC were bombarded with telephone calls from residents seeking more information about local spills. The Republican-controlled state Senate and the Democratic-controlled state Assembly each announced plans to hold hearings on the issue, and several lawmakers proposed new laws that would reform the state's spill-cleanup program.

The DEC, while defending its oversight practices, said it would do an internal review. And the *CBS Evening News* followed up on the stories by broadcasting a report that featured interviews with Long Island and Santa Monica officials.

The stories I wrote were specifically tailored to the Long Island region, but the broader issues are relevant throughout the country. MTBE is showing up as a drinking-water contaminant in many places and state environmental agencies are increasingly adopting fuzzy "risk-based" cleanup rules instead of strict, numeric standards.

There are good arguments to be made in favor of risk-based standards. Theoretically, they allow scarce financial resources to be diverted to the sites that pose the greatest risk to public health. But in New York, I concluded that the DEC's actions may not be adequately protecting drinking water and may violate state law.

Why not take a look and see what's happening in your back yard?

The *Newsday* stories and maps can be viewed on the Internet at www.newsday.com/news/news.htm (scroll down to the special reports section and then click on "Underground Danger: Leaking Tanks"). See www.toxicstargeting.com for the Toxics Targeting maps (follow the links to the *Newsday* spill maps).

Dan Fagin has been the environment writer at Newsday since 1991. A Pulitzer finalist in 1994, he is an adjunct professor at New York University, where he teaches environmental journalism. He is the co-author of the book Toxic Deception, which will be reissued by Common Courage Press in mid-1999.

Our beat is a different ball game

By JAMES BRUGGERS

They're everywhere now. Environmental groups and environmentalists are as ubiquitous as mosquitoes in Alaska in summer or tourists in California's Yosemite National Park. This is a big change from 20 or 30 years ago when environmental activists were as rare as some of the endangered species they now work to protect.

Veterans of the beat—those who remember what it was like to cover the environment then—have seen many changes in environmentalists and environmental groups. Some changes have been good. Others have not. All require that journalists be more sophisticated in how they think about environmental groups.

For example, some environment reporters are trying to better understand the powerful role foundations play in shaping environmental policy. Foundations are paying big bucks to environmental groups, often setting their agendas from glitzy offices, far from forests, fields or waterways—the front lines of many environmental battles. At risk is an environmental group's connection to its biggest strength—grass roots citizenry—as well as its ability to see the forest from the trees.

The topic of how environmental groups and environmentalists have changed surfaced at SEJ's national conference in Chattanooga when three veteran journalists—Casey Bukro, Michael Keating and Paul MacClennan—described how they built their beats. My own observations go back to the late 1970s, when I worked as a reporter and editor for my student newspaper, *The Kaimin*, at the University of Montana and pursued a journalism and forestry double major.

In the early days of the modern environmental movement, the groups were smaller and more idealistic, says Bukro. He began covering environmental topics in the 1950s for the *Janesville (WI) Gazette* eventually moving in 1967 to the *Chicago Tribune* where his stories about Great Lakes pollution contributed to the passage of the Clean Water Act.

Now, he says, "they're more like big bureaucracies," though Bukro concedes environmental groups are now more likely to be able to present evidence supporting their positions. More on that later.

Though environmentalists are helpful

and essential, their proliferation is one the biggest challenges for reporters who cover environment. Reporters can be lobbied for attention as frantically as members of Congress while weighing the pros and cons of the latest climate change legislation.

With each group having to shout louder to be heard, facts sometimes get left behind. And news can be reduced to cheap stunts that, arguably, do little good for anyone. Sometimes it's impossible to ignore them. For example, during the recent battle over Northern California's

Viewpoints

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

last major privately owned and unprotected stand of old-growth redwoods, actor Woody Harrelson scaled San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge with his Earth First friends, backing traffic up for miles into Marin County. My article on the incident described how motorists stuck in traffic for hours were angry, and how mainstream environmentalists believed Harrelson's actions did more harm than good to the cause of saving redwoods.

A much bigger environmental movement is also more complex to cover. Even the groups themselves aren't sure about what tactics are best to use, says Keating, a Toronto-based freelancer and former national environment correspondent for *The Globe and Mail*.

They are asking, "Should we be the attack dog, or should we be working at the (negotiations) table, often behind closed doors? The movement is still trying to work through this process."

Freelancer Dan Whipple started covering environmental and energy issues in 1974 in Washington, D.C., moved to Wyoming in 1976 and has covered science and environment ever since. "When I started at *High Country News* in 1976, I personally knew virtually every environmentalist within a 500-mile radius of Lander. When I go to a meeting on environmental issues now, I scarcely know anyone," says Whipple.

Whipple says groups have become

more confrontational. "This is in large part because the obvious issues—things like coal mine reclamation, Denver's air quality, clear-cutting reform—have been dealt with as much as they are going to be for the near future. New issues are more subtle, and the pressure is much greater, because there are more people here now, and the interests are more diverse.

"This confrontational style is not a bad thing, but it has led to a lamentable trend that now the groups care more about winning a battle than doing the right thing."

Janet Raloff, senior editor at *Science News* in Washington, D.C., has tracked environmental issues for more than two decades. She praises environmental groups for learning to make effective economic arguments for environmental protections instead of relying on moral ground. While becoming more professional, environmental groups have also become effective data crunchers, tapping into federal databases to strengthen their analyses of environmental policy issues. "In many cases, that analysis can be illuminating," she says.

However, Raloff finds fault with what she calls environmentalists' one-track minds. "If they are anti-nuclear, for instance, they turn a blind eye to the fact that coal mining and its emissions are anything but benign."

There are signs all around of how environmental groups have gone mainstream as environmental issues have landed on the front burner. Speaking in the plenary session of the SEJ national conference, former *Christian Science Monitor* managing editor and president of the International center for Journalists David Anable recalled a visit to Green Party leaders in Germany 20 years ago. He said he found them in a small house where the grass in the yard was left uncut "for the butterflies." The Greens, he said, "were pretty much a fringe party. Now they're part of the ruling party in Germany. That's a real, real big change."

James Bruggers is a staff writer at the Contra Costa (CA) Times and an SEJ vice president. He is on leave as a Michigan Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Hiking hell

A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail
(Abridged)

By Bill Bryson

Audiobook read by the author (4 cassettes, running time 360 minutes), \$25.00

(Bantam Doubleday Dell Audio Publishing, NY, NY)

Author Bill Bryson was born and raised in Iowa, but spent 20 years living in England. Upon his return to the U.S. a few years ago, he settled in New Hampshire and learned that the path that vanished into the woods at the edge of his town was indeed part of the famed Appalachian Trail. He suddenly, and rather foolishly, decided to hike the AT in order to reacquaint himself with his native land.

Big mistake. Bryson had only minimal hiking experience in England, and to top it off he was middle aged and out of shape. He spent outrageous sums on hiking gear, spent sleepless nights reading accounts of bear attacks and rodent-transmitted hantaviruses, and teamed up with his fabulously physically unfit friend from Iowa whom he hadn't seen in years. Together they set off on the trail in freezing weather in Georgia, and (with much panting, sweating, and cursing) slowly crept northward along the 2,100-mile trail.

Most "hitting the trail" memoirs reflect on the serenity and harmony of nature and overflow with inspiring anecdotes of resourceful problem-solving. But "A Walk in the Woods" demonstrates that a prolonged encounter with nature can be hell. It shows that if you do stupid things in the wilderness (like throw away most of your food to reduce your pack weight) you will suffer. In fact, even if you don't do stupid things, you will suffer. And after weeks on the trail, the most mundane tidbits of civilization (like ice-cold soda cans beaded with condensation) look like miracles. Since Bryson is well aware of his own incompetence, the tale is wildly funny.

This is more than an account of Bryson's journey, however. It includes a great deal of history and context about the Appalachian Trail, the regions that surround it, and the various groups and agencies responsible for it. Bryson offers particularly scathing critiques of the Forest Service and National Park Service...and a

touching requiem for the vanishing American chestnut and other eastern species.

The printed edition of this book has become a huge success. However, the audiobook adds extra flavor and dimension to the tale that should not be missed. Bryson's voice—slightly nasal, and with a unique British/Midwest accent—brings alive vivid pictures of the author and his trailmate. His inflections, whines, pauses, and imitations of others' voices convey emotion and humor that the printed edition can only hint at. This book is ideal for road

trips, or even to play on your Walkman while hiking.

—Amy Gahrn



Book Shelf

Our dying forest

An Appalachian Tragedy:

Air Pollution and Tree Death in the Eastern Forests of North America

edited by Harvard Ayers, Jenny Hager and Charles E. Little

Sierra Club Books

216 pp., \$45 (hardcover)

"The story is a hard one to tell," said John Flynn, a West Virginia forest ecologist, about the health and welfare of the great hardwood forests of the eastern United States. Not so hard to tell, maybe, but hard to have heard.

Say acid rain, and people say, "old story." The 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act sharply reduced allowable industrial emissions of sulfur dioxide, the chief cause of acid rain. By 1994, sulfur dioxide emissions, largely from coal- and oil-burning plants, were down 25 percent nationwide. And a massive 1991 federal study found that acid rain was generally not affecting U.S. forests.

But ecosystems aren't general; they're specific to time and place. And when the place is the Appalachian Mountains, the jumbled chain that forms the spine of the eastern U. S., it's both not specific enough, and a bit too specific. Appalachian Mountains can mean Vermont or Alabama, states that otherwise have little in common. And "Appalachia" states like West Virginia rarely poke their way into the national consciousness, except as the locus of hillbilly jokes.

So anyone who sets out to get people interested in acid rain or any kind of pollution damaging Appalachian forests has got their work cut out for them. That's one reason why Harvard Ayers, an professor of anthropology and sustainable development at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC., and his co-editors, photographer Jenny Hager and environmental writer Charles E. Little, decided to do a picture book.

Interview

Q: This has to be the first coffee-table book I've seen with photos of smokestacks and acid runoff. What's the idea?

A: We felt that we're having a serious problem with the trees in the East, a problem that's under-recognized and under-reported. We needed to jolt the public. Charles Little wrote the most important book on the subject, *The Dying of the Trees*, but Charlie's book is more like a textbook. With *Appalachian Tragedy*, you can read it for ten minutes or ten hours and get things out of it. Even if you just look at the pictures you've got a nodule of the concept. With most Sierra Club books, in most cases the only message is this is beautiful, we don't want to lose it. In this book, the message is not just that this is beautiful, it's that this is beautiful and this is ugly, and we've got to do something about it.

Q: How did this project get going?

A: In late '95, Charlie's book had just come out, and Charlie and Jenny Hager and I got together. I knew Jenny Hager; she was doing some photography for some of our field studies in West Virginia. But I didn't realize she'd already had a concept for a similar book. It turns out that Charlie was not only a good author but a very good editor, in terms of organizing the authors and the spreads. He knows a lot of people in the publishing business, he knows Tom Suzuki, the designer, who used to be at Time-Life Books. It took us just about two years to put the book together, all the major essays. And Jenny had to go through at least one full cycle of seasons. She took 12 different trips from her home in Boulder, Colo., from Alabama all the way up to New England. The smokestacks usually stop producing at dawn; she would be there at 4 o'clock in the morning, waiting.

Q: How did you finance this?

A: The only way to finance a picture book is to find someone very special who's will-

ing to fund it. We were able to identify a major funder and his family, Harry Dawson and his wife, Becca. Harry's 70th birthday was coming up, and his children wanted to give a substantial gift. This was all secretive until his birthday came along, which was June of '96. Then we were able to add a little bit of money from other sources. Without that, no way in hell would it ever have happened; even at \$45 a copy, that just pays for the printing. Exclusive of printing, it cost \$150,000. It's a ton. I did a little bit of shopping the idea to foundations, and they said forget it; they don't like to do books. You really need a benefactor who's willing to plunk down a chunk of change. If we hadn't found that one particular special person we couldn't have done it.

Q: You've got to admit acid rain and forest death isn't exactly best-seller material.

A: I think that the average person has acid rain on their scope more than policymakers; if you show them dead trees, they'll say that's acid rain. But there's not much understanding in the region, because in many cases it's not so easy to see. Mount Rogers is the tallest point in Virginia, at 5,700 feet. It's getting totally hammered. We found in our scientific research that 40 percent of the trees standing there are

dead, yet Appalachian Trail hikers I've interviewed hadn't noticed until I pointed it out. There's still a lot of green stuff. I've even seen a Forest Service biologist say gee, I didn't see that. The very point of this book is that people don't notice it. Now people say, ah, I know what that is, and I see it.

Q: People aren't looking for pollution damage in parks?

A: The most polluted place in the United States is the Great Smokies; ozone there is twice what it is in Knoxville, a nearby city. At night in the city, the level drops out to zippo, but in the mountains it retains a steady curve. One of the things that make the mountains really bad off in terms of air pollution is that they form their own weather, and form their own clouds. Those clouds are concentration points for pollution; rain in the mountains is two or three pH points more acidic. The Appalachians are being screwed by this.

Q: So, what should be done?

A: North Carolina would be glad to clean up, but they're not the problem. Ohio is the problem. The 1990 Clean Air Act made a huge dent in sulfur emissions, but it didn't make any dent in nitrogen. We need to drop NOx on the order of 70, 80, or 90 per-

cent, and drop sulfur by 50 percent. The main chapter on this is by Philip Shabecoff; he basically says that we're not there yet, folks.

Q: Now that you've got the book out, how do you get it seen?

A: First of all, you take it to Congress and find someone who's interested in it. It turns out that Sen. Moynihan and his not-so-good friend Alphonse D'Amato are sponsoring an acid rain act. So we went to Moynihan's office knowing that he wants to reduce acid rain into the Adirondacks. And Moynihan's office wrote a dear colleague letter saying that this is a wonderful book, if you want one free just call Harvard Ayers. I had five or six senators ask me for the book. We printed 6,000 copies, and I've sold 1,300, some of those at reduced prices. At \$20, \$25, I could sell these all day at environmental conferences. We're preaching to the choir, but the choir isn't as educated as it should be.

—Nancy Shute



Harvard Ayers

Classified Ads

(Continued from page 15)

not required, although a basic knowledge of biological principles and methods is advantageous. Tuition, travel, and MBL room and board are covered.

The deadline for applications is March 15, 1999.

For more information and application materials, please contact Pamela Clapp Hinkle, Administrative Director, Science Writing Fellowships Program, 7 MBL Street, Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, MA 02543-0105; Telephone: (508) 289-7423; e-mail: pclapp@mbl.edu.



Boyden, a global executive search firm, present in more than 40 countries around the world, would like to inform you of one of its recruitment mandates. Our 50 years of experience in this business has given us a finely honed executive search system. The Boyden Pledge offers a set of tenets that fully respects the integrity of both clients and candidates. We are sure that your expertise will be of great assistance in our search:

Communications Coordinator

Our client, an important governmental body, is seeking candidates to fill the position of Communications Coordinator. The position is based in Montreal, Canada. This experienced professional will implement a strategic communications plan in relation to the media and the public in collaboration with other professionals within the organization, and with the input of government officials, as well as interested parties in non-governmental sectors.

Also, he/she is expected to develop a strong institutional profile and coordinate media outreach in the required countries. Working closely with the Executive Director and program managers, the successful applicant will also develop outreach plans to promote greater information dissemination and public participation in our client's programs.

Specifically, the Communications Coordinator is responsible for:

Media outreach, media tracking, public outreach, information access.

The position is open to candidates who fulfill the following requirements:

Minimum of 10 years experience in

communications and/or journalism. Ideal candidate has experience working in international organizations, and has a substantive background and interest in environmental issues.

A degree or studies at a recognized university related to communications and/or journalism.

Strong understanding of environmental issues; outstanding writing, speaking, and interpersonal skills; experience in managing or supervising staff, a budget and outside contractors. Ideal candidate has demonstrated skills in working in a cross-cultural environment.

Fluency in at least two of the following languages (French, Spanish and English) and knowledge of the third.

Experience on the Internet and in the use of computers and computer-based systems also highly desirable.

Individuals interested for themselves or other potential candidates, contact Sonya Bilodeau, (514) 935-4560, or fax your résumé to (514) 935-4530 or e-mail to pbourbe@ibm.net. Be assured that applications will be handled in complete confidentiality.

Calendar

DECEMBER

3-5. **North American Electric Vehicle and Infrastructure Conference.** (with sessions on commercializing electric and hybrid vehicles). Phoenix. Contact: Pam Turner, Electric Vehicle Assn. of America. Ph: (650) 548-9464; Fax: (650-548-9764; E-mail: firstopt@aol.com; WEB: www.naevi.org/index.html

6-10. **Thermal Performance of the Exterior Envelopes of Buildings Conference** (with sessions on how to heat, cool, and insulate buildings efficiently). Clearwater Beach, FL. Contact: Mia Prater. Ph: (423) 576-7942; Fax: (423) 576-9331; E-mail: unb@ornl.gov; WEB: www.ornl.gov/ORNL/Energy_Eff/th7main.htm

7-9. **Leading the Retail Revolution** (with sessions on deregulating the energy industries, investigating "green pricing," environmental benefits of new technologies, and valuing products on a life-cycle basis). Lake Buena Vista, FL. Contact: Elliot Boardman, Association of Energy Services Professionals, Ste. 261, 7491 N. Federal Hwy., #C5, Boca Raton, FL 33487. Ph: (561) 982-9903; Fax: (561) 982-9905; E-mail: eboardman@aesp.org

7-9. **Annual International Research Conference on Methyl Bromide Alternatives and Emissions Reductions.** Orlando. Ph: (209) 447-2127.

7-9. **Natural Attenuation '98** (with sessions on natural breakdown or dilution of noxious and toxic chemicals, including gasoline, explosives, vinyl chloride and solvents). Pasadena. Contact: IBC, Ph: (508) 481-6400; Fax: (508) 481-7911; E-mail: inq@ibcusa.com; Web: www.ibcusa.com/conf/attenuation

8-10. **The Emission Inventory** (with sessions on the relationship between industrial concerns over emissions and the methods used to estimate emissions). New Orleans. Contact: Sandra Provenzo, Air & Waste Management Association, One Gateway Center, 3rd Fl., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Ph: (412) 232-3444, ext. 3159; E-mail: sprovenzo@awma.org; Web: www.awma.org

27-Jan. 3. **Canadian University Press 61st Annual National Conference** (with 30 workshops plus resource rooms, sessions on arts reporting, copy editing, why mainstream press can't cover social issues, feature writing, environmental journalism, libel, photographic techniques, and many others; plus discussions, plenary sessions). Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Craig "Red" Saunders, CUP, 24 Ryerson Ave. Ste. 206, Toronto, ON, M5T2P3. Ph: (416) 504-4672, email: reds@interlog.com, Web: www.cup.ca

JANUARY

21-22. **Accident Prevention and Risk Management** (with sessions on strategies for reducing risks of chemical accidents). Orlando. Contact: Sandra Provenzo, Air & Waste Management Association, One Gateway Center, 3rd Fl., Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Ph: (412) 232-3444, ext. 3159; E-mail: sprovenzo@awma.org; Web: www.awma.org

21-26. **American Association for the Advancement of Science**

Annual Meeting (sessions include: grazing animals and rangelands; genetic engineering of food; sustainable development in China; development, conservation, and conflict in the American West; harmful algal blooms; watershed nutrients in the Gulf of Mexico; role of estuaries in fisheries; scientific predictions in environmental policy; diet, estrogens and breast cancer; environmental hazards and cancer; and the local to global dimensions of America's food and agricultural systems). Anaheim. Contact: Ellen Cooper, AAAS, 1200 New York Ave., NW, Washington DC 20005. Ph: (202) 326-6431; Fax: (202) 789-0455; E-mail: ecooper@aaas.org; Web: www.aaas.org/meetings/scope

MARCH

20. **Annual International Wildlife Law Conference** (with sessions on effectiveness of wildlife treaties and legislation to protect endangered species). Washington, DC. Contact: Wil Burns, Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy, 1563 Solano Ave., Ste. 193, Berkeley, CA 94707. Ph: (510) 540-0980; E-mail: JIWLP@earthling.net

28-31. **EMF Science Seminar** (with sessions discussing new human health-effects data from residential exposures to electromagnetic fields). Denver. Contact: Robert S. Banks Associates, P.O. Box 141049, Minneapolis, MN 55414-6049. Ph: (612) 623-4600; Fax: (612) 623-3645; E-mail: vlprock@rsba.com

SELECT INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Nov. 23-27. **Biodiversity, Biotechnology & Biobusiness: Second Asia-Pacific Conference on Biotechnology.** Perth, Australia. Contact: Michael Borowitzca, Murdoch University, Congress West Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 1248, West Perth, WA 6872, Australia. Fax: (61) 8-9322-1734; E-mail: biodiversity@science.murdoch.edu.au

Feb. 25-26. **Open Science Meeting on Industrial Transformation** (with sessions discussing new research aimed at delineating the societal mechanisms and driving forces that could facilitate a transformation of industrial industries toward sustainable practices). Amsterdam. Contact: Pier Vellinga. Ph: (31) 20-444-9515; Fax: (31) 20-444-9553; E-mail: pier.vellinga@ivm.vu.nl; Web: www.vu.nl/english/o_o/instituten/IVM/projects/research/ihdp-it/Confer99.htm

May 5-8, 1999. **The 10th Global Warming International Conference** (with sessions on such topics as greenhouse-gas production, tree-line advances, El Niño, pollution and health, reforestation, infectious disease correlations, carbon emissions, and agriculture). Fujiyoshida Yamanashi, Japan. Contact: GW10 International Program Committee, C/o GWIC, P.O. Box 5275, Woodridge, IL 60517-0275; Fax: (630) 910-1561. Web: www.globalwarming.net

May 31-June 2, 1999. **The Second International Conference on Ecosystems and Sustainable Development.** Wessex, UK. Contact: Wessex Institute of Technology. Ph: (44) 1703-293223; E-mail: cduggan@wessex.ac.uk

Toxic reports due...(from page 1)

deadline. Some companies plan to put their information out ahead of the game.

Required by Congress under the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA), the Accidental Release Prevention program aims at heading off Bhopal-style disasters and promoting dialogue on reducing chemical risks. The regulation affects not only the likes of large chemical manufacturing plants and pulp mills, but municipal sewer and water treatment plants, food processors using ammonia-based refrigeration and any facility housing a sizable propane tank.

Reporters covering industry or looking for a good public service story have ample opportunity for news here, but they should also know the pitfalls. Below is a short list of potential story angles followed by cautions.

- The regulation is a good story in and of itself. Briefly, Accidental Release

RESOURCES:

The official name of the rule is: Accidental Release Prevention, Risk Management Program under the Clean Air Act, Section 112(r). The regulation reference is 40 CFR Part 68. The full text of the rule appears in the June 20, 1996 Federal Register, page 31667.

A good starting resource is EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention web site at <http://www.epa.gov/swercepp/acc-pre.html>. Within this web site is a link that is a good source for learning about past and current RMP issues: "Accident Prevention Subcommittee." This contains meeting minutes that spell out just what's at stake and who's invested in it.

For industry's view, check with local associations and with consulting firms helping with plans. At the national level, the Chemical Manufacturers Association and the National Association of Manufacturers, both based in Washington, D.C., are monitoring RMP closely.

Public-interest advocates such as the Washington, D.C.-based Working Group on Community Right-To-Know are planning strategy around the June 1999 information release. Start with <http://www.RTK.NET/wcs>.

requires public and private sector operations storing any of a designated list of 140 flammable or highly toxic chemicals to calculate the greatest possible impact a sudden release of the chemical(s) could have on nearby human populations and environments. Reporting entities must also describe efforts to mitigate such accidents in so-called Risk Management Plans (the regulation is often called the "RMP rule").

As a news peg, you can't get much better than these windows on chemical Armageddon, hypothetical as they are. It's an environmental story even an editor can appreciate. On the other hand, some balance is in order. Industry is rightfully concerned that widespread publicity about these worst-case scenarios could neglect the industry perspective that these disasters are, for the most part, long shots.

- Industry representatives and consultants suspect the RMP rule will catch many off guard. Water treatment plant operators might not consider their chlorine stocks in terms of toxic gas clouds; propane distributors might prefer to chance the odds of a government inspection. One consultant characterizes awareness as "those who are on top of it, and those who aren't aware it applies to them." EPA estimates 66,000 operations are affected. Thus, there could be a story in exposing a well-kept secret hazard in town.

One way to check on private firms is to follow hazardous materials inventories that companies are required to submit annually to state and local emergency planning agencies and fire departments. Most of the 140 substances on the RMP list are reported on Tier 2 forms under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

- Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) are community watchdogs authorized by right-to-know law to monitor industry hazmat use and to coordinate emergency response. LEPCs throughout the country, however, are largely underfunded. In many communities they're barely functioning, maybe even non-existent. While this has been the case for more than 10 years, the RMP rule offers an opening to revisit this issue. Fire departments, usually the designated first responders, have also proven undertrained.

- RMP is the ultimate public relations

challenge for industry. Company managers are scratching their heads over how to soften messages of vapor clouds and blast zones. The smart ones are busy honing their public relations strategies.

As ripe for exploitation as the issue appears, journalists hot to expose the corner fertilizer plant should be careful. Industry has had two years to prepare, and big name companies with an image to maintain will have a team of lawyers that is well-informed about the liabilities.

The RMP rule is complex, with its share of oddities (gasoline, for example, is exempt) and gray areas. Not all sites with RMP substances on hand must submit a worst case scenario or plan; the rule requires reporting only if the applicable chemicals exceed individual threshold amounts. Confidential business information provisions can shelter companies from disclosing amounts and locations. On the other hand, a provision called the "General Duty Clause" obligates those storing and using any amount of RMP substances to plan emergency contingencies. Vague and far-reaching, "general duty" is EPA's catch-all, but as such, it could also be difficult to enforce.

Other considerations, such as location of hazards and protective walls or fire suppression can reduce a site's threat. Obviously, the 1,000 gallon tank of toxics across the street from a residential neighborhood poses much more of a threat than the same amount stored in a warehouse miles from the nearest population center.

The RMP rule may be a temptation to sensationalize, but discretion is urged, especially where industries have done much to reduce hazards and communicate with neighbors. RMP can and should turn a spotlight on operations that have been accident-prone over the years.

Andrew Brengle is editor of Massachusetts EnvironManagement Report, a newsletter following state and federal environmental and safety regulation for Massachusetts industries.

For more on ferreting out toxic releases see Dan Fagin's story in Reporter's Toolbox, page 16. In Science Survey, Sara Thurin Rollin discusses harmful chemicals in the home, page 12.

Sterile seed...(from page 1)

But the practice of seed saving may soon go the way of the steam tractor, and farmers have little say in the matter. A new genetic technology, patented last March, will make it possible for companies to sell seeds that will only work for one growing season, so farmers have to buy each time they plant. Crops will grow as usual, but their seeds in turn will be duds, unable to germinate. Seeds of this kind are expected to come to market by 2004.

The unlikely inventor of the non-producing seed is the governmental agency supposedly looking out for the interests of American farmers—the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Using taxpayer money, about \$229,000, USDA created the new “technology protection system” with Delta and Pine Land Company, the nation’s largest producer of cotton seeds with a 73 percent market share. Together they hold the patent.

Public-private partnerships are not at all unusual at USDA. Two recent USDA inventions, a spray to prevent salmonella in chickens and a feed that will reduce water-polluting phosphorous content in animal waste, were both developed using private funds. But this one was not done to improve food safety, the environment, crop viability, or consumer choice. The research was done, according to the USDA inventor himself, to improve the bottom lines of American corporations.

Seed-saving may be good for farmers, but it’s not good for the chemical and seed companies spending billions to develop genetically engineered seed varieties. Although a 1970 law permits U.S. farmers to save proprietary seeds for use on their own farms, companies selling genetically engineered varieties now say that farmers must not re-use their patented varieties at all. They say they can’t make ends meet unless farmers pay each and every season.

Biotech seed companies have managed to control the “problem” of seed-saving in this country by policing farmers. Monsanto requires that buyers of its Roundup Ready seeds agree to use them only once, and hires Pinkerton investiga-

tors to root out violators. However, companies have been unable to do the same in developing countries, where they have little or no patent protection and enforcement is a real headache.

How can these companies continue spending millions to develop new high-tech seeds if they can’t reach the millions of farmers in the untapped markets of China, India, Pakistan, South America?

“The need was there to come up with a system that allowed you to self-police your technology, other than trying to put on laws and legal barriers to farmers saving seed, and to try and stop foreign interests from stealing the technology,”

says USDA scientist Melvin Oliver, the primary inventor of the new patent-protecting technique. Oliver says the invention is a way to put “billions of dollars spent on research back into the system.”

USDA refused to say whose idea the new technology was, but Delta and Pine president Murray Robinson admits it was the company’s idea. Under the public-private research program, USDA receives licensing fees and royalty payments when its inventions come to market. USDA scientists personally get a cut of royalties as well.

The patent covers all seeds, both transgenic and everyday conventional varieties. Though it’s only been tested on cotton and tobacco thus far, the inventors believe it could work on all major crops.

In the past, seed companies have been reluctant to invest in wheat, oat, and rice seed markets, for example, because those crops are self-pollinating, i.e., can’t be controlled reproductively; thus farmers can save the seeds, returning to the commercial market to replenish every five years or so. With the new gene technology, those farmers could be forced to buy every year, making bundles for companies in those markets.

“If commercially viable, the new technology could mean huge profits in entirely new sectors of the seed industry,” says Hope Shand of the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), an international public-interest group which dubs

the new technology the “terminator” seed. “For farmers, the patented technology will undoubtedly mean greater dependence on the commercial seed market.”

The USDA and Delta and Pine plan is to license the new technology widely to seed companies, both American and foreign. Critics of the new technology worry about the effect its widespread use would have, particularly in developing countries. They see it as a threat to millions of resource-poor farmers who depend on saving seeds and exchanging seeds with neighbors, for their livelihood.

Since the technology will enable multinational seed companies to enter second- and third-world markets, there is also the fear that greater amounts of identical crops will be grown worldwide, increasing monocropping and further eroding agricultural biodiversity. Some even see it as threat to world food security.

“If this were to take place, it would mean every single person in this country, and perhaps all the countries in the world where these seeds were in widespread use, would become dependent on the stability of the international seed supply industry,” says Lawrence Busch, a sociology professor at Michigan State University. “The fact is that wars and civil disturbances and catastrophes of a natural variety occur. Those are the kinds of things that can wipe out seed supplies.

“If farmers can’t plant the stuff that they harvest, and become totally dependent on this, you are really raising the ante on the possibility of mass starvation.”

Industry says its ability to develop seeds that yield more, require fewer chemicals, and resist pests, disease, and drought may be our only hope for a withering environment and growing world population.

The need was there to come up with a system that allowed you to self-police your technology

If farmers can't plant the stuff they harvest, you are raising the ante on the possibility of mass starvation

The above article, “A Seedy Business” by Leora Broydo, a freelance writer in San Francisco, was originally published by the MoJo Wire, Mother Jones magazine’s online sister (www.motherjones.com). Portions of the article were modified with permission.

Olympic village...(from page 1)

be built in Newington, accommodating about 5,000 people. Houses will also be fitted with gas-boosted solar hot water systems.

To maximize the efficiency of the houses, 90 percent of homes will be oriented to maximize solar access, with deciduous trees and verandas providing summer shade and winter sun. All appliances will be highly efficient, insulation will be installed and ventilation controlled. In total, these measures will make Newington homes 50 percent more energy efficient than standard Australian homes.

Construction also uses environmentally sound materials and design will attempt to minimize waste and water use. With a combination of large, open plots of land, plenty of sun, and some of the world's leading experts in solar technology, Australia should be well placed to take advantage of the global solar boom.

However, a small domestic population of about 18 million and successive governments reluctant to extend their budgets to solar industry development has constrained the nation's progress. For example, about 50 percent of Danes have solar hot water heaters compared to five percent of Australians, despite the obvious disparity in sunlight hours and warmth between the two countries.

Some progress has been achieved. Recently, a \$(Australian)1.8 million solar farm was installed at Singleton, near Sydney, capable of generating 200 kilowatts of electricity per year. At Monash University in Gippsland, near Melbourne, Dr. Eric Hu has developed a solar-powered fridge which has no moving parts, does not use batteries, or electrical equipment, but which cools using solar power to drive an absorption system.

In the State of New South Wales (the capital of which is Sydney) the government has offered \$A500 cashback on the purchase of solar hot water heaters to try to boost the local market, resulting in a more than 100 percent rise in sales. The state's Sustainable Energy Development Authority also offers leading-edge energy conservation advice to companies free on

the proviso that its advice is followed; more than 100 companies, including some of Australia's corporate giants, have participated in the program.

The Landcare movement is a story in itself. Set up in 1987 to plant trees, chop weeds, eliminate rabbits, and fence off river banks to benefit both agriculture and the environment, the volunteer movement now has more than 100,000 members in 4,425 groups across the country. The movement has been recognized worldwide as a model for marrying both agricultural and environmental objectives and is helping make the 2000 Olympics greenhouse-neutral by coordinating the planting of two million trees over the next two years.



Courtesy of Mirvac Land Lease Village Consortium

Solar panels are installed on the roof of a village house.

But the Australian environment is not just about good news. With a massive desert center and a growing irrigation program, water is set to become the preeminent environmental issue in the second-driest continent on earth. In the 1960s the Australian government dammed 99 percent of the headwaters of the Snowy River, diverting the rest for irrigation and the nation's only significant source of renewable energy. The river, long famous in Australian culture, has slowed to a trickle, but a two-state government inquiry is now examining whether to give the river back its flow at the expense of irrigators.

Salinity, resulting from intensive irrigation, is creating problems in several of Australia's most productive agricultural areas, but new methods are being found to combat it. In Shepparton, two hours north of Melbourne, farmer Ken Warren is draining his saline groundwater through a

salt-tolerant tree plantation into three ponds, in which he grows ocean fish. Salt is produced by evaporating the third, most salty pond and all these products help supplement Warren's dairy farm income.

The animals on Australia's national emblem, the kangaroo and emu, have both become popular items on the menus of Australia's trendy bushfood restaurants. Deforestation and agriculture have boosted kangaroo numbers since Europeans came to Australia and while thousands are culled each year, many farmers still see them as a menace. Michael Archer, a biological science professor from the University of New South Wales, says kangaroos should replace sheep and cattle on Australian farms because they have less impact on the environment. Meanwhile, animal liberationists in

Britain have successfully campaigned against the sale of kangaroo meat in British supermarkets, restricting the growth of the infant meat export trade.

Not enough to interest your editors? What about the plight of the koala, brought closer to potential threatened status by deforestation. Or the impact of tourism and fishing on the world-famous Great Barrier Reef off Australia's Northeast coast? The annual migration of 120 million crabs from the center of nearby Christmas Island to the sea every

November? The environmental logistics of transport in Melbourne, one of the world's most sparsely populated cities?

Or perhaps an investigation into the country with the world's highest rate of skin cancer, through an investigation of its beaches? Because it is in the Southern Hemisphere far from most western countries, and because its flora and fauna have developed in isolation to the rest of the world, Australia has an exotic environment which could prove very interesting to U.S. and European readers.

Tim Winkler has spent three of his past six years at Melbourne's The Age newspaper writing environment stories, and is heading to Britain in 1999 to either further his career in environmental journalism or start a new one as a bartender—whichever comes first.

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Hollywood and the Environment: Find out what stars are doing for the environment and how the press responds.

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Forests, Parklands, and Open Space: Can local mountains, deserts, and preserves survive the onslaught of 15 million Angelinos? A look at attempts to save wildlands from twin threats of love and neglect.

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The Beat Correspondents

Contribute to The Beat

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

To submit ideas for possible mention in The Beat, contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s) or, if none are listed, contact Beat editor Chris Rigel at (215) 836-9970 or rigel@voicenet.com

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Green Beat name changed

The former Green Beat has been changed to The Beat to avoid any appearance of bias in the *SEJournal*.

ARIZONA

► An international study commission created under the North American Free Trade Agreement has recommended several steps to protect the San Pedro River in southern Arizona and Mexico from overuse. The commission suggests reducing agricultural irrigation in both countries through land trades or the purchase of irrigation rights as well as stepping up water recycling and conservation. The panel stopped short of recommending more drastic—and controversial—measures, according to a September 15 story by reporter Rhonda Butterfield in the *Arizona Daily Star*. Contact Butterfield at (520) 573-4220 or e-mail butterfield@azstarnet.com.

► As if scorpions and rattlesnakes weren't bad enough, ornery Africanized honeybees have become a source of misery for residents in southern Arizona. *Arizona Daily Star* reporter Jim Erickson reports on the bees' "blitzkrieg march" across the region in the paper's September 21 issue. For more information contact Erickson at (520) 573-4220 or email her at erickson@azstarnet.com

ARKANSAS

► A study of the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology files conducted by the Arkansas Public Policy Panel and the Arkansas Coalition for Responsible Swine Production shows that violations at Arkansas factory hog farms are much more serious than previously thought. Contrary to claims of the pork industry, only 32% of the violations were for minor infractions like recordkeeping problems, while 68% were for major things like leaks, spills, discharges, excessive solids, and improper disposal of carcasses.

Contract producers for Cargill have the worst compliance record in the state with an 80% violation rate (64% of these major). Tyson producers averaged a 65.5% violation rate (72% major). Independent producers who do not contract with any one corporation have the best compliance record with just a 19% violation rate (53% major), but very few

independents are left in Arkansas.

Of the facilities studied, 39% had violations every time they were inspected and 73% of the facilities had at least one violation in the past six years—yet only two facilities were fined. For more information, contact Brenda Bragg, *The Morning News of Northwest Arkansas* at news@nwaonline.net, or Brownie Ledbetter, Arkansas Public Policy Panel, 103 W Capitol Ave. Ste 1115, Little Rock, AR 72201

CALIFORNIA

► The Russian River, beginning in Redwood Valley, Mendocino County, and ending 110 miles away on the Pacific Ocean, is threatened by decades of trapping, logging, gravel mining, damming, straightening, sewage dumping, water pumping, and farming. Inspired by a spurt of local activism buoyed by tougher federal laws to save wild salmon and steelhead, Sonoma and Mendocino county citizens are forming a Russian River Watershed Council to restore the river. "Rescuing the Russian River" ran Aug. 30-Sept. 2 in the *San Francisco Examiner*. For more information, contact Jane Kay at (415) 777-8704 or check www.examiner.com.

► In Northern California's largest land deal by a private organization to preserve open space, the Nature Conservancy is spending \$19 million to buy two vast ranches in the foothills east of Mount Hamilton. The purchases are the first piece of a broad strategy by the Nature Conservancy known as the "Mount Hamilton Project," designed to preserve the outskirts of the Bay Area. Call Paul Rogers, *San Jose Mercury News*, (408) 920-5045, or check www.mercurycenter.com.

► Ever since John Muir brought his preservationist act to California more than a century ago, eventually settling in the Contra Costa County mansion of his in-laws, the San Francisco Bay Area has provided fertile ground for the American environmental movement. James Bruggers of the *Contra Costa Times* profiled 10 eco-elders, age 75 to 90-plus, who have made a big difference either local, nationally, or internationally: David Brower, Margaret Tracy, Silvia

McLaughlin, Dwight Steele, Robert Stebbins, Will and Jean Siri, Manfred Lindler, Dr. Edgar Wayburn, and Mary Bowerman. *Contra Costa Times* ran the story on Aug. 23. For more information, contact Jim Bruggers at (734) 763-8874 or ecowriter@aol.com.

► A plan to build a dozen quadruplex cottages about 500 feet from Yosemite National Park's Camp Four—favored destination of rock climbers from around the world—is being challenged by climbers and the Sierra Club. The housing plan would use \$178 million in federal relief money to provide housing destroyed in the 1997 New Year's Day flood, when the Merced River wiped out about 200 rooms at Yosemite Lodge. The *Associated Press* story ran Nov. 8.

COLORADO

► Biologists for a new aquarium in Denver have received a controversial OK from the Mexican government to pluck some 8,500 specimens from underwater breeding grounds off the Baja Peninsula. Ocean Journey, a \$93 million aquarium that will trace aquatic life from the headwaters of the Colorado River to the Sea of Cortez, says the undersea creatures are critical to its mission. But conservationists in Mexico, and other U.S.-based research biologists worry that supplying the booming American aquarium industry is depleting a spectacular marine habitat that has yet to be scientifically surveyed. Contact Bruce Finley at the *Denver Post* at (303) 820-1577 or email newsroom@denverpost.com

► A *Denver Post* investigation in September found that the EPA appeared to be off-base with its claim that a controversial method of cleaning up radioactive soil in an inner-city Denver neighborhood had been commonly used at other sites in the United States. In fact, the newspaper found, the cleanup method—which calls for mixing radioactive soil with concrete and leaving it on-site—has never been attempted anywhere else in the country. The EPA defended its claim, albeit using a bit of verbal jockeying. A project manager for the agency said the radioactive waste involved radium 226, a heavy

metal, and mixing heavy metal-laced soil with concrete is a "very common treatment method for metals across the country." For more information contact Mark Eddy at wmarkeddy@aol.com.

► State health officials recently revealed one of the state's largest corporate hog producers may be applying too much nitrogen-rich effluent to neighboring fields. The red flag was raised at a time when Colorado has become the latest battleground over the environmental risk posed by giant factory hog farms. The hog companies have moved across the country, looking for states with little or no regulation of factory farming practices. They have found an ideal location in the plains of eastern Colorado. But the discovery of increased levels of nitrogen 12 feet under the company's fields stokes the fires of environmentalists who are supporting a statewide referendum asking voters to place hog farms under the authority of state regulators. Contact Mark Eddy at wmarkeddy@aol.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► Coal mining is reshaping parts of West Virginia as mountaintops are lopped off and valleys are filled with the resulting rubble, according to an Aug. 31 story in the *Washington Post*. Environmental reporter Joby Warrick examined the trade-offs in the Mountain State between scenery and its heavily mechanized strip mining industry in the A-1 story. The piece was accompanied by a detailed graphic on strip mining techniques used to recover low-sulfur coal. Contact Warrick at (202) 334-7292. Text of the story can be downloaded for a fee through <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives/front.htm>.

► An Aug. 31 story by *Washington Post* national desk reporter Linda Perlstein described an organization designed to protect public employees who blow the whistle on governments' environmental shortcomings. The group is Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), which has 10,000 members who work or are former employees of federal, state, and local agencies. Her article, which appeared on the *Post's* Federal Page, can be downloaded for a fee through

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives/front.htm>.

► The formerly endangered right whales are flourishing off Argentina's Patagonian coast, *Post* foreign service reporter Anthony Faiola wrote in an Aug. 31 piece. The whales attract tourists, who come to watch the huge mammals. The Argentine government, wanting to maintain the tourism industry, protects and closely monitors one of the whales' most important breeding grounds. Faiola's piece may be downloaded for a fee through <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/archives/front.htm>.

► A provision tucked into omnibus federal spending legislation could discourage researchers from working with federal agencies, according to an Oct. 30 lead article in *Daily Environment Report*. The law requires greater access to data gathered through federally funded research. The move comes after EPA turned down requests from Congress and industry to compel researchers to turn over data used in developing tighter air pollution standards for fine soot. Some scientists, particularly epidemiologists, say the new law could threaten privacy of patients and researchers' proprietary interests in data. Reporter Alec Zaccaroli can be reached at (202) 452-6364.

FLORIDA

► The *St. Petersburg Times* reported on August 10 that Florida's Legislature has approved the sale of 420 acres of Walton County's Point Washington forest in the Florida Panhandle. Supporters include Governor Lawton Chiles in contention with the Wildlife Federation, Florida Audubon Society, and Earth Justice Legal Defense, who have sued to block the sale. Contact Craig Pittman, environmental reporter, at (727) 893-8530 or craig@sptimes.com.

► A series of planned bicycle, equestrian, hiking, and water trails will weave through 450 miles of coastal Georgia's six counties. The network will eventually connect with trails in Florida to comprise the East Coast Greenway. Contact *Florida Times-Union* staff writer, Gordon Jackson at (904) 359-4280 for more infor-

mation on his October 13 story.

► On October 17, the *Florida Times-Union* reported that Jacksonville is returning to its pattern of violating clean air standards fueled by rising traffic levels. The city spent 18 years on the EPA's "bad air" list, then shed the designation in 1995 through initiatives, including mandatory auto emissions tests. If the ozone levels are unchanged, the city will return to the list by 2000. For information contact staff writer Steve Patterson at (904) 359-4280.

► Mayor John Delaney said Jacksonville can legally challenge a Putnam County paper mill's proposed pipeline that empties into the St. Johns River. For the city to challenge the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's decision, city officials would have to show that the proposed \$21 million pipeline causes "injury" to Jacksonville's interest. David Bauerlein's article ran in the *Florida Times-Union's* Oct. 13 edition. (See related columns by Ron Littlepage 8/27, 9/27, 10/4.) Contact (904) 359-4280.

► The Sept. 1 *Times-Union* reported that state officials plan to spend about \$15.2 million to help buy sites in Duval, St. Johns, and Flagler counties. The purchase will help preserve land near two Northeast Florida waterways. Contact Jim Saunders and Randolph Pendleton, staff writers, at (904) 359-4280.

► In wildlife news, On August 20 the *Times-Union* reported on two rare herons whose sight was completely restored after three years of total blindness. Daniel Brogdon, a veterinary ophthalmologist, performed the cataract surgery. Contact Susan Respass, staff writer, (904) 359-4280.

► In an in-depth Sept. 28 story, the *Times-Union* reported on the recovery of red wolves on St. Vincent's Island, a 13,000-acre wildlife refuge off Apalachicola's western shore. After the population's devastation throughout the 20th Century, the program's goal is to establish 550 wolves for \$1 million a year under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Gary Henry's management. For more informa-

tion contact staff writer, Thomas Pfankuch, at (904) 359-4280.

► On Oct. 18, the *Times-Union* reported that microscopic forms of algae, including some related to pfiesteria, could be the cause of a series of wildlife mishaps, from alligator deaths to sea turtle tumor epidemics. Drinking water supplies have also been affected in Florida by the buildup of destructive algae, which is ascribed to combined side effects of development and agriculture. John Burns, a St. Johns River Water Management District biologist, has drafted a report for a state science panel that links changes in rivers to new concerns about the organisms. For information, contact Steve Patterson, staff writer, at (904) 359-4280.

► In the aftermath of the summer's wildfires, the *Times-Union* summarized the devastation. By July 19, fires had raged across Florida from the Apalachicola National Forest to the Intracoastal waterway, from the Okefenokee Swamp to Cape Canaveral. The toll was 204 people injured, nearly 500,000 acres charred, 337 homes damaged or destroyed, and the total cost was \$400 million. In subsequent stories, the *T-U* reported on July 29 of the debate among Okefenokee Swamp officials over the ramifications of the fire that burned 1,500 acres of swampland and uplands in July. For more information, contact staff writer Gordon Jackson at (904) 359-4280.

► In its September 23 edition, the *Times-Union* reported on a 24-member panel's debate over whether timber owners could have helped prevent the wildfire disaster by routinely burning underbrush. The task force, known as Wildfire Response and Mitigation Review Committee, consisted of timber companies, forestry, river management, and community affairs, among other state and regional agencies. Contact Jim Saunders, staff writer, for more information, at (904) 359-4280.

ILLINOIS

► A Chicago neighborhood has been quarantined in efforts to check the spread of the Asian long-horned beetle, an infes-

tation traced to untreated wooden crates carrying imports from China. The beetles, which gut deciduous trees, cannot be controlled with pesticides and have no natural predators in the U.S.

The situation threatens to start a trade war: China has until Dec. 17 to begin fumigating, kiln-drying, or otherwise treating all wood shipping materials exported to the U.S., affecting billions of dollars worth of exports from an already shaky Chinese economy. China has hinted at retaliatory measures like halting imports of American wheat and soybeans, according to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. U.S. officials claim the regulation is to prevent an infestation that could wipe out entire forests. The Nov. 8 story ran in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, written by *Los Angeles Times* reporter Eric Slater. The number for the *Times* is (800) 528-4637

IOWA

► On Oct. 25, *The Des Moines Register* ran a comprehensive story on early research suggesting that neighbors of large-scale hog confinements are at a higher risk of respiratory trouble and other health problems typically reported by confinement workers. Research at the University of Iowa, Duke University, and elsewhere showed that confinement neighbors are reporting bronchitis, asthma, headaches, nausea, depression, anxiety, and anger at an elevated rate. The research is preliminary, and in some cases inconclusive, but researchers are pushing on with more detailed and comprehensive studies.

The next day, *The Register* reported a special study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention checking whether pathogens and pollutants from confinements are getting into the waterways near the confinements in Iowa and Ohio. Call Perry Beeman, *The Des Moines Register*, at (515) 284-8538.

► In a series running this summer in *Iowa Farmer Today*, reporters Dan Zinkand and Gene Lucht covered the reluctance of the European Union (EU) and other parts of the world to approve buying U.S.-produced genetically modified corn and soybeans. European and

Japanese consumers indicate strong resistance to genetically modified organisms (GMOs); costing the U.S. about 80 million bushels in corn sales this year, with further losses anticipated around soybean sales. Contact Zinkand or Lucht at (800) 475-6655.

► Those doubting the value of genetically modified corn in the food chain could put it to non-food uses. *Iowa Farmer Today* reporter Dan Zinkand travelled to Japan to cover restaurant use of biodegradable corn and soybean products such as uniforms, serving trays, and plastic utensils. Biodegradable plastics can be composted or burned cleaner than petroleum-based plastics, improving environmental consequences and high costs related to waste treatment. For more information, contact Zinkand at (800) 475-6655 or email 9ft@fyiowa.infin.net.

KENTUCKY

► To mark the 50th anniversary of the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal* looked at how water quality in the river has improved and at what problems remain. For more information, contact *Courier-Journal* environmental writer Andrew Melnykovich at (502) 582-4645 or at Amelnyko@louisvil.gannett.com.

► Do hazardous chemicals mix well with the Internet? The FBI doesn't think so. *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal* looked at the inter-agency flap over whether the EPA should post worst-case accident scenarios for chemical plants and other facilities on its Web site. The FBI says it's a prescription for terrorists; environmentalists contend the threat is minor and the public's right to know is more important. (See "Toxic reports due," page 1.) Contact Melnykovich for more information at (502) 582-4645 or at Amelnyko@louisvil.gannett.com.

► Electric consumers in the Midwest are going to have to pay to reduce emissions that the EPA says are contributing to summer smog in the Northeast. *The Courier-Journal* looked at the issue, and also at the extent to which the reductions are needed to deal with the Ohio Valley's

own smog problems. For more information contact Melnykovich for more information at (502) 582-4645 or at Amelnyko@louisvil.gannett.com.

► The practice of mountain-top removal mining for coal is becoming more widespread, and more controversial, in Eastern Kentucky. *The Courier-Journal* found that the rules to regulate the practice are often ignored by strip-mining regulators. For more information, contact Gardiner Harris in the paper's Hazard bureau, (606) 436-6060.

MASSACHUSETTS

► It has been called "the other" Boston Harbor cleanup. While a high-profile campaign gets under way to clean the waters of polluted Boston Harbor through advanced sewage treatment, and tourism officials hail the designation of the harbor's many islands as a national park, environmental groups are concerned about toxic and radioactive waste, asbestos, and other hazards on those islands. Over the past century, the islands have been used as military forts, municipal landfills, mental institutions, and quarantine centers during outbreaks of disease. Contact Peter Howe, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000.

► A *Boston Globe* story reported that state officials took initial steps in September to force the recycling of computer monitors and television sets. The state Department of Environmental Protection next July will ban the disposal of cathode ray tubes in municipal trash collections, landfills, and incinerators.

According to state DEP Commissioner David Struhs, the annual volume of discarded CRTs is expected to quadruple by 2006, to 300,000 tons. The commissioner said the change is expected to encourage the small state industry recycling and reconditioning CRTs. Recycled tubes can be separated into glass and lead for reuse, or reconditioned for use in new computers, he said. The story ran Sept. 2. For more information contact Peter Howe, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000.

► An investigation is under way to determine whether chemicals from a Massachusetts military reservation near

Sandwich on Cape Cod are seeping into the region's wells, cranberry bogs, and ponds. Officials also recently discovered residue from several high explosives in a well serving the military base. Many of the chemicals are suspected carcinogens.

"The numbers here stagger the mind. There is as much contaminated drinking water under Cape Cod as there is drinking water in the whole Wachusett Reservoir," said John Rodman, spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Protection, referring to the 65-billion-gallon reservoir near Worcester.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Air Force Center for Environmental Excellence, the federal agency that heads the military cleanup, missed by six months a deadline for delivering a study on Cape Cod's drinking water demand and where to find backup supplies. The *Boston Herald* story ran July 19. For more information contact David Talbot, (617) 426-3000.

► According to a Sept. 8 *Boston Globe* story, residents of Sierra Blanca, Texas, are fuming over the possibility that Maine and Vermont could soon join Texas in burying tons of low-level radioactive waste near their town in the Chihuahu Desert. Massachusetts and other New England states also hope to use the massive underground repository.

The Sierra Blanca dump is a former cattle ranch selected by Texas authorities as a disposal site. It is populated by poor, predominately Mexican-Americans.

Only three New England senators, all Democrats, have voiced opposition to the dump-use expansion plan—Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry of Massachusetts, and Jack Reed of Rhode Island. Contact Bob Hohler, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000.

► The General Electric Co. has announced plans to reclaim more than 250 acres of tainted industrial land in Pittsfield. Ending more than a year of quarreling, GE and environmental regulators announced an agreement on Sept. 24 to clean up the plant site, two miles of the nearby Housatonic River, properties on its flood plain, and other areas.

The agreement was described by John DeVillars, regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, as the most costly brownfield reclamation

project in New England and among the most expensive in the country. The city and the company had been bickering over cleanup of PCBs, the result of GE's transformer plant operations.

GE estimates it will spend about \$45 million to help the community with economic development, although it halted transformer manufacturing in 1987. Pittsfield Mayor Gerald Doyle told reporters the partly-abandoned site will be a "huge model" for "the rest of the world." About 35 journalists and politicians were given a site tour of the 416,000-square-foot, five-story building where GE once housed offices and made transformers. City officials expressed hopes that the building could be renovated as offices for new businesses and light manufacturing.

As part of the deal, the EPA will not add the Housatonic River to the federal Superfund list, which could have slowed the cleanup and ultimately carried a higher pricetag. *Associated Press*, Oct. 15, 1998

MINNESOTA

► A Canadian researcher who has been studying deformed frogs since 1991 said in early November that there's a relationship between malformed amphibians and the use of agricultural chemicals. Martin Ouellet, whose work at McGill University in Montreal is funded primarily by the Canadian Wildlife Service, said he has examined almost 30,000 frogs along a 150-mile stretch of the St. Lawrence River valley during the past seven years.

Ouellet said his latest research from about 30 ponds and wetlands found deformed frog populations of zero to two percent in areas with no recent pesticide use, and malformed frog populations of 5 to 100 percent in ponds near areas being actively farmed with pesticides, insecticides, and fungicides. At some sites Ouellet said he found empty pesticide containers that had been discarded or burned.

A correlation between pesticide use and deformed frogs continues to be documented in the field, but researchers are not sure which chemicals or combinations of chemicals may be causing the deformities, and how they may be acting to disrupt normal development. For more information contact Tom Meersman, *Star*

Tribune, (612) 673-7388.

► The world's largest single wind-farm project was dedicated in southwestern Minnesota recently, a \$125 million investment that will provide electricity for as many as 40,000 residential customers of Northern States Power Company. The project generates 107 megawatts of electricity, and is the second phase of a commitment NSP made in 1994 to buy or produce 425 megawatts of wind-generated power by 2002. The agreement was part of a compromise the utility accepted in return for being allowed to store additional nuclear wastes in outdoor casks at its Prairie Island nuclear plant, located along the Mississippi River in Red Wing about 50 miles southeast of Minneapolis/St. Paul. Contact: Tom Meersman, *Star Tribune*, (612) 673-7388.

MISSISSIPPI

► Echoing Rachel Carson's long-ago warning about "a new kind of fall-out," U.S. Geological Survey researchers sampling air and rain in Jackson, Mississippi, the state's largest city, found about two dozen pesticides and chemicals, including DDT, which has been banned since 1972. The pesticides become airborne through evaporation or wind, then fall to earth as rain. A Mississippi toxicologist said rain-borne pesticides could harm aquatic invertebrates at the base of the food chain. Bruce Reid reported on this for Jackson's *Clarion-Ledger* on September 13. He can be reached at (601) 961-7063) or breid@jacksongannett.com

► Reid has also written a number of stories about catfish farmers illegally applying the pesticide malathion to their ponds (its use is not permitted on water). Eight farmers have been cited by Mississippi's agriculture department, according to the October 21st *Clarion-Ledger*. Although malathion has not yet been detected in the catfish, the state's aquaculture industry, which processes 70 percent of the farmed catfish in the U.S., has tried to restore consumer confidence by vowing stricter monitoring of pesticide application near catfish farms. For more information contact Reid at (601) 961-7063) or breid@jacksongannett.com

MONTANA

► In 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans to formally begin the process of delisting the Yellowstone grizzly bear population from its current status as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Already, the controversial action has spawned one of the most heated conservation debates in recent years. Opponents of delisting claim that science has been misrepresented due to meddling by politicians allied with the Wise Use Movement and bureaucrats eager to trumpet a conservation success story. *High Country News* (November 9, 1998) devoted 5,000 words to the subject in an essay written by Todd Wilkinson, who also examines cases of grizzly bear biologists being intimidated by their government superiors in his new book, *Science Under Siege: The Politicians' War on Nature and Truth*. For more information, contact Todd Wilkinson at (406) 587-4876 or e-mail him at Tawilk@aol.com

NEVADA

► The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection delayed a 5,000-home development with a golf course in Henderson, 15 miles southeast of Las Vegas, until Rhodes Design and Development Corp. finds a way to keep groundwater contaminated with low levels of radiation and chemicals from former industrial activities from reaching Lake Mead, Southern Nevada's major drinking water source. Three articles ran in the *Las Vegas SUN* Newspaper on Oct. 19, 20 and 21. For information contact Mary Manning at (702) 259-4065 or e-mail manning@lasvegassun.com

► The U.S. Department of Energy reversed plans to conduct its own environmental monitoring outside the Nevada Test Site where more than 1,000 nuclear explosions were detonated from 1951 through 1992. First the U.S. Public Health Service then the federal Environmental Protection Agency monitored groundwater, air, meat, milk, and vegetables around the site, 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas and larger than the state of Rhode Island. The *Las Vegas Review Journal* on Oct. 25 and the *Las Vegas SUN* on Oct. 26 report-

ed the story. For information contact Keith Rogers at the *Review Journal*, (702) 383-0264. Mary Manning can be reached at the *SUN*, (702) 259-4065 or e-mail manning@lasvegassun.com.

► Southern Nevada water officials have noticed a slight increase in gross alpha radiation in the Las Vegas Valley drinking water supply. However, the source of this radiation is unknown. Possible contributors include an industrial site with radioactive ore that entered Southern Nevada's groundwater, uranium mill tailings upstream in the the Colorado River, or Cold War nuclear weapons activities. The *Las Vegas SUN* Newspaper ran the story Nov. 9. For information contact Mary Manning at (702) 259-4065 or e-mail manning@lasvegassun.com.

OREGON

► Oregonians soundly defeated the first statewide ballot measure banning clearcut logging on federal, state, and private lands. Eighty percent of voters opposed Ballot Measure 64, which would have banned clearcuts, logging trees bigger than 30 inches across, and herbicide and pesticide spraying. The measure also encouraged enforcement through citizen lawsuits. The initiative's sponsors, Eugene-based Oregonians for Labor Intensive Forest Economics, favored environmentally friendly selective logging techniques. The timber industry waged a multi-million-dollar opposition campaign against Measure 64. But even many environmental groups took a neutral stance. Along with banning traditional clearcuts, the measure would have seriously restricted most thinning, a recent forestry innovation that even the measure's sponsors praised. For more information contact the McMinnville *News-Register's* Pat Forgey, pforgey@newsregister.com.

► Observers monitoring a small portion of Oregon's and Washington's fishing fleet found that fishermen dumped nearly half of the fish they caught in 1997. A state biologist cautioned that the observers' results might not represent the entire fleet. But what they found provided the most detailed analysis yet: Of 2.3 million pounds of fish brought on deck, more

than 1 million pounds representing more than 14 species were thrown back overboard. Because fishermen discard species that lack markets or exceed landing quotas, many remain cool to observers, fearing additional costs and fishing limits. Biologists say a mandatory observer program for the West Coast fleet is key to check potential overfishing. Contact *The Oregonian's* Hal Bernton at (503) 294-7689 or halbernton@news.oregonian.com.

► The government wants to evict a huge colony of Caspian terns from a man-made island in the Columbia River estuary. Terns on Rice Island ate between six million and 25 million young salmon and steelhead last year, putting a dent in regional salmon recovery efforts. The elegant sea birds nest in bare sand, so they flocked to the island the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers created as a dump for sand dredged from the Columbia's shipping channel.

Because the agency can't kill the birds, the Corps of Engineers plans to relocate the terns to a downriver island using a combination of decoys and recorded tern calls. Officials don't know if their scheme will work. But the agency plans to continue dumping sand on Rice Island—with wheat planted on top to deter terns from nesting. Contact *The Daily Astorian's* Zaz Hollander, (503) 325-3211 or email zaz@dailyastorian.com.

PENNSYLVANIA

► *Philadelphia Inquirer* staff writer Marie McCullough reports that men are probably as fertile as ever, according to D. Stewart Irvine of the Center for Reproductive Biology in Edinburgh, Scotland. However, in a presentation to the International Federation of Infertility Societies and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, Irvine stated that rates of testicular cancer and genital birth defects may indicate changes in men's reproductive health that could be linked to environmental factors. The story ran Oct. 12. The number for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* is (215) 854-2000.

► A chemical release from a South Philadelphia plastics plant shut down the most heavily-traveled bridge between Pennsylvania and New Jersey for several

hours on Aug. 21. Workers at the Ashland Chemical plant were mixing chemicals used to make liquid plastic when the mixture overheated, releasing yellow chemical clouds into the air and sending 21 people to the hospital for shortness of breath, skin rashes, and itchy eyes. All were released. A similar incident occurred in Dec. 1996, according to plant operations manager Robby Shelton. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* story by staff writer Julie Stoiber ran Aug. 12. The *Inquirer* can be reached at (215) 854-2000.

► The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has become involved with efforts to contain a 12,500-gallon gasoline leak in Blue Bell, a suburb of Philadelphia. EPA's involvement, according to EPA on-scene coordinator Steve Jarvela, is not to take over the project, but to make sure the leak doesn't reach the Wissahickon Creek or its tributaries. The *Ambler Gazette* story by staff writer Bob Keeler ran Sept. 2. Contact the *Gazette* at (215) 542-0200.

► An open-space committee in New Britain Township near Philadelphia has identified 24 parcels of land targeted for preservation as parks, continuing as farms, or left as open fields and forests. Properties were chosen according to a number of criteria, one of the most important being whether the property would help create greenways. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* story by suburban staff writer Mark Binker ran October 14. Contact the *Inquirer* at (215) 854-2000

TENNESSEE

► Tennessee seems like a pretty wet place, so it's come as a shock that the middle and eastern parts of the state are beginning to run out of water. The problem is that many small municipalities have dammed local streams for their water supply, and those sources have become inadequate as population grows. Further damming of streams would be environmentally unsound, especially in areas where there are endangered aquatic species. Small-town utilities are looking at their options, including building pipelines to large federally owned lakes.

Also, while Tennessee grapples with its shortages, the fast-growing Atlanta, Georgia, area is seeking to draw water

away from the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, a potential problem since the water would leave the state permanently instead of being recycled into the local ecosystem. Anne Paine reported this story on Sept. 17 in *The Tennessean*. For information, contact her at (615) 259-8071, or e-mail abpaine@aol.com.

► Tennessee Valley Authority, the state's single largest emitter of nitrogen oxide (NOx), has voluntarily agreed to reduce its NO emissions by 75 percent by 2003. If carried out, this could cut Tennessee's total NOx output by 20 percent, which could help alleviate some of the smog and ozone problems plaguing the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Tom Charlier reported on this in *The Commercial Appeal* in August. He can be reached at (901) 529-2572.

UTAH

► Syro Steel Co. was fined more than \$1 million for dumping large quantities of zinc into a sewer system north of Salt Lake City. The fines, the largest criminal fines in Utah history, were levied after the firm, whose parent company is Dallas-based Trinity Industries Inc., pleaded guilty to two felony criminal charges of violating the federal Clean Water Act. State and federal investigators said that Syro, on several occasions from May 1992 to December 1993, dumped at least 75 tons of zinc into a sewer system, which dumps its water into marshes around the Great Salt Lake. Zinc concentrations were measured at two parts per million. A concentration of 0.3 ppm can kill small invertebrate species, an important part of the lake's ecological food chain. For more information contact the U.S. attorney for Utah, (801) 325-3206 or Brent Israelsen, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045 or israel@sltrib.com.

► The first year of the EPA's toughened new ozone standard was a tough one for Utah, which violated the standard 19 times this summer—the most since the 1970s, prompting the state to begin implementing additional measures to curb auto and industrial emissions that contribute to ozone pollution. Those measures include vapor-recovery devices at the gas pump, more controls at the oil refineries, and

The Beat

more cajoling of big businesses to urge their employees to use mass transit. For more information call the Utah Division of Air Quality at (801) 536-4000 or Brent Israelsen, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045 or email israel@sltrib.com.

► About 25,000 eared grebes and several thousand gulls washed up on the shores of the Great Salt Lake in October after dying of avian cholera, the worst outbreak of the disease in Utah history. Wildlife officials do not know the disease's origin or whether the Great Salt Lake, one of the most important stopovers on the Western migratory bird flyway, has become a harbor for the disease, which was unheard of in Utah before 1994. For more information contact Frank Howe, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, (801) 538-4737 or Brent Israelsen, *Salt*

Lake Tribune, (801) 237-2045 or israel@sltrib.com.

WISCONSIN

► The environmental records of political candidates are often ignored. But several Wisconsin newspapers and other media outlets closely analyzed the environmental stands taken by major party candidates in the Wisconsin Governor's and U.S. Senate races this past fall. Environmental groups strongly favored Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ed Garvey and Democratic Senator Russ Feingold. The League of Conservation Voters even set up a Milwaukee field office to focus its efforts on behalf of Feingold. Feingold narrowly won re-election against Republican Mark Neumann. Garvey lost to incumbent Governor

Tommy Thompson, but narrowed the Republican's victory margin from four years ago. For more information contact Chuck Quirmbach, (414) 227-2040 or email quirmbach@vilas.uwex.edu.

► The changeover in the environmental beat of *The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, the state's largest newspaper, continues to evolve. Tom Vanden Brook, recently named to the beat, has been travelling the state and has filed several stories that made the paper's front page. The beat's former occupant, Don Behm, continues to report on issues in Washington County, a fast-growing region near Milwaukee. Behm scored front page on most editions of the paper, with a story on faltering attempts to protect greenspace. Contact *Journal-Sentinel* Editor Martin Kaiser at (414) 224-2000.

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