



SEJ Journal

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Copenhagen Compromise

NYT's Revkin charts new course

Cracking the gas drilling story

Step by step help for multimedia stories

It's not easy using "green"

A quarterly publication of the

Society of Environmental Journalists



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If we want cleaner, more reliable energy, we need to first modernize the rules for building new electric transmission. Our current laws were enacted nearly 100 years ago, leaving us with false boundaries that don't match how the 21st century works. Modern energy means wind power from the Great Plains and solar energy from the Southwest benefitting everyone across the country. But to make the most of our renewable energy resources, we need new transmission. Without it, we will never unlock the full potential of clean American energy.

**IT'S TIME CONGRESS CHANGES HOW WE PAY FOR TRANSMISSION
SO PRIVATE INVESTMENT CAN BUILD A MODERN GRID.**



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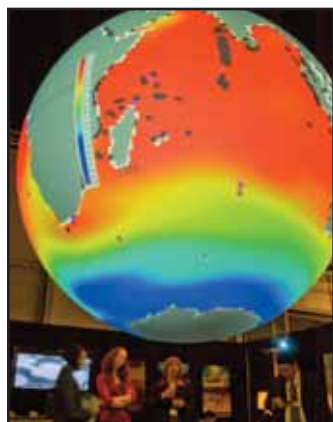
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The "Science Sphere," a giant depiction of the Earth in the Department of State's U.S. Center at the Copenhagen Climate Conference last December, displayed ocean temperatures, moving weather and other climate information. See story on pages 16-17. Photo: © Gary Braasch

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SEJ works to hold Obama administration to its pledge of transparency

By CHRISTY GEORGE

A confession: for a long time, I didn't experience the access shutdown reported by so many other SEJ members. I don't know if it was the agencies I covered, OPB's reputation for balance, or my relative obscurity far away from the Beltway, where so many SEJers on deadline run into brick walls when they ask for interviews with federal workers.

And then came one raw, rainy December day in Corvallis, Oregon, when I arrived at the home of an eminent IPCC author.

Just as I gratefully accepted a warm cup of Earl Grey tea, his cell phone rang.

On the line was a USFS communications person in Washington, D.C., who told the scientist, Ron Neilson, that he couldn't go ahead with my planned radio interview. Neilson works for the U.S. Forest Service and Oregon State University, and I had interviewed him about climate change and forests for a TV documentary I produced in 2007, during the Bush administration.

To be clear, I had called several days earlier and requested permission through appropriate channels to debrief Neilson about a paper he was presenting the following day at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco. I had explained that my story wouldn't run until after he presented the paper publicly.

No dice. No explanation. Just no.

It didn't shut down my story, but my listeners missed out on the news in Neilson's paper — and the Forest Service lost out on a chance to publicize the solid science their researchers are contributing to the climate change field.

SEJers have weighed in with similar stories of access problems and roadblocks, such as high fees and long waits for Freedom of Information requests, at the USFS, EPA (the Environmental Protection Agency), OSHA (the Occupational Safety & Health Administration), FDA (the Food and Drug Administration) and other federal agencies.

Put me in the camp that really appreciates PIOs. A good Public Information Officer can be tremendously helpful by providing background information, setting up access to federal research sites and scheduling interviews with federal employees. But things turn sour when "sitting in" on an interview turns to chilling a scientist's ability to respond freely.

Many PIOs privately object to these restrictive practices. And to be fair, access problems didn't begin with Obama — or, to be really fair, not even with Bush — but they surged right after the terror attacks of 9/11. The Bush administration took down key environmental and right-to-know information from agency and cabinet department websites.

Gone overnight were facts about pipelines, chemical and nuclear power plant safety and certain corporate records about critical public infrastructure.

The impression was clear — that the Bush administration was using the 9/11 attacks to give industry a pass on environ-



mental scrutiny.

SEJ responded in March 2002, by creating the FOI Task Force. Just riffle through past editions of SEJ's *WatchDog Tipsheet* to see the scores of letters SEJ has written opposing secrecy and stiff fees for journalists' access to federal land, while also fighting to keep the Freedom of Information Act alive and functioning, and journalists in the loop about what the government is doing, often in concert with other journalism groups such as SPJ (the Society of Professional Journalists), AHJC (Association of Health Care Journalists), ASNE (the American Society of News Editors), RCFP (the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press), and others. That work has continued with the Obama administration.

SEJ recently wrote directly to White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer, in an attempt to trigger an administration-wide stand-down on press policies which "forbid, delay, or monitor contact between reporters and employees."

Muzzling public officials, or forcing them to conduct interviews with "minders" in the room, we wrote, is an attack on both good science and good public policy.

The irony, of course, is that when Barack Obama took office, he vowed to increase transparency in the federal government, writing that he "is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government." http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/

We do not know how much of what's happening is being driven by Obama or White House officials closest to the center of power, as opposed to so-called "left-behinds" from the Bush administration.

But there's some cause for cautious optimism — at least, when it comes to EPA.

No agency is more central to SEJ members than EPA. While other agencies may own a piece of environment turf, EPA is the single agency whose job is completely about environmental matters in the United States. And because it's so central to us, EPA's missteps and goofs are on full display to the SEJ membership.

Case in point: the late January press conference unveiling EPA's budget. Afterwards, former SEJ board member Mark Schleifstein wrote EPA to complain about the agency's surprise ground rule that every speaker except Administrator Lisa Jackson was on background — a rule announced to reporters while their phones were muted, so no one could object. And EPA took only a very few questions.

It was disappointing, given the work EPA had done to respond to SEJ criticisms going back to December 2008, when SEJ wrote the outgoing Bush EPA to complain about secrecy around the

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Long-time NYT reporter Andy Revkin charts new future as “communicator”

By BUD WARD

It's no stretch to think that Andy Revkin was at the top of his game when he chose this past December to leave *The New York Times*, where for years he had headed the paper's science coverage of global sustainability and climate change.

Certainly, he was at the top of his journalism career, in a position that made him one of the few “rock stars”...or celebrity reporters ... in environmental journalism.

Over much of the past 15 years, Revkin had enjoyed a generous *Times* travel budget that would make most other journalists drool with envy; had toured the globe, from the Arctic to Antarctica; had unparalleled access to climate science experts both nationally and internationally; and, through the *Times*, had wielded an agenda-setting journalism capacity like few others.

And all that on an issue seen by many of his peers in and beyond journalism to be the environmental issue — perhaps even THE issue — of the coming century.

Along with a very small group of other science reporters — none of them with the match of international audience, free-range of coverage, and high visibility — Revkin for years had set the bar high and had defined the standard for climate science reporting. His copy was closely followed by other reporters around the nation and world as a verification, or refutation, both of quality climate science and of journalism. The scientific community — which spared him no barbs from either end of the climate change spectrum — followed his every word, his every Tweet.

He was a marquee speaker at workshops, in campus presentations, and on air ...seldom detached from the 24/7 online world and networking that made him seem all the time to be everywhere.

Now, as he moves into a new role, the journalism community may once again learn, not just about climate change, but also about our new world of communications.

So Why Leave When He Did ...and To Do What?

Why did Revkin leave a journalism job to which most others covering climate change can only aspire?

In fact, it's not entirely accurate to say that he has fully left the

Times: he expects to continue his popular Dot Earth blog as an independent contractor, and *Times* management appears inclined to keep him in that capacity. And he certainly hopes not to be leaving reporting entirely either, though he hopes and expects his future writing career will more often come through magazines and books. He now is working on a book for middle-school children on resilience to disasters and another, for adults, on “ways to navigate the next 50 years with the fewest regrets.”

In late December, the *Times* pared 100 news and editorial employees. But Revkin's acceptance of the buyout surprised many. In fact, it had been in the works for months. His new affiliation as Senior Fellow for Environmental Understanding with Pace University's Pace Academy for Applied Environmental Studies, near his home in New York, had long since been secured. (Pace in 2007 awarded Revkin an honorary doctorate in humane letters.)

Writing of his own future on Dot Earth in December 2009, Revkin said, “I no longer see journalism, on its own, as the single best use of my remaining days. Among other goals, I want to help make scientists and scientific institutions into **better, more committed, more creative communicators**. In a world of **shrinking specialized journalism**, direct outreach will be more vital than ever.”

...Beyond Traditional Journalism and Newsprint

The roots of his move actually go further back. Some two years ago, Revkin had written a personal “second half” memo sketching what shape his work life might take over the second half of his life — he's 54 now. What became clearer to him then was a realization that his future work career would have to go beyond journalism, beyond newsprint, indeed that it might not even encompass traditional newsroom journalism as that phrase had adequately captured his early career.

Even before launching the Dot Earth blog in October 2007 as part of the *Times*' venture into the digital world, Revkin was

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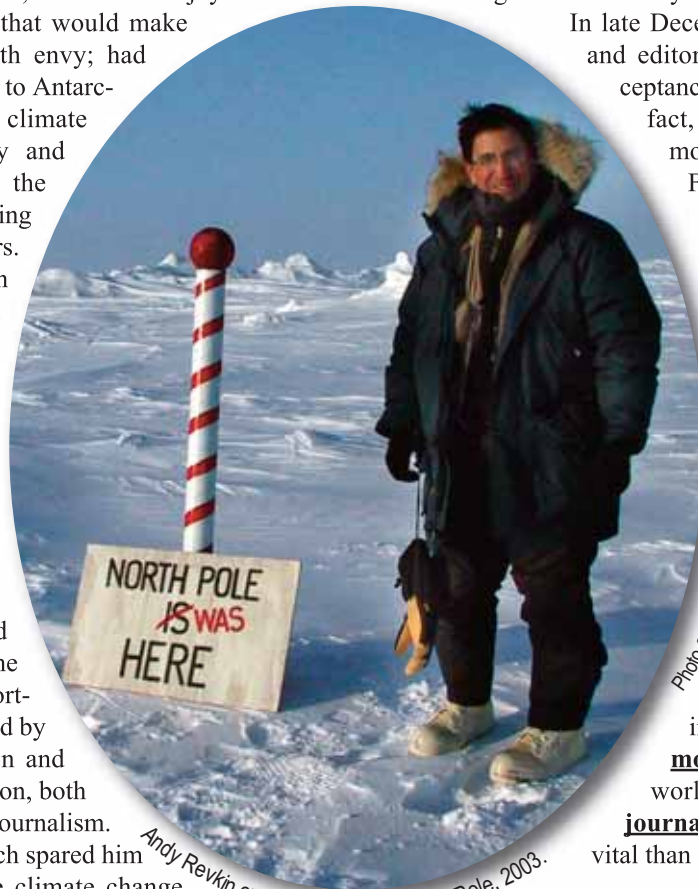


Photo courtesy Andy Revkin

Andy Revkin on the sea ice near North Pole, 2003.



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Mission: To strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues

The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of SEJ is to strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues. As a network of journalists and academics, SEJ offers national and regional conferences, publications and online services. SEJ's membership of more than 1,500 includes journalists working for print and electronic media, educators, and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's annual conferences and to subscribe to the quarterly *SEJournal*.

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Knight Center to Award \$1,000 Prize for Top Innovation in Environmental Journalism

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The winner will be selected by a distinguished panel of judges and receive \$1,000 and an all-expenses-paid trip to speak at MSU in East Lansing, Mich. during the School of Journalism's 100th anniversary celebration the week of Oct. 22 to 24, 2010.

Additional details about the contest and an entry form can be found at <http://ej.msu.edu/innovation>. Entries may be submitted via e-mail to ej@msu.edu or by mailing an entry to EJ Innovator of the Year Award, Knight Center for Environmental Journalism, Room 382 Communication Arts Building, East Lansing, MI 48824-1212. The deadline for entering this contest is April 30, 2010.

This contest is supported by a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

*Long-time NYT reporter
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among the most aggressive reporters in the paper's news room in adapting to multi-media reporting and new online formats, *Times* Assistant Managing Editor Glenn Kramon has said. Pointing to a workshop on the subject, Revkin has referred to it all as "straddling the uncertain interface between the front page and home page."

Revkin personally and professionally was clearly caught up in the tensions between being a full-time news reporter while also being a 24/7 blogger. There appears little question that the enormous success he enjoyed as a blogger through Dot Earth came at some expense to the quantity of his front-page output, and in 2009 he acknowledged and accepted responsibility for what he called "my worst misstep as a journalist in 26 years." <http://tinyurl.com/cqxibom>

He acknowledges the tradeoffs. "Blogging is not something that the policy makers in Washington follow," Revkin allowed in a recent phone interview. "They'll pay attention to the printed page, and not to something that's coming out on a blog. If I break news on Dot Earth, unless it gets on to Drudge or something, it will just sort of pass in the flow. And that's a limitation, and the sort of constrained nature of the thing ... a pre-selected audience that's interested in global change. And that's a limitation, and it's why I want to keep a hand in print coverage too."

Self-Marketing ... While a Tempting Target of Scorn

In addition to his constant online blogging, Tweeting, friending, listserving, commenting, and interviewing, Revkin also possessed another skill few of his journalism peers can match. But it's a skill they all should mimic: He excelled in marketing and promoting his own work, leaving a trail of tiny URLs for all on his extensive distribution lists to follow like squirrels pursuing nuts. It's a skill not to be taken lightly and one that does not come naturally to many ink-in-the-veins reporting types.

Don't get any notion of Revkin on some kind of infallible journalistic pedestal, however. While standing atop a mountain of kudos from journalists and scientists alike for his climate coverage, he acknowledges gaps and takes some responsibilities for what he sees as the *Times*' shortcomings in reporting too little on the strengths and weaknesses of modeling and the economic implications of climate change — both costs and benefits.

There is little question too that with his high visibility he became a tempting — for some, almost irresistible — target for barbs from advocates left and right. (Radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh's broadcast suggestion that Revkin take his own life is only the most highly publicized example.) As much as climate "skeptics" deplored much of his handling of climate science issues, he in 2009 found himself the target also of many in the "pro" AGW (anthropogenic global warming) community, some of whom had sworn not to deal with him again.

It all contributed to the growing frustration over what he increasingly saw as the restrictive limits of traditional black ink on white newsprint journalism. Revkin had a distaste for what he



Andrew Revkin moderating questions and answers following an address by former Vice-President Al Gore during the 2009 SEJ Annual Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

PHOTO © ROB GOODIER

called "the front page thought" — the newsroom tension to pursue the dramatic, the "newsy" sometimes beyond newsworthiness, to boost a potential inside-page story to the front.

So add to those very professional concerns the round-the-clock pressures of his reporting job. He had to keep a backbreaking on-call pace that was increasingly taking a toll professionally and personally.

After an exhausting 10 days and international flights to Copenhagen to cover the climate meetings in December, his last official business trip for the newspaper, Revkin returned home seriously ill and pretty much spent. His work schedule already had forced him to set aside his affinity for playing his guitar, sometimes solo and sometimes as part of the Uncle Wade acoustic/blues/countrygroup www.myspace.com/unclewade.

Still a 'Journalist'? — Yes ...No ...We'll See

In his new capacity, Revkin now appears ambivalent, at best, about whether the term "journalist" still will apply to him. Asked recently, for instance, if he still considers himself a journalist, he replied, "Yes, well, no, well, let's see."

And asked if he plans to remain a dues-paying member of SEJ (active, associate, academic?), he responded that he would most like to make a presentation before the group arguing that its proper name should no longer revolve around journalism, but perhaps rather around communications. (It's not an entirely new thought among SEJ types, but one that has scarcely gotten out of the starter's block.)

"Oh, God," Revkin replied when asked about his ongoing SEJ membership status. "I mean my communications is still going to be a primary function. If I were just listed as academic, that would be a problem for me. I'm basically now a communicator."

Along with his teaching and class work revolving around a new course tentatively titled "9 Billion People + 1 Planet =?," echoing the focus of his Dot Earth blog, he explains that he will continue writing — yes, still for print media, including magazines — while exploring the "synthesis of the diverse portfolio of disciplines that are critical to a full understanding of environmental issues." He has said he expects to work with his new

colleagues in academia to “create and promote online communication and educational tools for building and linking communities in ways that foster one-planet living.” And he said he hopes to develop a “go-to” portal to compile and improve public understanding of critical sustainability issues, helping to improve links between journalism and communication schools and science departments.

In more down-to-earth terms, Revkin recently said in a radio interview that his reporting on climate science since the mid-1980s had given him “the privilege and the horror of getting a more realistic view of how this issue related to the grander trends that are under way in human history right now. And that leads to a very clear understanding that the more you look at the moment that this is not a moment, that it’s a journey.”

It was part of Revkin’s recognition that while he shepherded climate science coverage during a critical era, the road to overall societal change is a long one.

“You know, our relationship to energy is not going to be solved or transformed by any one president, any one administration, any one Congress, and any one conclave in one capital or another. It’s an evolving process.”

Part of that evolution has involved a steady, and in past months a steadily increasing, pace of criticisms of his coverage, not only from climate skeptics but also — and more so — from climate scientists more aligned with the official IPCC view of things. As the prospects for real and serious legislative or regulatory action increased, either at the federal or international level, as they had been increasing until the past four months or so, so too did the attacks and criticisms of Revkin for his reporting.

Big Challenge for Media: Need for ‘An Intellectual Agora’

Characterizing what he describes as his “interrogatory reportorial exercise” at Dot Earth, Revkin says he much prefers the kind of communication in which he poses questions and outlines what the answers tell him. “I’m not saying what to do, and I’m not telling you what to think,” he told a Living on Earth interviewer. He has said he does not foresee himself practicing advocacy journalism and does not plan to align with interest groups on climate change or sustainability issues.

Still in negotiations with *Times* management over his continuing to handle Dot Earth as a contractor (both parties appeared eager, and close to reaching an agreement), Revkin said in a February telephone interview that newspaper reporters nowadays must embrace the need to be multi-media.

“If they’re interested in covering the brewing kinds of stories like climate ...one approach is to do more comprehensive pieces every once in a while. And just really press for the space for that.”

Pointing to a mix of in-print and online reporting tools, Revkin says, “You can’t just do the one thing, I think that has to just go away. It’s ancient history.” He points to *Albuquerque Journal* science writer John Fleck and to *Houston Chronicle* reporter Eric Berger and *Charleston, W. Va., Gazette* reporter Ken Ward Jr. as examples of reporters who have achieved a delicate balance between their on-paper and online reporting.

“It’s a big challenge for the media ... We need an intellectual agora, the Greek word for the plaza,” Revkin says. “We’ve lost that with the death of the nightly news and the death of the daily newspaper, the sense of a common sort of vista on what’s

happening. Something that everyone is experiencing together.”

“How do we maintain that, and also have the depth? You have to have the interactivity and the real-time dynamics of blogging, Twitter, and the like at the same time that you have the same core strength reserved for doing the heavy lifting.”

“A conversation that we’ve been having even in our newsroom is that more of the daily responsibilities of the person who we used to call a reporter will include things like managing topics pages, and that’s already the case.”

“All of us, increasingly, will be managing flows of information, on topics that are enduring, rather than simply or only reporting the news.”

Environmental journalists pondering their own futures — and that of journalism overall — will at least have a role model to follow to see just how it might be done. Granted that Revkin leaps into this uncertain future from the strength of having been the nation’s leading climate science journalist, a launch pad few others will enjoy. But Revkin may again be blazing a journalism/communications path others will want to learn from as the entire field moves in directions as yet unknown and highly uncertain.

Bud Ward, a founding SEJ member, is an independent journalism educator and former editor of Environment Writer. He edits The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media (<http://climatemediaforum.yale.edu>)

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Happy 20th Anniversary, SEJ

Small Texas daily tackles complex issue by focusing on a basic human need: safety

By BILL DAWSON

Photos courtesy *Denton Record-Chronicle*



Lowell Brown



Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe

As newspapers have shed reporting positions, practitioners and observers of environmental journalism have remarked that while the “environment beat,” per se, may no longer be a formal position at as many publications, reporters with other assignments are doing high-quality work on environmental issues.

Lowell Brown and Peggy Heinkel-Wolfe of the *Denton Record-Chronicle* in North Texas have provided a notable example with their reporting on the impacts of the boom in drilling for natural gas in a shale formation. The two won first-place recognition in SEJ’s 2009 awards category for Outstanding Small-Market Reporting, Print. The contest judges said their five-part series, “Behind the Shale,” had set “the standard for reporting on environmental issues at small-circulation publications.”

The judges added:

“With striking personal detail, the paper’s reporters told a great behind-the-scenes story about how land deals really work in Texas. It’s not a pretty sight: example after example showed how the tables are tilted to favor corporations and lawyers over residents and how little government agencies had done to curb abuses. While some of the other entries had more refined prose, the *Record-Chronicle* deserves the highest marks for laying bare an issue in which virtually everyone in the 18-county region of the Barnett Shale has a stake.”

Brown and Heinkel-Wolfe responded to emailed questions about their reporting from *SEJournal*’s Bill Dawson.

Q: First, tell me something about yourselves. How long have you been journalists? How long at the Denton newspaper? What are your jobs or beats there?

A: Lowell has been a writer, editor and page designer for daily newspapers since 2003. He’s been a staff writer at the *Denton Record-Chronicle* for the past four years.

Peggy has been a journalist since 2000, freelancing with area dailies and weeklies until she started full-time with the *Denton Record-Chronicle* in December 2005.

We’re both city hall reporters, with Lowell covering Denton and Peggy covering all the small cities — about 15 of them — around Denton.

Q: Generally speaking, how are environmental issues handled at the newspaper? Is there an environmental beat,

per se? Besides natural gas impacts, what are some of the other environmental issues that receive coverage in the area that the newspaper covers?

A: Our paper doesn’t have anyone dedicated to the environmental beat. We tackle environmental issues as part of our everyday coverage. We’ve written stories on development and the loss of open space, we regularly report on Texas

Commission on Environmental Quality enforcement proceedings, and we have written stories on air and water quality. Denton County, by the way, is part of the regional non-attainment area [for ground-level ozone] encompassing Dallas and Fort Worth.

Q: Natural gas drilling in shale formations has become controversial in various parts of the United States in recent years due to growing concern about the environmental impacts. For *SEJournal* readers who aren’t familiar with that issue or with your area, please provide a little background information about the Barnett Shale — what and where it is, how gas drilling has increased there in recent years, and how urban areas have been affected.

A: The Barnett Shale is a massive gas field that spans more than a dozen counties in the western Dallas-Fort Worth area. The gas isn’t new; the technology to get at it profitably is. When wells started popping up in urban areas several years ago — often next to homes and schools — people complained about the noise and traffic from the heavy trucks and machinery. Since then, evidence is mounting that more serious problems can accompany gas drilling and production, including cancer-causing chemicals in the air and water supplies.

Other events here have led to more scrutiny of the industry, even if they haven’t been conclusively tied to gas drilling operations. Public water wells in three North Texas towns were shut down recently after state regulators reported finding increased radiation levels. Some locals blamed the problem on gas drilling activities, including a malfunctioning wastewater disposal well in one of the towns, but state officials said they found no definitive link. Some scientists blamed a series of minor earthquakes last year in Cleburne, south of Fort Worth, on extensive gas drilling there. Also, state health officials are investigating a leukemia cluster in the Denton County town of Flower Mound.

State regulators have said they need more evidence on the health effects of gas drilling to support a moratorium, feeding a perception among environmentalists that the state is asleep at the

wheel on the issue.

Q: How did your series come about — why did you and the newspaper decide to undertake it at the time you did? Was it an outgrowth of previous reporting on drilling impacts? Was the series the first time you had reported as a team?

A: The project was an outgrowth of previous reporting. In 2006, we wrote a host of stories that tackled various issues with the intense shale development, from the rights of cities to govern themselves, to the rights of property owners to protect their interests to the environmental impacts. While it wasn't the first time we worked on a story together, it was the first time to work as a team on something large-scale. We decided ahead of time how we would divvy up the duties. After we started reviewing our early



A natural gas rig drilling a horizontal well towers over a neighborhood southeast of Denton, near Corinth, Texas. Photo by Al Key, *Denton Record-Chronicle*

drafts, Lowell quipped — if someone cried, he wrote it, if someone died, Peggy wrote it.

Q: Your series pays close attention to one neighborhood in the small town of Argyle, near Denton. How and why did you decide to focus on that community? What were some of the key citizen concerns and complaints there that you examined and documented?

A: The battle in that particular neighborhood looked like one that could be an excellent backdrop for a narrative that we hoped would take two years' worth of reporting and put it together in a way that our readers could understand the impact.

A pad site sat only 250 feet from some of the homes — a towering, rocky plateau where a tree-lined hill used to be. The construction re-routed the flow of rainwater, and pools and homes now flooded with a modest rainfall. The government was little help to these neighbors — in Texas, energy companies enjoy enormous legal leeway — but they'd managed to delay the drilling so far, mostly by pointing out the drilling company's disregard for city development codes.

It helped that the main characters of the story were willing to work with us. The story's direction really took shape when the neighbor closest to the well, a mother of two young boys,

confessed her inner turmoil. Thoughts of a well explosion haunted her, but by giving voice to them she felt as though she failed to live up to the tenets of her Christian faith. Nowhere had we seen this depth of emotion conveyed in media reports about gas drilling. The issue for these neighbors isn't noise or dust, we realized. It's the basic human need to feel safe in your home.

Over the months that followed we spent countless hours talking to sources, transcribing interviews and sorting through mundane government documents, but we never lost sight of our goal. We were, in the words of Gay Talese, telling stories with real names.

Q: Besides the attention to Argyle, how and why did you choose the various sub-topics that you explored in the different stories that made up the series?

A: We were ambitious and/or naïve enough to think we could write the single most comprehensive story about urban gas drilling ever published. So we knew we had to offer a broad view of the industry while following the narrative of what happened in this one neighborhood.

Luckily for us, their story was complex enough that we could easily break off and explore the larger issues we knew were critical to understanding the industry, including the lust for money and the short- and long-term environmental problems involved.

Q: How long did you spend on the project? Were you obliged to keep up with

your regular reporting duties at the same time? The series represents an impressive commitment of time and resources. Was it your idea or an editor's idea? If it was yours, was it hard to persuade your bosses to let you do it? Does the newspaper produce many such in-depth projects?

A: The story was our idea and we didn't have any trouble convincing our editors to do it. It took about six months to pull it together, chipping away at it a couple of hours each week to assemble what we needed. We each got a week off to write our portion. During his writing week, Lowell checked himself into a hotel for part of the time. Peggy moved to an unused cubby in a quiet corner of the building.

This was the first time our paper had run something on this scale, and in narrative form, so we were all cutting our teeth on what was required to make that work, particularly in the editing process.

However, every year, we make time during Sunshine Week to do a large-scale project. Other projects come together as the need arises. Usually, reporters just pitch in to help cover another reporter's beat as they tackle something big, whether it's the detailed examination of poorly run election or the prosecution of a cop-turned-murderer.

Q: The natural gas industry exerts a lot of influence and has a lot of supporters in Texas and in other places where it's an important part of the economy. Describe the reactions your series got from the public, government officials, business and industry leaders. Was there a significant negative response?

A: The response from the community was so positive it far outweighed the negative reaction of the industry. We know journalists covering other shale development have used our coverage as a template for what to question, but our favorite compliment was a local one. A city planner said he was clipping and saving the story because it helped him understand what was going on better than any other resource he had.

Q: Natural gas drilling in the Barnett Shale region has continued to be highly controversial in the 14 months since your series was published in late 2008. Air pollution issues, such as benzene emissions and drilling activities' contribution to ozone levels in North Texas, have gotten a lot of media attention in the region during that time. Tell me about your own coverage since the series ran. Are the two of you still covering drilling as a reporting team or individually? If so, what are some of the subjects and developments that you've written about and continue to pay attention to?

A: The beginnings of the benzene controversy can be traced to Peggy's regular reporting duties in Dish. In May 2009, Dish residents were upset when an industry-funded study of air quality there showed no problems. The Dish Town Council voted to commission an air quality study of its own. Peggy was the only reporter in Dish that night. The town hired an environmental firm

to take measurements and write up a report. Peggy was there again when the results were released, but so were a lot of other reporters because state and federal officials had gotten word that the results were troubling.

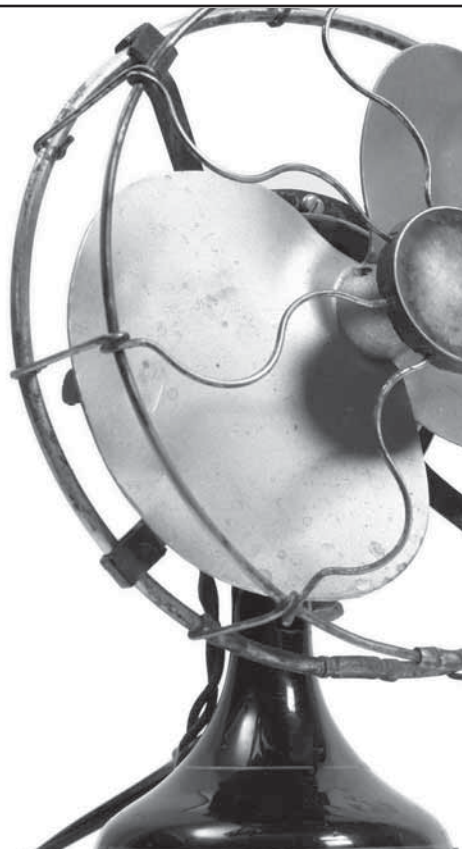
We both continue to follow the health concerns surrounding drilling as well as the emerging activism towards regulatory reform. Most of the time, those issues emerge at one city council meeting or another. For example, another Denton County town, Flower Mound, is experimenting with the concept of centralized wastewater collection along with centralized compression, where companies place gas compressors for multiple wells at a single location. That sets up a host of environmental justice concerns.

After the Texas Railroad Commission ultimately did not approve the permit for drilling in the Argyle neighborhood featured in our series, we started working as a team on a follow-up story. But the leaseholder has not yet given up on that spot, so we're working with a moving target there.

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of the SEJournal. He can be reached by email at b.dawson@earthlink.net



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Journalists use term “green” more often, but what does it mean?

By JACLYN TAN

“Green” seems to be the new **black**.

In November 2007, NBC Universal launched its first “Green Week.” According to the company’s Web site, the media giant presented more than 150 hours of “environmentally themed content across multiple platforms,” and continues to hold twice-yearly weeks to deliver “green-themed content” to its viewers and online users.

Among other things, the NBCU Web site GreenIsUniversal.com contains guidelines for TV production professionals to help reduce their environmental impact — a part of NBCU’s plan “to bring an environmental perspective” to the work it does. The guide also says it will change “to keep pace with the constant advances in the field of sustainability.”

Over the past few years, journalists have also begun to casually use the terms “green” and “sustainable” when reporting. Many corporations and advertisers have jumped onto the “green” and “sustainable” bandwagon. However, according to an informal e-mail survey of Society of Environmental Journalists members, the use of these terms has its critics.

“I don’t use either term,” wrote Seth Borenstein, a science writer for the Associated Press, in an e-mail. “Green is too wishy-washy and could mean just about anything, and usually does. Sustainable is too wonky and inaccessible. And for that matter, what is sustainable and what is not?”

Green background

“Green” and “sustainable” aren’t recent additions to our vocabulary.

“Both ‘green’ & ‘sustainable’ are very old buzz-words, in use as early as the 1930s and perhaps even earlier, with quite a lot of overlapping usage, but different implications,” wrote Merritt Clifton, editor of the newspaper *Animal People*. “The concept has gradually evolved since the 18th century and even influenced political ideology,” wrote Clifton.

However, heightened environmental awareness has driven up the popularity of both terms when it comes to taking care of nature.

“I think it’s something that over the last couple of decades has been more visible,” said Sharon Kuska, architecture professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, “because of issues coming to the forefront like climate change (and) shortage in natural resources.”

Marketers seem to have a different agenda for these terms. For example, although NBCU has gone all out to promote green, or eco-friendly, methods, this marketing technique has also benefitted NBCU.

“NBC Universal has been able to generate tens of millions of

dollars worth of sponsorship revenue during its Green Is Universal Earth Week in the spring and Green Week programming stunts in the fall,” wrote Jon Lafayette in TVWeek.com, an online insider guide to the television industry.

Sustainability in different fields

While “green” seems to be a vague concept relating to all things environmentally friendly, “sustainable” has a formal definition. The most quoted definition, contained in the United Nations’ 1987 Brundtland Report, defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

But sustainability can mean different things in different industries, said Sue Ellen Pegg, recruiting coordinator for the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In environmental studies, she said sustainability means not depleting natural resources of a given ecosystem.

“Sustainability is looking at a system being able to function at that same level across time,” said Pegg, who previously served as the associate director for WasteCap Nebraska, a non-profit organization that promotes resource conservation to Nebraska businesses.

Sustainability spans many fields, going into areas such as energy.

“Sustainable is generally considered to be an energy source which can’t be depleted,” wrote Roger Witherspoon, freelance writer and an active member of the Society of Environmental Journalists. “Hydro power, thermal power, wind power all fall into that category.”

And sustainable design is even important in architecture.

Kuska, who teaches a class on sustainability at UNL, said the concept encompasses more than not depleting resources. A sustainable social profile of a house could involve how the house fits into the existing neighborhood and infrastructure.

A team of University of Nebraska-Lincoln architecture students recently designed and built a house to fit into an established neighborhood with existing infrastructure such as plumbing, power supply and four different bus routes within five blocks of the building. These combined factors make the house more sustainable because the tenants can live comfortably over a long time, Kuska said.

Differentiating “sustainable” and “green”

In a special edition of *Scientific American Earth* 3.0, Michael D. Lemonick wrote about the untruths linked to both terms. In his

article, “Top 10 Myths about Sustainability,” Lemonick points out that people often lump sustainability together with green practices when these two terms are not the same.

Since sustainability is based on the drive to keep improving production methods so we preserve scarce resources, Pegg said eco-friendly products aren’t necessarily sustainable.

“Just because it says recycled doesn’t mean it’s good,” Pegg said. “Look at the whole life cycle.”

For example, she said, disposable paper cups are biodegradable and thus more eco-friendly than styrofoam cups, which take much longer to decompose. However, paper cups are far less sustainable than longer-lasting ceramic mugs.

Kuska said that’s why sustainability is an evolving concept.

“There’s no one standard for sustainability,” Kuska said, “because it’s kind of an ideal to strive toward.”

But SEJ member Sarah McCammon thinks “sustainability” is more trustworthy than “green.”

“‘Sustainable’ seems a little more precise,” responded McCammon, who, at the time, was a reporter and producer for Nebraska’s NET radio. “I think it’s probably subject to many of the same pitfalls as the term ‘green’; however, I hear scientists and urban planners and food-systems experts talk about ‘sustainability’ a lot more than ‘going green.’”

Greenwashing

So what kind of pitfalls does “green” face?

Witherspoon, also a critic of the word, said the term has lost its substance because companies pepper advertising with “green” without explaining it.

“Toyota describes its Land Cruiser as a ‘green’ car,” wrote Witherspoon in his e-mail, “I guess because it uses less gas than a similarly huge Cadillac Escalade. GM, on the other hand, describes the new Escalade Hybrid as a Green SUV. Hence, my feeling that it is a journalistically useless term, though one suited for marketing and rather shallow TV reports.”

Companies that make misleading environmental claims of their product or company practices engage in a practice called greenwashing.

A 2009 report by TerraChoice, a Canadian-based environmental marketing agency, pointed out the seven sins of greenwashing: hidden trade-off, no proof, vagueness, worshipping false labels, irrelevance, lesser of two evils and fibbing.

Of more than 2,000 products claiming to be green in the U.S. and Canada, only 25, or less than 2 percent, of those products were found to be “Sin-free,” states TerraChoice on its Web site.

Ruth Brown, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln associate professor of advertising, said the Federal Trade Commission has regulations on environmental marketing, such as the need to substantiate environmental claims made on any product. But the FTC relies on complaints of products before acting on a case. Brown said insufficient FTC funding and the sheer number of products make enforcement difficult.

“So it boils down to the ethics of advertisers and agencies themselves,” she said.

At the very least, Brown said everyone should be armed with a fact-checking mentality when looking at anything labeled as “green” or “sustainable.”

“Look for that point of substantiation. Look for where that claim is explained,” she said.

As Kermit the Frog would say, **“It isn’t easy being green.”**

Sustainable weight

In their defense, not all corporations practice greenwashing. In fact, why shouldn’t “green” and “sustainable” carry weight if they are backed up by science?

Vicki Miller, research communications coordinator at UNL’s Office of Research and Economic Development, said in more than 20 years of being a reporter and writer, she’s used both “green” and “sustainable” but in proper contexts.

For example, “sustainability has long been an issue for agriculture,” Miller said. “I think folks sort of forget that ag folks have been concerned with the issue of feeding the world ... long before folks worried about where their food came from.”

Paying closer attention

The use of “green” and “sustainable” will continue, but it can bring significant benefit if journalists stop to consider the concepts before using the terms.

On the term “green,” Sarah McCammon wrote, “I think it’s a positive sign that the word is being used more and that people are at least thinking about these issues.”

To Borenstein of the Associated Press, the best way to explain things is to avoid vague terms altogether and cut to the chase.

“My job is to put things in more accessible language,” he said. “If something saves electricity or produces less greenhouse gas emissions, why not say it directly? Why not say something is less carbon-polluting?”

Miller, on the other hand, thinks journalists can use the terms, but must define them well.

“Everybody uses them and they mean different things to different people. And they also mean different things in different contexts,” she said. “As science writers, we certainly have to be careful and specific about what we’re talking about.”

Jaelyn Tan graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Journalism and Mass Communications in December, 2009. She wrote this story as an assignment in a science-writing class. Tan can be reached at jaelyn87@gmail.com



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At Sundance, filmmakers tackle everything from cane toads to climate-change victims

By JOANN M. VALENTI

The odds at Sundance seem overwhelming. When 9,816 films are submitted and only 186 accepted for screening, it's no wonder the chosen filmmakers so easily ignore the thin mountain air, ten-foot snow drifts, 20 degree F. highs, and knee-deep slush between venues in Park City, Utah. With this year's mantra to "rebel", "dare to grow from underground," finding films with an environmental theme was not too difficult. That is, in the documentary or shorts categories.

None of the feature-length dramas, those films you're most likely to find in local theaters, addressed environment issues. Award winners in the feature category and films picked up by major distributors focused more often on bad behavior, sex, crime, betrayal, torture, war or drugs. Evidence perhaps of Redford's worry that "we [are] sliding...flatlining" from the founding principle to create and nurture alternatives to Hollywood fare.

Eight environmentally focused documentaries screened: *Cane Toads: The Conquest*, *Climate Refugees*, *Gasland*, *Waste Land*, *Countdown to Zero*, *Pumzi*, *Vegetarian* and *Obselidia*, the winner of the Alfred. P. Sloan Award for science content. Seven short films covered environment topics: *Born Sweet* (an honorable mention award winner telling a story of arsenic leaks in UNICEF dug wells in Cambodia), *Plastic and Glass*, *Rains*, *Vostok Station*, *Drunk History: Tesla & Edison*, *Tungjuq* and *Mr. Okra*.

Robert Redford's annual independent film event, held the last ten days in January, brought out the usual crowds from industry in search of audience pleasers for distribution, mostly young/struggling indie filmmakers, people who just love movies, a bevy of Hollywood stars and 1,600 volunteers directing traffic, collecting tickets and doing the general grunt work.

Also on hand were Bill Gates (there to see *Waiting for Superman*, a doc critical of the U.S. education system, winner of an audience award and acquired for U.S. release this fall), Koko Warner from the U.N.'s University Institute for Environment and Human Security and long-time environmental advocate Lester Brown, who appeared with Warner in *Climate Refugees* and participated in a panel discussion on climate change. Environment issues also featured prominently in several high tech, interactive art installations.

A fact sheet listed the festival's sustainability commitment and activities to lower energy consumption, reduce waste streams, conserve natural resources and eliminate disposable shopping bags. A baseline assessment of the festival's environmental impacts is under way.

The Sundance Festival's 2010 oft-repeated theme made Redford's intent clear: This is the Renewed Rebellion Against the

Establishment of the Expected. On day one, Redford admonished the audience to "get back to our roots" and again emphasized the importance of documentaries and diversity. The festival's categories listed first-time, female, native or indigenous and international filmmakers. Forty-one countries were represented.

Although not an award winner, *Climate Refugees* aims to heighten concern about climate change. Director Michael Nash wants to "put a human face" on the consequences of disastrous changes already taking place around the planet. Interviews with experts, including Stanford's Stephen Schneider, Paul Ehrlich and global security leaders, predict that "climate wars" will come in the wake of millions of poor displaced by the ravages of floods, storms, disappearing land mass and massive water issues. Artificial political borders are being breached. The documentary argues that Bangladesh, ground zero for climate change's impact, will soon be uninhabitable, along with other island states. "Nature is at war with us," one of the many featured refugees cries. Migrations into other countries have led to national crises. The Malthusian prediction is evident. "It's a moral issue," the film warns, "a last call for humanity." Katrina and Haiti loomed large in post-screening discussions.

Attacking a lesser known environmental issue is John Fox's *Gasland*. Fox, who owns acreage in Pa. where toxic spills from natural gas drilling is ongoing, follows the trail of the Halliburton-developed drilling technology called hydraulic "fracking" across the country and interviews those impacted. Homeowners relying on well water easily ignite the stream flowing from kitchen faucets. Fox attempts to interview dozens of government sources only to be blown off. He lists the no-return calls, refusals and failed interviews at the end of the film. A nice touch. It will look familiar to any environmental journalist.

Fox reports that the industry knew of problems but opted to pay for any resulting fines rather than bother to get permits or go through a public hearing process. So far that seems to be working. It's hard for homeowners to prove effects, Fox said, because there is no science. The EPA failed to make decisions based on science, he told me in an interview during the festival. His film documents the dismantling of the needed science. Only whistleblowers and noted scientist Theo Colborn provide data, independent science to show that leaking chemicals contaminate groundwater wherever drilling occurs.

"You can't switch the burden of expertise onto the citizenry," the obviously frustrated Fox told me. He's encouraged recently with changes at EPA and the agency's open online tip line, but wonders still about the agency's enforcement efforts. These gas



Josh Fox, director of the documentary Gasland which traces the impacts of unregulated natural gas "fracking" across the country, watches water running from a homeowner's faucet burst into flames. Photo courtesy of International WOW Company

Advertisement

companies are running afoul of the Clean Water Act through a buried legal exemption, he said. He wants more media attention to those insider scientists who are aware of industry projections versus the reality of the drilling operations' design and operation.

So bottom line, according to this year's indies, the cane toads have not left Australia. No conquest in sight for this "epitode". Brazil's Jardim Gramacho in Rio, the world's largest landfill, affords a miserable existence for recyclables pickers but world class art for Vik Muniz. Lots of techno stuff becomes obsolete way too fast and bee keepers know that to save ourselves we need to save the bees. Nuclear weapons security is an oxymoron. Climate wars are coming. We have either too much, too little or too polluted water. And indie filmmakers are trying their best to get their messages across, growing from the underground, rebelling against the expected.

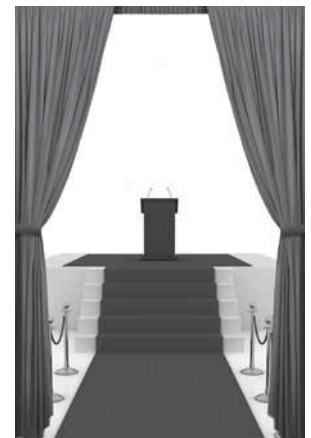
Go to www.sundance.org or websites for individual films for more information.

JoAnn Valenti, Emerita Professor and a member of SEJournal's Editorial Board, has attended Sundance with students and to cover science and environment in films for over a dozen years. It's always too cold, but the event is worth trudging through snow drifts.



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Copenhagen compromise

Text and Photos by GARY BRAASCH



Photo © Gary Braasch



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Denmark

Gary Braasch, a freelance environmental photojournalist who has been documenting the climate story worldwide for over a decade (see SEJournal, Summer, 2009), covered the Copenhagen Climate Conference last December in both words and photographs. His comments about these pictures were condensed from blog entries posted to his website, www.worldviewofglobalwarming.org. --ED

Inside Copenhagen's Bella Center, delegates from 192 nations were served by forty-two interpreters (above) who translated the proceedings into Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Using a Braasch photo to make his point — the 1995 Chicago heat wave that killed 730 — U.S. Presidential Science Advisor John Holdren (topcenter) told delegates that climate change is already disrupting normal temperatures, rainfall, tides and ice patterns.

To emphasize the risk of sea level rise, sculptor Jens Galschiot installed evocative bronze figures (bottom left) surrounded by water near the Bella Center.

Prime Minister Apisai Ielemia (below second left) of the Pacific island nation of Tuvalu led a group of smaller nations demanding stronger reductions in emissions by 2020. "It is now or never," he told reporters. "We have the right to exist!"



Co



Photo © Gary Braasch



Photo © Gary Braasch

Sweden



Photo © Gary Braasch



Photo © Gary Braasch

Around Copenhagen, a number of giant inflated balloons (inset above) purported to equal the volume of a tonne (2,205 lbs.) of carbon dioxide.

The U.S. Senate's foremost critic of global warming, Senator James Inhofe (R, OK), told reporters that energy and climate legislation proposed by Senator John Kerry (D, MA) would not pass. (below second right) Kerry also spoke at the conference.

Highlighted by smoke-spewing Statues of Liberty (bottom right), over 30,000 protesters marched through Copenhagen to demand action at the climate talks.

At the eleventh hour of the talks, U.S. and Chinese negotiators reached an unexpected breakthrough, a three-page accord which President Obama and leaders of China, India, South Africa, and Brazil agreed to, but did not sign. Delegates (top right) get their first look at The Accord.

From *The Accord*:

“We agree that deep cuts in global emissions are required according to science, . . . and take action to meet this objective consistent with science and on the basis of equity.”

Gary Braasch can be reached at gary@braaschphotography.com



Photo © Gary Braasch



Photo © Gary Braasch



A host of investigative journalism on the web, thanks to non-profit sites

By BILL DAWSON

One of the worries prompted by the plummeting numbers of jobs in the commercial news media is that it will mean a decline in investigative reporting.

One of the hopes prompted by the launching of new non-profit journalism ventures is that it will make up, at least partly, for that decline.

ProPublica, a leading non-profit venture dedicated to investigative reporting, expresses the concern at the heart of its own founding on its Web site: "Investigative journalism is at risk. Many news organizations have increasingly come to see it as a luxury."

ProPublica and other non-profit news outlets have been busy lately producing investigative reports on various subjects in the environmental arena, sometimes in collaboration with other news organizations.

Here's a sampling of some of that recent work.

New York-based ProPublica started operations in January 2008. The following July, it published the first in what was to become a continuing, occasional series of articles on the environmental dangers posed by a boom in drilling for natural gas.

The reporter, **Abrahm Lustgarten**, wrote in that first article that New York State was moving ahead with expedited permitting for a "water-intensive, horizontal drilling" method that a joint investigation by ProPublica and WNYC, a public radio station in New York City, found "has caused significant environmental harm in other states and could affect the watershed that supplies New York City's drinking water."

Other ProPublica reporters have also been involved in the investigation. One of them, **Sabrina Shankman**, wrote one of the organization's latest articles on gas-drilling issues — a Feb. 22 account of the guilty pleas of two men for dumping drilling wastewater in an abandoned oil well. That story was itself an update to an examination of wastewater issues by ProPublica's **Joaquin Sapien** and Shankman on Dec. 29.

Lustgarten's reporting is being honored with the 2009 George Polk Award for Environmental Reporting, scheduled to be awarded in April. The Polk judges said Lustgarten had "turned hydraulic fracturing [the drilling method under investigation] into a national story and shifted the focus of the coverage from local business issues to safety concerns."

Last October, judges in SEJ's 8th Annual Awards for Reporting on the Environment gave Lustgarten third-place recognition in the investigative category, noting that his "stories on natural gas drilling started in Upstate New York and followed the 'fracking' trail westward to Colorado and Wyoming, at each stage carefully documenting how little regulators know about the environmental

effects of a drilling process that so many energy companies are rushing to utilize."

In a continuing investigation by one of the oldest non-profit reporting groups, the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity since early last year has been examining lobbying efforts aimed at influencing both federal and multinational policymaking aimed at addressing climate change.

Last year, the Center published two investigative projects on climate lobbying. The first, "The Climate Change Lobby," which started appearing on the organization's Web site in February, examined lobbying related to federal climate legislation. The second project, appropriately titled "The Global Climate Change Lobby," was the product of a collaborative effort by reporters from eight nations under the auspices of the Center's International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. The Center's **Kate Willson** and **Andrew Green** also reported from the U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen in December.

In February, referring to the Environmental Protection Agency's possible regulation of greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act, the Center's **Marianne Lavelle** placed the organization's latest lobbying-related findings in the context of its earlier reports on lobbying focused on Capitol Hill. She reported:

"The same onslaught of lobbyists and lawyers that helped dim prospects for climate legislation in this Congress (representing about 1,170 businesses and interest groups by the fourth quarter of 2009) is now engaged in an energetic, multi-front offensive to delay or block any attempt by the Obama administration to enact an alternative through regulation ... Opponents of federal curbs on fossil fuel emissions are also seeking allies in the states and in other federal agencies, while paving the way for court action to directly challenge EPA's initiative."

A climate investigation of a different sort was published Feb. 4 by *The Yale Forum on Climate Change & the Media* — a detailed examination of how the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change wrongly reported in its sweeping 2007 update on the state of climate science that glaciers in the Himalaya Mountains would disappear by 2035, more than 300 years earlier than a projection in a source document.

Bud Ward, editor of *The Yale Forum* (and a columnist for *SEJournal*), said in announcing the article by Yale University graduate students **Bidisha Banerjee** and **George Collins** that their research had "unearth(ed) the details of how that mistake

originated, how it found its way into the IPCC report, and how media coverage has perpetuated the mistake (as well as contributing to it initially).” The authors of the article saw a cautionary tale in their findings:

“Ultimately, there is a common lesson for both scientists and the media: the need to drill down to original sources. This extra effort is vital in reporting on such complex and critical issues: It could help avoid future runaway quotations — like the claim that the Himalayan glaciers would disappear by 2035 — and enable science, the media, and society to focus on real environmental problems, such as glacier melt which continues around the world.”

Two new non-profit organizations — one based in California, the other in Washington — published investigative reports recently about companies that have received federal stimulus money.

California Watch, launched in 2009 by the long-established Center for Investigative Reporting, lists “environment” on its Web site as one of the six main subject areas for its investigations. In January, California Watch published “Stimulus funds aiding companies fined for pollution, accused of fraud,” by **Will Evans**.

Evans reported that big companies doing business in California “have reaped tens of millions of dollars in new federal stimulus funds, despite previous pollution violations, criminal probes, and allegations of fraud.”

The contracts spotlighted in the article raise concerns for government watchdogs “about the way the massive federal stimulus program is being administered,” he wrote. “Although most major companies in America face lawsuits and regulatory action, these government reformers say a contractor’s entire history should be considered before doling out more money to the same firms.”

Besides the California Watch Web site, the article was published or broadcast by commercial news outlets including the *Los Angeles Daily News*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle* and KCBS-AM, which broadcasts to the San Francisco Bay area.

Another recent stimulus-related investigation was published in February by the Investigative Reporting Workshop, a project of the School of Communication at Washington’s American University. The article, “Renewable energy money still going abroad, despite criticism from Congress,” was reported “in coordination” with ABC’s *World News Tonight* and a non-profit journalism group at San Diego State University, the Watchdog Institute.

The February story, written by **Russ Choma**, represented a follow-up to an earlier report on the same subject by the Workshop, which started publishing last year. Choma wrote:

“The Workshop was the first to report last October that more than 80 percent of the first \$1 billion in grants to wind energy companies went to foreign firms. Since then, the administration has stopped making announcements of new grants to wind, solar and geothermal companies, but has handed out another \$1 billion, bringing the total given out to \$2.1 billion and the total that went to companies based overseas to more than 79 percent.”

Robert McClure, a former reporter for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and now chief environmental correspondent for

InvestigateWest, another new non-profit reporting organization, wrote a piece on new findings about health risks of a common pavement-sealing substance. It was jointly published online in January by that group and MSNBC. (McClure is a member of SEJ’s Board of Directors who also chairs the organization’s Editorial Board, which oversees publication of *SEJournal*.)

McClure reported that a federal study in Austin, Texas, had found that toxic chemicals in coal-tar sealant, a substance generated as waste in the manufacture of steel, are present “at alarming levels in dust in homes, prompting concerns about the potential health effects of long-term exposure.”

The research findings by the U.S. Geological Survey, “which found high levels of chemicals used in the sealant in house dust, marks the first time researchers have raised alarms about potential health effects for humans — especially young children — from the parking-lot coatings,” he wrote.

Along with earlier studies showing harm to small organisms



The raised platforms used at some drill sites in the Wyoming gas fields help to protect the underlying landscape. Photo by Abraham Lustgarten, *ProPublica*

in waterways, “the finding raises serious questions about the advisability of using coal tar as a sealant, the scientists say,” McClure added.

(**Kevin Carmody**, a founder of SEJ who died in 2005, had reported on the subject of pollution from coal-tar sealants for the *Austin American-Statesman*. SEJ’s annual award for investigative reporting is named in Carmody’s honor.)

Despite an increasing amount of solid investigative reporting by non-profit organizations, exemplified by the reports noted here, Harvard University’s Nieman Journalism Lab revealed in February that one venture to distribute non-profits’ work broadly had not worked out as well as hoped.

Laura McGann reported that it appeared *Associated Press* members had used “little if any” of the reports by four non-profit organizations that the AP had distributed in a six-month pilot project. The four were ProPublica, Center for Public Integrity, Center for Investigative Reporting and the Investigative Reporting Workshop.

SEJournal assistant editor *Bill Dawson* worked for the Center for Public Integrity from 2001-03. He is now a contributor to The Yale Forum. He can be reached by email at b.dawson@earthlink.net.



When mute swans become a menace, what should be done?

The non-indigenous mute swan (*Cygnus olor*). Photo by Steven Holt / Stockpix.com

By CHRISTINE HEINRICH

Mute Swans retain a mythic grip on people, touching the hearts of those who glimpse these graceful white birds gliding across a misty lake. Yet many now regard Mute Swans as unwanted invaders that trash fragile wetland and aquatic habitat and chase out other birds.

This dichotomy confounds wetlands managers, who want at least to control growing populations of Mute Swans, if not eliminate them entirely.

“They are a beautiful form of biological pollution,” said Jonathan McKnight, associate director for habitat conservation at Maryland’s Department of Natural Resources.

Conservation organizations, including the Audubon Society, are united in supporting Mute Swan control. Meanwhile, animal welfare groups and others defend the birds.

Mute Swans aren’t actually mute, but they don’t honk the way other swans, such as the Trumpeter and Tundra swans, do. They snort, hiss and yap to communicate with one another and other species. A really angry Mute Swan can make a shrill trumpeting cry when the occasion demands.

To feed, Mute Swans poke their heads underwater to eat submerged aquatic vegetation. Each adult eats around eight pounds of plant matter a day and uproots an additional 20 pounds or so.

In some places, they have devastated eelgrass beds and disrupted habitat for fish, shellfish and macroinvertebrates in shallow water. In places like the Chesapeake Bay, they crowd out other birds, notably Black Skimmers and Least Terns. In other locations, they impact Black Ducks, Canvasbacks and Redheads.

Mute Swans are native to Europe and Asia, and have been semi-domesticated in some places. In England, for example, all swans have belonged to the Crown for hundreds of years, with all associated pomp and ceremony attaching to annual events such as the Swan Upping on the Thames.

Most ornithological researchers discount claims that the species has any native presence in North America. But Mute Swans’ advocates say the issue is not yet resolved.

For instance, Kathryn Burton, who has established the organization Save Our Mute Swans, contends that as a migratory bird, Mute Swans have a natural presence in North America. A 16th century Colonial painting and a reference by John James Audubon to the possibility of more than two species of native swans are additional evidence.

In contrast, advocates for reducing Mute Swan populations cite Audubon’s silence on the particulars of swans other than Trumpeter and Tundra as evidence that they are not native. I was unable to substantiate claims that swans of any kind were raised commercially in the 19th century.

What is undisputed is that Mute Swans were imported to decorate the estates of the wealthy from the late 19th century on, and occasional escapees took up residence in the surrounding countryside. They reproduced successfully, but populations remained small.

Mute Swan numbers began increasing rapidly when lead shot was banned. Efforts to reduce lead shot in Maryland began in the 1970s and a federal ban was adopted in 1991.

As shallow water feeders, Mute Swans scoop up plenty of mud containing small pellets discharged from hunters’ shotguns. Wildlife biologists believe that lead, a toxic metal, may have limited the population of swans in past years. Scientists who followed swans before and after the lead shot ban found that the level of the metal in the birds’ blood fell. Swans with less lead in their bodies apparently raised more cygnets to adulthood.

The population grew from less than 1,000 in the 1950s to more than 14,000 in 2002 along the Atlantic Flyway. Swans increased most in Ontario, Canada, and in Massachusetts, Rhode Island,

Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and the Chesapeake Bay states of Maryland and Virginia. In 1999, the Chesapeake Bay hosted more than 4,000 swans.

More swans meant more impact. Wildlife managers began to intervene.

Egg addling was tried as a means of reducing the numbers of Mute Swans. To do this, workers search out nests. They shake or coat eggs with oil — or do both — so the eggs won't hatch. Then the eggs are returned to the nest. Simply removing eggs doesn't work, because the swans may lay more.

Addling of eggs curbed the growth in the population, but it didn't reduce the number of Mute Swans.

"We needed population reduction," said McKnight.

Wildlife managers determined that killing them is the most effective way to control the population.

But a public hunting season for Mute Swans hasn't been established. Doing so would raise the chances that hunters would shoot similar but federally protected Trumpeter and Tundra swans.

Individual property owners, though, can seek special permits for hunting Mute Swans if they are having a problem with particular individuals.

The typical problem that leads an owner to apply for a permit is swans acting aggressively in a boating area. They defend large nesting territories and can be formidable opponents. Mute Swans are the largest flying birds, with males reaching weights over 35 lbs., females around 20 lbs., as much as five feet long from bill to tail, with a wingspan of four to five feet. Aggressive Mute Swans can pose a threat to public safety — reports document that the birds have broken people's arms and legs.

"We get a fair amount of complaints from kayakers," said McKnight.

Legal protection for these birds has shifted over the years. Once, they were protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. But the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2005 removed that protection, saying the Mute Swan is not native and its "presence in the United States and its territories is solely the result of intentional or unintentional human-assisted introductions."

Maryland's legislature passed a law providing for lethal control of Mute Swans in 2001. The state formed a 12-member Mute Swan Advisory Committee. A majority of that panel recommended the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reduce populations of the species to "as low a level as can be achieved."

But two members, John W. Grandy, representing the Humane Society, and E. Joseph Lamp, of the Maryland Wildlife Advisory Commission, issued a separate report, refuting the charges that Mute Swans were responsible for loss of submerged vegetation and destruction of shallow water habitat. They concede that Mute Swans are not native to the state. But they advocated for maintaining a population of fewer than 500 swans, rather than exterminating them.

"For years, Md. DNR has wrongly vilified these beautiful, majestic birds, and as a result, thousands of them have suffered and paid the ultimate price for the misdeeds of industries that dump tons of pollutants into the Bay every year," said the report from Grandy and Lamp.

Nonetheless, Maryland has reduced its Mute Swan population from 2,198 in 2005 to less than 500 today. Maryland's Department of Natural Resources relies on the American

Veterinary Medical Association's Guidelines for Humane Euthanasia for methods — shooting and neck dislocation — that wildlife professionals employ to dispatch swans.

Maryland is not alone. The Atlantic Flyway Council has surveyed the impact of Mute Swans and in 2003 issued a management plan for these birds. The council includes: Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia; the Canadian territory of Nunavut and provinces of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec; plus the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

Under council's management plan Mute Swans in the flyway were reduced by 27 percent from 2005 levels by 2008. Rhode Island cut its Mute Swan population over that period, from 1,246 to 856. Virginia lowered its by more than half, 725 to 323, and New Jersey, from 1,890 to 1,253. Mute swans declined or increased slightly in other Atlantic Flyway states.

The public relations of eliminating beautiful, inspiring birds are daunting. "It's a fiery issue," McKnight said.

"It's a beautiful species, and people like to see them," McKnight said. "But they are an ecological liability for the Chesapeake. If we are going to restore and conserve places and the species that go with them, we have to get serious about managing them."

Christine Heinrichs usually writes about domestic poultry, but she stretched her wings to include a chapter on Swans in her recent book, How to Raise Poultry, Voyageur Press, 2009. She lives on California's Central Coast, where she's more likely to see pelicans and gulls.

Contact:

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Jane West, Chief Coordinator: Migratory Bird Conservation, Ohio, (612)713-5480, MidwestNews@fws.gov

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2008 Mid Summer Mute Swan Survey Results: <http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/pdfs/AFMSMSSResults-Final2008.pdf>

Atlantic Flyway Mute Swan Management Plan 2003-2013, Atlantic Flyway Council, July 2003 <http://tinyurl.com/yz2l68>

Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife and Heritage Service, <http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/waterfowl.asp#mute>

Save the Mute Swans: <http://savethemuteswans.com/>
U.S. Fish and Wildlife waterfowl management, <http://www.flyways.us/>

Swan upping: <http://www.thamesweb.co.uk/swans/uppering2.html>



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Scientist's efforts to "persuade the public" have professional costs

By WILLIAM R. FREUDENBURG

Editor's note: The SEJournal likes to take note of outstanding posts to the SEJ-TALK listserv, where members share comments, concerns, frustration and successes in a members-only conversation. Sometimes, the posts are so noteworthy that they should be shared with a larger audience, like this one that follows from SEJ member William R. Freudenburg, Dehlsen Professor of Environment and Society at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

... I write as a card-carrying professor — and not a professor of journalism — and I write to say that I come far closer to agreeing with Gavin Schmidt today than I would have ten years ago.

I've always seen myself as one of the folks who really does try to communicate, not just with fellow specialists, but with members of the broader public that we seek to serve — or at least with journalists who really do know a hell of a lot more about communicating with the public than we do. My college roommate was a journalism major, and he really did a lot to educate me. I've hung around with journalists many times since then, and I've found myself impressed with skill sets that are almost unknown in the academy. I have gone to every "how to communicate with journalists" training session that's been offered at any of the universities where I've spent time over the years ...

So I decided to try even harder. In the aftermath of Katrina, I even made a commitment to do literal "tithing," the rest of my career — trying to spend at least 10% of my time on publications that will get me absolutely no points with my fellow academics (and may even cost me a bit, because they're "too popular"). Since it takes more than eight hours a day just to do the unproductive stuff that most professors have to do, the time to work on any sorts of publications is incredibly precious, so that's actually an expensive commitment; some weeks, 10% of my time is 100% of the time I have to do anything that actually wins me academic points. And as a more tangible indicator, as a number of you know, I even crossed over to what many academics consider to be The Dark Side, joining the SEJ. I've even done so under my own name, and I keep trying to participate as often as I'm able in SEJ-TALK. (I don't tell most of my academic colleagues about it, since they might call the authorities if they knew, but I've never once denied it. I figure I can afford it, because I've had tenure since the late Pleistocene.)

What's more, knowing when to quit has never been one of my strengths, so I'm likely to stay a member of SEJ as long as I'm still around.

But anyone reading this far probably knows the next word will be "but."

But the facts are, it isn't easy, and frankly, it's not very rewarding. First, we're paid for "contributions to knowledge," which is a fancy way of saying, for publishing work that advances the best thinking in the specialized fields that we DO know well — not for pretending to be good at something that we obviously don't know how to do very well, namely persuading the broader public. Second, when we DO try to "persuade the public," it can be personally and professionally costly ... and at the same time, it can bring spectacularly low rewards. Not only do our colleagues think we're nuts, but the journalists we think we're "helping" will start wondering about us, too.

Beyond all of that, it can be costly in personal ways, too. At the AAAS meetings a week or so ago, I was amazed at the number of my mild-mannered scientific colleagues who were willing to report, at least in private/informal conversations, about the pressures and/or threats they've received. The lucky ones were like me — we've heard from a dean or two that, while those deans "appreciate" our efforts to reach out to a univer-

sity's broader public, they've been hearing from people who "didn't fully understand" the value of academic freedom. Usually, those deans will thank us for our service but then "wonder" if we might want to spend a bit more time back at our computer screens and lab benches. We're the lucky ones, though, because those kinds of conversations don't have many real consequences for someone as old as me. But at one lunch, three of the five of us at the table had received literal death threats, and even though everyone said "I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing," you could hear the voices quavering a bit. One of the topics that didn't show up on the AAAS program, but was the subject of intense interest in informal conversations, was whether the time has come to set up some sort of anti-defamation "league," at least to challenge some of the ad hominem attacks against leading scientists, and if enough money could be found, to serve as a legal defense fund. The problem, of course, is that people who aren't that good at persuading the public also aren't that good at begging for the kind of money it would take to set up such a thing.

But wait, there's more.

I've spent over a third of a century studying various kinds of technological controversies. I've had a few threats, and I've had police escorts myself a few times. I've dealt with people who were trembling with rage and with others who took swings at me. But in all my years, I have NEVER seen the kinds of attacks that have been aimed at climate scientists in recent years. Yet that's not what bothers me the most.

What bothers me is that, while leading European newspapers will report what such scientists are saying, and will usually report it well, even well-respected U.S. journalists are more likely to ask, "why is that news?" That's clearly less true about SEJ members than about whatever general-assignment reporter just got told to do a story in the next three hours about this three-thousand page report. But even the reactions from SEJ members don't always inspire confidence among scientists who don't have the foggiest idea what makes something "news" or not, and who thought they were going beyond the call of duty — and were — just by taking the time and effort to translate their work into English.

It doesn't bother me that U.S. media devote so many gallons of ink to a handful of errors in a 3,000-page technical report. What bothers me to no end is something that seems to matter to journalists AND scientists, namely a stunning lack of balance. It bothers me, to be more specific, that when the AEI [American Enterprise Institute] publicly offers \$10,000 to any "scientist" who's willing to write an essay on "why I decided not to worry about global warming during my summer vacation," there is barely a MENTION of it in the American press — only in Europe. And it also bothers me that, the next time any global warming story comes out, the same AEI is treated as a perfectly credible source for a juicy quote — without even a sentence or two to say, "The AEI, which was revealed last year to be offering pay for reports that repeated its party line, offered a comment, too."

Folks who work for AEI know how to provide juicy quotes. Scientists don't. I understand both of those facts. I also understand that VERY few folks who work for AEI, or the Heartland Institute, etc., would

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Multimedia training smorgasbord awaits you — online

By ROBERT MCCLURE

For some time now the Reporter's Toolbox has focused on hands-on instruction to help SEJers making the transition to multimedia journalism, including pieces on photography, audio, and how to do cool stuff online really easily. When I was fortunate enough to be selected recently to attend the Knight Digital Media Center's weeklong multimedia training program, I discovered the center's valuable treasure chest of online tutorials about various aspects of multimedia journalism.

This Toolbox gives readers a taste of what's available on KDMC's website. The tutorials include step-by-step instructions, complete with helpful screen shots showing you exactly which button to push. We're offering this because I've heard from more than one SEJer who is still waiting to be selected for the incredibly in-demand KDMC training. To those of you similarly situated: Keep trying. But in the meantime, avail yourself of what's right there on the WWW. Try doing an audio slideshow just to dip your toe in.

Key principle: Multimedia is not just adding video and audio and databases and photos and whatever to text. Doing it well means learning to integrate the ways we present information. Here are short excerpts from three online tutorials by KDMC experts. http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/multimedia_training/.



What is a Multimedia Story?
By JANE STEVENS*

A multimedia story is some combination of text, still photographs, video clips, audio, graphics and interactivity presented on a Web site in a nonlinear format in which the information in each medium is complementary, not redundant.

Nonlinear means that, rather than reading a rigidly structured single narrative, the user chooses how to navigate through the elements of a story. Not redundant means that, rather than having a text version of a story accompanied by a video clip that essentially tells the same story, different parts of a story are told using different media. The key is using the media form — video, audio, photos, text, animation — that will present a segment of a story in the most compelling and informative way.

When news organizations take full advantage of two other important characteristics of storytelling on the Web — context and continuity — multimedia stories are wrapped in a story "shell" that provides background information on the story. This could include everything from databases, timelines and infoboxes to lists of related stories, links to other resources and online forums. The information in each shell gives the reader a sense of the context of a story and where it fits in with other stories on the same topic.

* Jane Stevens has left the Knight Digital Media Center for a position at the Lawrence Journal World in Kansas.



Multimedia journalism takes on hard breaking news at UC Berkeley's Knight Digital Media Center. Photo courtesy of the Media Center. <http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/workshops/projects/2/show>



Storyboarding
By JANE STEVENS*

A storyboard is a sketch of how to organize a story and a list of its contents.

A storyboard helps you:

- Define the parameters of a story within available resources and time
- Organize and focus a story
- Figure out what medium to use for each part of the story

How to Do a Rough Storyboard:

A multimedia story is some combination of video, text, still photos, audio, graphics and interactivity presented in a nonlinear format in which the information in each medium is complementary, not redundant. So your storyboard should be put together with all those elements in mind.



Embedding Multimedia
By SCOT HACKER

This is where your skills come together — Web page creation skills, interview skills, audio and video editing skills, and storytelling skills all converge at this point. Inserting media into Web pages is a bit more difficult than creating plain old HTML with graphics, but if you've mastered the other tutorials in this site, you'll do fine.

Before you can begin inserting audio and video into Web pages, you must first have some audio and video content to work with. This tutorial assumes that you've already edited your audio or video in ProTools, iMovie, Final Cut, or other media applica-

tion, and that you've already exported your audio or video as web-ready compressed QuickTime files.

Robert McClure is chief environmental correspondent for InvestigateWest, a non-profit, multi-platform journalism studio offering in-depth coverage of the environment, public health and social-justice issues in western North America.



Links to the full suite of tutorials on the KDMC site:

Choosing a story <http://bit.ly/lyiHF>
Storyboarding <http://bit.ly/OENgP>
Fieldwork (aka The Complete Equipment Guide for Backpack Journalists) <http://bit.ly/9t7eE5>
Editing <http://bit.ly/zUGQP>
Assembling your story <http://bit.ly/cBWKgJ>

Video

Video Cameras <http://bit.ly/drdbda>
Video Accessories <http://bit.ly/bH6x3q>
Shooting Tips <http://bit.ly/rsvkb>
Standups and Voice-overs <http://bit.ly/zA7J0>
iMovie <http://bit.ly/bu3hKM>
Final Cut Pro <http://bit.ly/1VOdjC>
Premiere <http://bit.ly/d7M0tL>
Exporting Web Video <http://bit.ly/cK2Buk>

Audio

Minidisc Recorders <http://bit.ly/9eLZwq>
Pro Tools <http://bit.ly/cLQnau>

Photo

Still Cameras <http://bit.ly/cmy4An>
Photoshop <http://bit.ly/xKdzH>

Web Design

HTML <http://bit.ly/8CBzk4>
Dreamweaver <http://bit.ly/5LQhDo>
Adding Multimedia <http://bit.ly/LFUcX>
Flash <http://bit.ly/dcnqRe>

Post of Note

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be able to get a job at a research university, or NSF, or NASA, or NOAA, at least not as a scientist. What I don't understand is why the difference in PR skills should outweigh so completely the difference in scientific credibility.

As I said before, this academic won't quit SEJ. I'm learning things about a culture that's as exotic to me as Trobriand Islanders were to early anthropologists. I've also found that quite a number of you, as individuals, are some of the best kinds of friends I could ever hope to make. And most of all, I've learned that SEJ members really DO tend to value scientific credibility. So you won't lose me. But I need your help: when I give advice to younger academics, what argument can I legitimately offer to them about why THEY ought to spend more of their time trying to reach out to journalists — even those of the SEJ — when the net effect will be to (give) precious hours away from their research, only to see their words “balanced” with a much more skillful turn of phrase from someone hired last year by the Heartland Institute?

I've seen many helpful comments in SEJ-TALK. I hope this heartfelt plea will lead to a few more.

Best to all — WRF

SEJ President's Report continued from page 4

disastrous Tennessee coal ash spill. The incoming Obama EPA responded, promising to improve the flow of information.

Since then, high-level EPA press staff has made strides in trying to smooth out relations for our members. Largely at their initiative, we've had a couple of conference calls, and EPA PIOs from every region and deputy associate administrator for public affairs Allyn Brooks-LaSure attended SEJ's Madison conference and were part of a “Meet the PIOs” session.

EPA has acted on SEJ suggestions to include reporters beyond the Beltway in press events, and to hold events at a time that's convenient for reporters on every time zone from Eastern to Pacific. In turn, EPA staff has solicited SEJ input about their redesign of <http://www.epa.gov/> — a key portal for EPA interaction with the media, and perhaps most important to the agency, the public. EPA is now on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and more.

A promising start — until the January press conference.

We got on the phone again. Brooks-LaSure and EPA press secretary Adora Andy listened, and explained that they had been trying to find a balance between a too-short press conference, and one that kept reporters away from budget briefings going on at other agencies. They agreed the “on background” mandate was silly, especially given that EPA posted the audio of the “background-only” press conference on the web the very next day. They agreed to look into increasing their bandwidth in order to allow more reporters on the phone line, and to rethink how best to handle key press events so as to increase the number of people who get a chance to ask questions.

“It's a big vessel — eighteen thousand people — and a tiny rudder, but we're trying to course-correct,” said Allyn Brooks-LaSure.

That February call happened during the Washington DC blizzard, when the EPA officials were house-bound, so we also had enough time to lay out a bit of SEJ history, demographics and organizational goals. We ended by agreeing to make these calls a monthly fixture.

This all adds up to reason for optimism. Just look at some of the headlines in the *Dog TipSheet* since that first July 2009 call: Agencies Post “Openness” Pages on Web per Obama Order, EPA Reveals More High-Hazard Coal-Ash Sites, EPA Moves for Disclosure of Pesticide “Inert” Ingredients, EPA Takes Some Trade Secret Wraps off of Chemical Identity, TRI Analysis Offers State-Level Toxics Info, EPA Releases Bush-Suppressed Endangerment Finding, EPA Uses Online Forum To Address TRI Mining Changes, Tapping the “Fishbowl” — Is EPA Doing Some Things Right on FOI?, EPA Releases All Responses to Coal Ash Survey, and on and on.

The progress made with EPA so far leaves me convinced that it's too soon for SEJ to write off President Obama's pledge of transparency. In our last call, EPA officials themselves suggested a survey of SEJ members about EPA services would be helpful. The FOI Task Force will go one step further, and revisit the state of transparency across all federal agencies.





By JUDY FAHYS

Big movies, new books and accolades for SEJ members

Environmental journalists have had lots to brag about lately. Take, for instance, **Christine Heinrichs**, who was already years ahead of the poultry-raising craze that's gripping the nation. Besides her popular books on the subject and serving part-time as contributing editor at Diversity/Careers in Engineering and Information Technology, www.diversitycareers.com, she's doing more radio.

Heinrichs does a monthly with the Chicken Whisperer, talking about traditional poultry breeds, www.blogtalkradio.com/backyardpoultry.

And fellow SEJER **Laurel Neme** interviewed Heinrichs about being an Elephant Seal docent for her weekly radio program, The WildLife, <http://laurelneme.podbean.com/>

"The WildLife probes mysteries of the animal world through interviews with scientists and other wildlife investigators," says Neme, whose show is available through the web site of WOMM-LP in Burlington, Vt., as well as on iTunes, through her website www.laurelneme.com and via laurelneme.podbean.com. "I'd urge SEJ members with wildlife stories to contact me if they're interested in being on The WildLife."

Meanwhile, **Debra Atlas** has a new online series called "Green Gadget Spotlight" at Conducive Chronicle in addition to her blog, www.envirothink.greenpress.com. Atlas adds that a twice-weekly radio spot is in the works — the front-runner for names is The Green Gadget Spot — at a local radio station.

Also blogging is **Emily Gertz**. She became a correspondent with *OnEarth* magazine in November 2009 just in time to cover the Copenhagen climate talks. Gertz filed on the negotiations for OnEarth.org, and as an independent reporter for Oxfam America's blog, covering the humanitarian impacts of global warming.

Gertz's cover feature "On the Edge of the Future: What are some of the world's poorest cities getting right, and what can they teach us?" won the Gold award for Best Feature Article of 2009 from the Minnesota Magazine & Publications Association. The piece was published in *Momentum*, the magazine of the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment, spring/summer 2009 issue.

Deborah Fryer, who joined SEJ while she was a Ted Scripps Fellow at the University of Colorado at Boulder, has just won a CINE Golden Eagle Award for her documentary short, SHAKEN: Journey into the Mind of a Parkinson's Patient. Fryer also is finishing a 16-minute video for *High Country News*, which

celebrates four decades of publication this year. Her video will be posted on www.hcn.org/40years

While on a year-long project with journalists in Zambia and Malawi, **Dale Willman** is conducting environmental journalism workshops and setting up a resource center that provides weekly background feeds on news topics to journalists in those African nations. He is also a contributing author to *Climate Change Science and Policy*, a book edited by Stephen Schneider and others. Willman's chapter examines the role of the media in public education on the topic of climate science.

Elizabeth Grossman's book, *Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health, and the Promise of Green Chemistry*, was published last fall by Island Press and selected by Booklist as one of the Top 10 Science & Technology Books of 2009. The book is in its second printing.

Tucson-based freelancer **Gisela Telis** edited the new book, *Champions for Change: Athletes Making a World of Difference*, which describes athletes and explorers working to fight global warming and other environmental issues (gsa-usa.org/Champions_For_Change.php). Thanks to a grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, she's now working on her first novel.

John Daley's essay, "Zephyr to Zion — Responses to Climate-Change Disruption in the Rockies," is part of the book *How the West Was Warmed*, which can be previewed at www.howthewestwaswarmed.com/. A reporter for Salt Lake City's NBC affiliate, KSL 5 News, Daley also published a thought-provoking piece called "When a Tree Falls: Why the Decline and Rebirth of Environmental Journalism Matters" in *The Yale Forum on Climate Change and the Media* www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org/2010/01/why-decline-rebirth-of-environmental-journalism-matters/. He wrote it last fall while at Stanford's Bill Lane Center for the American West on a Western Enterprise Reporting Fellowship.

Also looking at trends in environmental journalism was **Miranda Spencer's** article in the February issue of *Extra!*, the journal of the media watchdog FAIR.

David Biello provided an update on his experience in Copenhagen in December with SEJ board member **Doug Fischer**. The two were among the winners of the inaugural Earth Journalism Awards <http://awards.earthjournalism.org/> for the world's best climate change coverage. Biello won the North America, EC, Australia & New Zealand Regional Award with his article about carbon capture and storage and Fischer nabbed the Climate Change & Diplomacy Award with his analysis of how both rich and poor nations might cut emissions.

Longtime Orange County, Calif.-based freelancer **Carolyn Lee** has returned to her Hawaiian roots by moving to Honolulu in February. A former member of the SEJ Audit Committee, Lee hopes her SEJ colleagues will look her up when they are in town. If anyone needs freelance work from a Hawaii-based contributor, she asks for you to keep her in mind. Lee has worked for the Associated Press, UPI, *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Orange County Register*, *The New York Times'* regional newspapers, *Los Angeles Times* special sections and *KoreaAm Journal*. She can be reached at cleehawaii@gmail.com.

Judy Fahys is environment reporter at The Salt Lake Tribune. Send an email about your latest accomplishment or career shift to fahys@sltrib.com



Comprehensive test tracks e-journalism's roots and looks to its future

The Environment and the Press:

From Adventure Writing to Advocacy

by Mark Neuzil
Northwestern University Press
\$24.95 (paperback)

Reviewed by BILL KOVARIK

Fifteen years ago, when Mark Neuzil and I worked on *Mass Media and Environmental Conflict*, we seemed to be confronting a deep-seated historical myth about the environment.

According to this myth, the rise of concern about environmental issues was a product of the social turmoil of the 1960s — a Luddite reaction to science, technology, and reason itself.

Media historians contributed a miniature version of this environmental myth by assuming that the press had not taken a serious interest. According to the mini-myth, the once-slumbering media only awoke when there were dramatic events in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as the Earth Day, the Cuyahoga River fire, and the Buffalo Creek disaster.

Although drama does attract media, the myth itself was appallingly inaccurate. It also missed the far greater opportunity for media historians to help open a then-emerging field of environmental history.

With *The Environment and the Press*, it now seems possible to lay these myths to rest.

Neuzil had been steadily chipping away at these myths with previous books, such as the previously mentioned *Mass Media and Environmental Conflict* (which was episodic rather than comprehensive) and in recent years, *A Spiritual Field Guide*, and *Views on the Mississippi*.

However, *The Environment and the Press* is the real myth-buster. It is by far the most comprehensive history of the field to date, exploring connections between journalism and the social context of environmental reform and advocacy.

The book begins with a discussion of the prophetic voice of the press, for example, with Aldo Leopold comparing Teddy Roosevelt to the prophet Ezekiel. While some journalists have been called “false prophets” of doom over the years, many examples of accurate predictions — for example, the warnings around the Katrina disaster — have a resonance in age-old storytelling, Neuzil reminds us, such as the Genesis story of the flood or the story of Jonah and the whale.

Within this broad historical horizon, Neuzil describes agricultural journalism, nature writing, mainstream journalism and new media. The field is populated by prophets, advocates, observers and community builders, and the story is threaded through both narrative and analysis. For some historians this is a tricky terrain to navigate, but Neuzil has a knack for pulling it off

with deep insight and remarkable clarity.

As might be expected, Neuzil notes that sometimes the mainstream media led the coverage, and sometimes it followed.

Among the leaders was Sam J. Shelton of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* — a reporter on the series of “smoke abatement” articles and editorials that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940. Not only did Shelton report on air pollution, but he promoted alternatives to bituminous coal and wrote the newspaper’s editorial comment toward the end of the campaign: “A great city has washed its face, and its neck and ears too... The plague of smoke and soot has been so well wiped off, if not completely removed, that the shining countenance of the Missouri metropolis is now the envy of other cities still subject to the winter’s outpouring of dirt and fumes from thousands of chimneys.” This is Pulitzer-style civic crusading, and few people in St. Louis complained.

In other cases, the mainstream media became interested only after labor or specialized publications uncovered disturbing stories with dramatic value. One of these instances involved labor publications that carried stories about the “village of walking skeletons” in the Gauley River — Hawk’s Nest disaster of 1931-34, in which African-American workers died of silicosis by the hundreds due to gross negligence. Only after the labor publications ran the story did the mainstream media report the case.

Neuzil documents other cases where non-mainstream media led the way. One of these was the Sierra Club’s use of documentary film in its successful campaign to save Dinosaur National Monument from the dam-builders of the Bureau of Reclamation in the early 1950s. Environmentalists carried film projectors around the halls of Congress, showing the Dinosaur film to everyone who would sit still for 28 minutes. The growing interest in the issue attracted the attention of the mainstream media and politicians.

The book also takes us almost up to the present day with broadcasting and new media, describing the history of PBS’ *Living on Earth*, the development of CNN’s *Assignment Earth*, and the approaches taken by Discovery Channel. The book also describes the background of magazines like *E Magazine* and web sites like *Grist*. However, some of the most recent developments, such as the demise of CNN’s science and environment unit, will need to be included in a second edition.

Neuzil also recounts the development of the Society of Environmental Journalists following a 1989 invitation by Scripps-Howard executive David Stolberg, followed by the organization’s first conference in 1991 as interest in environmental coverage grew with environmental Pulitzer Prizes in 1990 and the pending Rio conference on the environment.

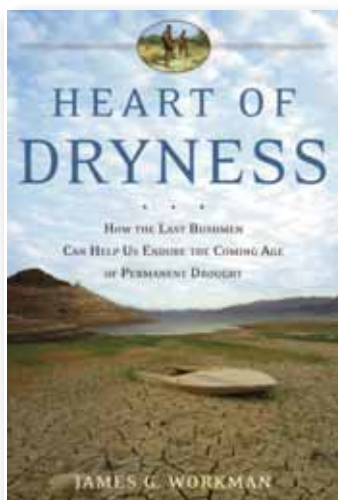
How the trends of environmental journalism will develop is an open question, and Neuzil asks whether a new form of moralistic, values-based journalism will overtake the social responsibility model.

Seen in the historical context, the ebb and flow of environmental journalism has continued from its beginnings in ancient texts and Izaak Walton through nature writers and science writers to the beat system and online media.

The historical thread that holds it together is the common

concern with storytelling, and Neuzil has given us the history of the story of the millennia.

Bill Kovarik is a communications professor and coordinator of the journalism program at Radford University in Virginia.



What would the Bushmen do? This book tells you.

Heart of Dryness: How the Last Bushmen Can Help Us Endure the Coming Age of Permanent Drought

by James G. Workman
Walker & Company
\$26

Reviewed by GREG HARMAN

In the history of the conservation movement, notions of wilderness have rarely included people. Homo sapiens were universally tagged as the hapless despoilers of the land. Nearly 30 years ago, writer Gary Paul Nabhan exposed a notable exception to this ingrained prejudice by examining two desert oases — A'al Waipia, located inside Arizona's Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and Ki:towak, across the Mexican border.

De-peopled of subsistence farmers by the U.S. Parks Service in 1957, A'al Waipia had since choked on sediment, Nabhan wrote in *The Desert Smells Like Rain*. It regressed to a quiet pond visited by few animals or people, while across the border, at Ki:towak, fruit trees bloomed and insects rushed about thanks to irrigation that made use of local springs. Native greens and healing herbs grew across the border and biological surveys showed human partnership with the land doubled the amount of bird species present.

The Parks system also drove out Lakota, Crow, Blackfeet, and Miwok from enormous parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite to preserve that "virgin" country. And so it was that the government of former president Festus Mogae began to drive the Bushmen of Botswana's Kalahari Reserve off their land while exploiting global affection for the African elephant, writes James Workman in *Heart of Dryness*.

In his well-researched book, Workman argues that our increasingly thirsty world desperately needs the knowledge of those we persecute in the name of saving the Earth.

Workman tracks the unraveling of what had been one of the

most successful democracies in Africa as Mogae pressed for the total removal of the few remaining bands of subsistence hunter-gatherers who attempted — during what turned out to be the planet's hottest years on record — to hold onto their traditional ways. The fight came to a climactic moment a few years ago when he ordered the dismantling of the sole federal water pump inside the game reserve. Workman spent time with the Bushmen, learning how they gathered the water they needed from a parched landscape.

Though many human-rights organizations mobilized against Mogae's efforts to drive out the Bushmen, Workman suggests it got a wink from American and European wildlife biologists. After all, in protecting the elephant's wide-ranging habitat, entire ecosystems are preserved as well. For Botswana, there was nothing quite like it for the balance sheet: tourism-related revenues climbed in pace with the growth of the elephant population. "The trouble with indigenous people, it seemed," Workman writes, "was that they generated insufficient cash flow, especially foreign exchange from ecotourists."

But it wasn't only elephants and tourist dollars motivating Mogae's government to sustain a low-intensity war upon the Bushmen. The world's largest diamond company, De Beers, reportedly had its eye on the Kalahari for new mining sites. In a region where native peoples are frequently relocated to make way for development projects, the case against the Bushmen was exacerbated by the inherited racism of the dominant Tswana, many of whom ridiculed the Bushmen as a "serf" class or as embarrassing "Stone Age" creatures. "If the Bushmen want to survive, they must change," Mogae had said in 1996, "otherwise, like the dodo they will perish."

Workman uses the story of Bushmen resistance to tell a broader story about the looming global water crisis that is already recasting political relationships around the planet. Ultimately, Workman's book is a rallying cry. It is a call to trade in our leaky, centralized water systems and water-hogging agricultural methods with a decentralized model based upon indigenous principles. For example, fundamental rights to water would be honored for all, but only at a level to ensure healthy survival.

He turns the tables on centuries of hydrological thought to ask, "What Would the Bushmen Do?" The answer — to Workman's mind — doesn't flow from a United Nations resolution establishing an inherent human right to water. Neither does it come through privatization. Instead it sits somewhere like a submerged Kalahari sip well, beckoning us to part the sands, fashion our reeds, and reevaluate the value of life itself.

Greg Harman is a staff writer at the San Antonio Current. He also runs the blog Harman on Earth.

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Corwin highlights threats to the most endangered species.

**100 Heartbeats:
A Journey to Meet Our
Planet's Endangered Animals
and the Race to Save Earth's
Most Endangered Species**

by Jeff Corwin
Rodale, \$24.99

Reviewed by JENNIFER WEEKS

If you didn't know that Jeff Corwin was an Emmy-winning producer and television host, you might come away from reading *100 Heartbeats* convinced that he was a conservationist with a bad case of Attention Deficit Disorder. One minute he's tracking polar bears above the Arctic Circle; then suddenly he's riding in a jeep through the forest in India looking for Bengal tigers. After a few pages about habitat fragmentation and poaching, he turns up at a zoo in Spain that breeds endangered Iberian lynxes. Like a television newscast, the book is riddled with jump cuts and abrupt transitions.

But Corwin has a theme: human impacts have created a major crisis for biodiversity on Earth. His book is about members of what he calls the "Hundred Heartbeat Club," a term borrowed from biologist E.O. Wilson to describe critically endangered species that have 100 or fewer individuals alive in the wild today. Corwin has seen many animals that belong to the club or may join it soon and he uses their stories to illustrate the many threats driving them to extinction.

He leavens the gloom with stories about conservationists working to save threatened species. "[E]very day presents opportunities for us to make a resounding difference in their lives and their future as species," he writes. From panda reserves in China to captive black-footed ferret breeding programs in Wyoming, Corwin musters plenty of examples to show that human intervention can make a difference. But he's also realistic: once we've interfered drastically with a species, he points out, there are no quick fixes – long-term management is the only option.

100 Heartbeats is (loosely) structured as an overview of human-generated threats that are driving many species toward extinction. It's a sorry list that includes climate change, habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, introduced species, and over-hunting, to name just a few of the biggest drivers. Each section is illustrated with animal encounters and vignettes from Corwin's global reporting.

Many of these close-ups are poignant, like an encounter with Lonesome George, the last giant Abingdon Island tortoise — a subspecies found on one of the Galapagos Islands. George lives at the Charles Darwin Research Station, and researchers are looking for closely related female tortoises that they can mate with him and keep his genetic line going at least one generation longer. He's only 90-something (giant tortoises are thought to live for 150

years or more), so there's still time.

There's also Booming Ben, the last heath hen that remained on Martha's Vineyard in the 1920s after his species had been eradicated on the mainland. For five years, Corwin writes, Ben came to the hens' spring lekking (mating ground) to dance: "He boomed out his mating call again and again, unaware that there were no other heath hens to hear him," before he died in 1932.

Many of Corwin's stories touch on scientific problems, such as how chytrid fungus attacks and kills frogs, or the harmful impacts when keystone species are removed from an ecosystem. The anecdotes are bite-sized, but they show how many unintended consequences have resulted from human actions like over-hunting and importing species around the world.

Corwin's writing is uneven. Sometimes he uses vivid metaphors to put readers in the scene: for example, describing bald eagles' seven-foot nests, he recalls, "The first time I climbed inside one, I felt like I was Alice in Wonderland after eating the mushroom that made her very small." But he also can turn clichéd and clunky, writing that seeing an eagle in the wild "feeds my soul," or asking rhetorical questions such as "How can we reconcile the moral chasm that lies between a 5,000-pound rhino carcass and a few harvested horns?"

Even when the phrasing gets awkward, though, Corwin's sincerity feels genuine and unforced. And he doesn't just say that we need to do better — he also rightly points out that conservation policies are most effective when they motivate people to change their behavior. For example, he argues, the best way to stem the African trade in bushmeat (meat from non-game wild animals like chimpanzees) is not just to ban the practice but to give people other sources for income and protein.

This book isn't the source for in-depth case studies or big policy solutions, but it's a good survey of threats to endangered species and some creative rescue initiatives. If you're new to writing about wildlife conservation, it's a good jumping-off point. If you already know the field, you may get inspired to extend some of Corwin's stories where he leaves off, or to track down the next candidate for the Hundred Heartbeat Club.

Freelancer Jennifer Weeks lives and writes in Watertown, Massachusetts.

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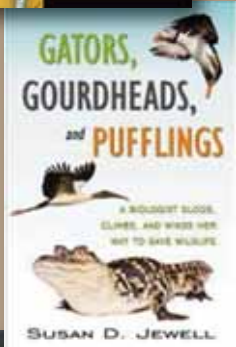
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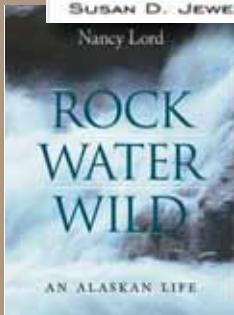
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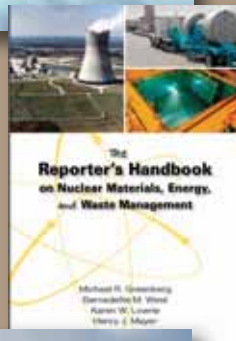
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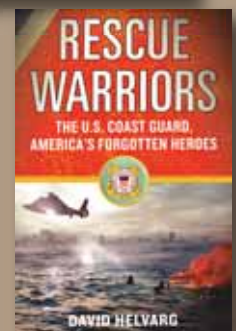
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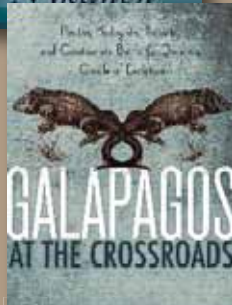
A compendium of great Missouri weather disasters with a final chapter on climate change impact as factors in recent meteorological events.
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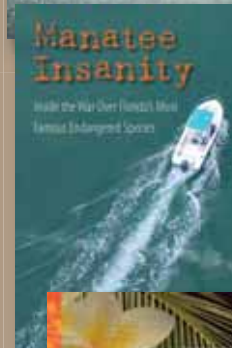
A model and her estranged activist daughter get caught up in the "war on terror" and global warming.
marknykanen.com *Bell Bridge Books*



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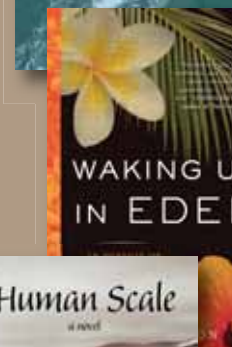
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"Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs. I am haunted by waters."

Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It*

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SEJ member and volunteer photographer for *SEJournal*, Fred First captured this photo near his home in Virginia. The SEJ office chose this photo from a group of submissions to be used on SEJ donation acknowledgment cards. Photographer, essayist-author and teacher, Fred writes the hyperlocal from the Blue Ridge Mountains. His photos and front porch musings from Floyd County can be found at www.fragmentsfromfloyd.com