

SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

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News Titans

How will big new owners affect the beat?

By AMY GAHRAN

When it comes to reporting environmental news, is bigger better—or badder? How will Disney's ownership of *ABC*, Westinghouse's ownership of *CBS*, Time-Warner's eventual ownership of *CNN*, and the absorption of local papers into large chains affect coverage of pesticides, global warming, endangered species, or the nuclear industry?

Could beats be eliminated, "tamed," or cut back due to conflicts with owners' interests? Might there be new editorial directives to steer clear of certain topics, sources, or angles? In practical terms, what could corporate consolidation mean to environmental journalists?

Most media professionals and scholars agree that it is too early to predict the consequences of consolidation precisely. They add that impacts proba-

bly would vary widely in form and scope from one news outlet to the next.

According to several journalism scholars, direct interference with the news process is highly unlikely. Also, several environmental reporters interviewed for this story have not experienced anything remotely like this.

"The common conflict that people think of is that stories about the environment tend to challenge the freedom of corporations to act in ways that maximize profits," said Phil Shabecoff, publisher of *Greenwire* and former environment reporter for the *New York Times*. "Regulations that restrict pollution, access to resources, or land use are often antithetical to corporate interests. The catch is that these companies not only are advertisers—some now also own the

(Continued on page 7)

Wet field reporting for the Web

By BILL BELLEVILLE

I am under 60 feet of frigid sea water, just off the rocky coast of Isla Santiago in the Galapagos Islands, being buffeted by tricky equatorial crosscurrents. A school of barracuda moves by, all teeth and silvery fins, reflecting rays of sunlight like a prism ball from a 70s disco movie. The barracuda disappear, replaced by a massive hammerhead, primal and intent on things known only to other hammerheads.

I drop down another 30 feet, to where Dr. John McCosker, a noted Galapagos ichthyologist, is searching for yet another new species of reef fish. As I settle next to him at the base of volcanic

rubble, he hands me a clear plastic collection bag, indicating that I should hold it open. As I do, he herds into it a small horn shark, a slender animal half the length of my forearm.

Welcome to a work day as an internet reporter in the Galapagos Islands, where for one month I became—quite literally—immersed in my assignment as a writer and photographer. I did so on behalf of the Discovery Channel and their World Wide Web site, *Discovery Channel Online* (DCO). My office was on board an oceanographic ship, the Research Vessel (R/V) Seward Johnson, chartered from Harbor Branch

(Continued on page 10)

A bold return to Boulder

SEJ board and believers meet to chart the future

When the Society of Environmental Journalists held its first conference in Boulder, Colorado, few could have imagined that the group would grow so large so quickly. A charming gathering of 200 scribblers met there nearly five years ago, out of a total membership of some 600. From such modest beginnings an organization of nearly 1,200 has blossomed.

This summer, the SEJ board is returning to Boulder for a July 26–29 meeting with a special twist. Along with elected members of the board and staff, SEJ has invited members who want to be among the Society's next generation of leaders. We envision this meeting, hosted by the University of Colorado's Center for Environmental Journalism, as both a training session for future board members and a chance for current board members to get feedback and advice.

Any member is welcome to attend, and SEJ has extended partial travel fellowships to more than a dozen who responded to an earlier mailing. When that letter went out, we expected to hear from those people who have invested a lot of effort in SEJ, perhaps by organizing regional conferences or writing for the *Journal*. We heard from some of those folks, but in addition we were delighted with the response from other members who had not yet devoted major time to the organization but who said they were eager to do so.

"It's a great opportunity to get a lot of ideas on the table to hear from people committed to SEJ and its future," said SEJ vice president Tom Meersman of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, who is chairing the leadership development retreat. "I salute them for taking the time to come and do this."

Those expected to attend, in addition to staff and board members, include:

- Chris Bowman, of the *Sacramento Bee*
- Jim Bruggers, *Contra Costa (CA) Times*
- Carol Command, *East Oregonian*, Pendleton, Oregon
- Don Corrigan of Webster University, Webster Groves, MO
- Peter Fairley, *Chemical Week*, New York City

- Carol Grossman of State University of New York in Sag Harbor
- George Homsy of *National Public Radio's* "Living on Earth"
- Gary Lee, *Washington Post*
- Elizabeth Manning, *High Country News*
- Eric Niiler, *Quincy (MA) Patriot Ledger*
- Gary Polakavic, *Riverside (CA) Press Telegram*
- Bruce Ritchie, *Gainesville Sun*

Report from the society's president

By
**Emilia
Askari**

- Sara Thurin Rollin of the Bureau of National Affairs
- Jennifer Schmidt, *KPLU* public radio in Seattle/Tacoma
- Nancy Shute, independent journalist in Washington, D.C.

Also in Boulder, soon-to-be editor of the *SEJournal*, Noel Grove, will speak of his vision for the publication and lead a brainstorming session on story ideas. SEJ is very fortunate to have a *Journal* editor with Grove's insight, experience and dedication. Grove, a long-time staff writer for *National Geographic*, has authored several books and served as SEJ's founding treasurer. He is now freelancing from his home outside of the nation's capital.

On the financial front, I am delighted to report that SEJ recently won a two-year, \$150,000 grant from the W. Alton Jones Foundation. The amount was significantly higher than that requested by SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke, an almost unheard-of phenomenon in the competi-

tive world of foundation funding.

SEJ has met a challenge grant from the Mott Foundation and soon will receive another \$25,000 installment from that foundation. In addition, nearly 20 SEJ members have made personal donations to the newly established endowment fund, which now has a balance of over \$1,000.

Because of these funding successes, SEJ's Philadelphia staff has moved to a new, more spacious office this summer and will add a new staff position: programs manager. If you are interested in the job, please contact the SEJ office at (215) 836-9970 for more information.

The last board meeting of the year will be during the annual conference in St. Louis on October 17–20. See you there!

Letter

To the Editor:

Amy Gahran's otherwise flattering review of our book, *Toxic Sludge Is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* unfortunately repeats a false charge against us by journalist Don Behm. We note that in 1982 Maryland banned sales of Milwaukee's sewage sludge fertilizer 'Milorganite.' Behm claims that we and a colleague of his at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Michael Zahn, are "wrong" in reporting this fact.

In truth, Behm is wrong. Sales of Milorganite were banned in Maryland from August 1982 until April 19, 1983, when Milwaukee legally agreed to place special labels on its sludge sold there, and to monitor its level of cadmium.

Behm first made his false charge last November. Since then we have further buttressed the veracity of our claim through an extensive open records investigation of Milwaukee's files. We will gladly supply this documentation to interested parties who contact us at (608) 233-3346, or at 74250.735@compuserve.com.

Sincerely,
John Stauber & Sheldon Rampton
Co-Authors

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Co-editors

Noel Grove
Amy Gahrn

Editorial Board Chair

Kevin Carmody

Design Editor

Chris Rigel

Section Editors

Viewpoints	Craig LaMay
On-line Bits & Bytes	Russ Clemings
Science Survey	Sara Thurin Rollin
Book Shelf	Nancy Shute
New Members List	Chris Rigel
Calendar	Janet Raloff
Greenbeat	Kevin Carmody

SEJournal will accept unsolicited manuscripts. Send story ideas, articles, news briefs, tips, and letters-to-the-editor to Noel Grove, ngrove1253@aol.com, P.O. Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 22117. Send calendar items to Janet Raloff, *Science News*, 1719 N Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036. For Greenbeat, contact Kevin Carmody at 1447 1/2 W. Fletcher Street, Chicago, IL 60657; (312) 229-2814; e-mail KPCarmody@aol.com. For book reviews, contact Nancy Shute, (202) 378-9110, 2730 Wisconsin N.W., Washington DC 20007.

For inquiries regarding the SEJ, please contact executive director Beth Parke at the SEJ office, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118; Ph: (215) 836-9770; Fax: (215) 836-9772; Internet: SEJOffice@aol.com.

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

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Showdown in the SPJ corral Sparks fly on environmental coverage

When Fred Brown of the *Denver Post* commented "Journalists are drawn to the heat rather than the light," Jim Woolf, environmental journalist for the *Salt Lake Tribune* shot back, "My job is to respond to where the fires are burning, not come up with solutions."

That was part of a lively discussion on how and why media cover the environment, in a recent regional convention of the Society of Professional Journalists at Utah State University in Logan. Taking part in the proceedings was a panel of SEJ representatives, organized by academic board member JoAnn Valenti of Brigham Young University and including Woolf, John Hollenhorst (KSL-TV News, Salt Lake City), and Jon Christensen (editor, *Great Basin News*). The panel discussed the pros and cons of environmental coverage to an audience of about 50 professionals and students. Utah State University co-hosted the two-day conference with the theme "Wilderness Tomorrow? Covering the West."

Several natural resource experts set the tone in the opening presentation by criticizing most media coverage in a panel entitled "What needs Covering." The SEJ panel then indulged in some introspection, with Hollenhorst echoing Woolf's general call for more "civility and objectivity," but labeling wilderness issues "the Bosnia of BLM battles."

"There are atrocities and war crimes on both sides," Hollenhorst said, "and the first casualty of war is truth."

Environment reporters need to slow down, calm down, ignore the rhetoric, and talk to people, Christensen said.

Also at the conference, Rep. Jim Hansen (R-Utah) and David Simon (Southwest Regional director for the National Parks and Conservation Association) debated future park reforms, proposed entrance fee increases, and the state of federal subsidies for park users.

"We don't want to close any parks," Hansen said, "but not all parks are created equal." Recalling a Ross Perot-ism, Hansen argued, "the devil is in the details."

Hansen, now serving his eighth term in Congress, feels the media have not treated him fairly. That's not the case, Hansen says, for celebrity-environmentalists such as Robert Redford, who, he said, the media "are in awe of."

CASW offers travel fellowships

The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (CASW) is offering travel fellowships of up to \$1,000 each to cover the cost of attending its 34th annual New Horizons in Science Briefing, to be held Oct. 27—31, 1996 at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The four-day briefing will bring together world-renowned scientists and many of the nation's leading science reporters to examine new developments in a variety of scientific fields.

The fellowships are intended primarily for newspapers, magazines, other publications, and TV and radio stations that do not have a full-time science writer. The deadline for submitting applications is September 16, 1996. For submission procedures, call Diane McGurgan at (516) 757-5664.

Regional gigs on the upswing

SEJ members are meeting locally for work and play

By RAE TYSON

Nam Viet is a restaurant in the heart of an ethnically diverse neighborhood along the western edge of Arlington, Va. On any given night, the can't-miss combination of good food, generous servings and ice cold beer attracts an interesting blend of Vietnamese families and young Washington, D.C., area professionals.

Yes, this is the *SEJournal*. By now, you are probably wondering what a Vietnamese restaurant has to do with environmental journalism.

Quite a bit, actually. For several months, Washington, D.C.-area SEJ members have gathered monthly at Nam Viet to talk shop, share story ideas and socialize. They also use the informal gatherings as an opportunity to plan other regional events, which have included newsmaker dinners and breakfasts, seminars, and full-day conferences.

Though the Washington region may well be SEJ's most active, it certainly isn't unique. As SEJ grows, the number and

variety of regional activities continues to increase. "It's been very encouraging," says Tom Meersman, a *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reporter and SEJ vice president who helps coordinate regional events.

Indeed, at least eight of the 13 SEJ regions have had at least one event in the past two years; some have hosted several. And new volunteers with fresh ideas and energy are stepping forward to help with future events. To underscore the importance of regional activities, the SEJ board is holding a leadership conference this summer at the University of Colorado. The seminar is designed to help and encourage regional SEJ volunteers.

"Organizing an event takes a lot of hard work but, in the end, it is worth it," says Heather Conway, a reporter for *The Madison Press* in London, Ohio. Conway and *Columbus Dispatch* reporter Scott Powers helped organize an innovative regional conference on river issues June 29 in Marietta, Ohio. (See page 16.) The region includes SEJ members in

Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky.

Conway says she got involved after attending an earlier regional workshop. "I kept telling Scott, 'We need to do another regional conference.' So he said, 'When are you going to get started?'"

The river conference organized by Powers and Conway even included an afternoon field trip so reporters could get a first-hand look at trouble spots in the Marietta area. The program ended with a dinner with guest speaker Peter Kostmeyer, a former EPA regional administrator who now heads Zero Population Growth.

June also was a busy month in other SEJ regions.

• SEJ's first New York-area regional event was held June 14–15 at Rutgers University in Piscataway, N.J. (See sidebar.) The co-sponsor and host was the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI) at Rutgers. The conference, "Reporting on the True Environmental Risks of the 1990s," was

Anatomy of a toxic barrage

By WILL NIXON

Editor's Note: Since Rae Tyson took a nationwide look at regional meetings, here's a close-up of one productive session. See more on page 16.

New Jersey has had a toxic year. A leaked report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found dioxin in the local lobsters. The port authority has stopped dredging much of the New York/New Jersey harbor because of contaminated sediments, threatening the future of the shipping industry. A cancer cluster has emerged in the town of Toms River, although no one can explain why.

All of these subjects and many others were discussed at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists June 14 and 15, held at the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI) at Rutgers University in Piscataway, New Jersey. As conference chair, Ed Rodgers of *NJN News*, told the opening session, the aim of the gathering was to help journalists understand "the real environmental risks" that are present amid public fears and scientific uncertainties.

Dr. Bernard Goldstein, the director of EOHSI, discussed the President's Commission on Risk Assessment and Risk Management, which had released its final report on June 13. A

member of the Commission, Goldstein reviewed their recommendations, including the need for the government to adopt a more systematic approach than the current chemical-by-chemical regulatory strategy.

Keynote speaker Theo Colborn, a senior scientist at the World Wildlife Fund, discussed some of the issues raised in the recent book that she has co-authored, *Our Stolen Future*, about the disruptive impacts that chemicals have in the sexual development of animals. She replied to some of the criticisms of the book, such as recent reports that human sperm counts have not declined in recent decades, by stating that these new studies are based on highly selective groups of sperm donors.

On Saturday, Dr. Herbert Needleman, a professor of pediatrics and psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, reviewed his research linking low levels of lead contamination in children with lower IQs and, most recently, aggressive behavior.

About 80 people attended the conference, including panelists and journalists from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, and several other states. The panel sessions discussed summer ozone pollution, the effectiveness of pollution prevention programs, urban and suburban ecology, and other important issues in the region. EOHSI sponsored the conference as part of its tenth anniversary celebration.

Will Nixon is a freelance writer based in New York.

organized by former *E Magazine* editor Will Nixon, Candace Botnick of the institute, Peter Page of the *Trenton Times* and chaired by Ed Rodgers of New Jersey Network *PAGE 2 News*. Speakers included a number of prominent scientists. Among them: Theo Coburn, a World Wildlife Fund scientist and co-author of *Our Stolen Future* a new and controversial book on environmental estrogens.

- In Rhode Island, Jackleen de La Harpe of *Maritimes*, Peter Lord of the *Providence Journal* and Geoff Oxnam of *Sailing World* teamed up with University of Rhode Island scientists to stage a June 21 conference on coastal water quality issues.

- At Michigan State, 25 journalists attended a three-day symposium on Great Lakes issues. Organized by former SEJ President (and current Michigan faculty member) Jim Detjen, speakers at the early June event included prominent scientists and journalists. The symposium was not all science and journalism however. Detjen even organized a night out (complete with hot dogs and beer) to see the local Lansing Lugnuts play the Beloit Snappers in a minor league baseball game.

The busiest region has been in and around Washington, D.C., where SEJ has

a heavy membership concentration and a cadre of hard-working volunteers. Led by Sara Thurin Rollin of the Bureau of National Affairs and Peter Fairley of *Chemical Week*, the D.C. region this year has hosted conferences on nuclear waste, pesticide regulations and the new farm bill.

In addition to the monthly social gatherings at a local restaurant, the region co-hosted a March conference in Annapolis, Md., with the Society of Professional Journalists and, in late May, worked with the World Resources Institute on a half-day conference for reporters covering the United Nations Habitat II conference in Turkey. Plans this summer include a tour of Baltimore Harbor aboard the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's research ship the Snow Goose.

Plans are also in the works for regional conferences elsewhere. California members will hold a series of workshops on computer-assisted reporting this fall. And members in Montana, Idaho and Washington state are hoping to join with the Associated Press for a series of seminars on property rights and wilderness issues.

The events in the Pacific Northwest will be the first for a region that is ham-

pered in part by the distances between SEJ members. Remoteness also has been a factor in several other regions with more scattered populations west of the Mississippi where events have yet to be held. SEJ members with ideas and energy should contact their regional coordinators. Names and phone numbers are in the front of the membership directory. "Don't be bashful," says the *Madison Press's* Conway.

Beyond the July leadership seminar, Meersman says the SEJ board also approved Executive Director Beth Parke's plan to hire another staff member to help coordinate regional events. "I think that is going to help a great deal," says Meersman.

Meanwhile, SEJ members in Washington, D.C. on the last Thursday of the month are invited to join other members for dinner. Don't look for the Nam Viet Restaurant, however. This summer, the group is meeting at Zorba's Cafe, a Greek restaurant near Dupont Circle in the heart of Washington, D.C.

Rae Tyson, environmental reporter at USA Today is founding SEJ vice-president and, with Tom Meersman, coordinator for regional events.

Editors and reporters "TipSheet" to debut

Three national organizations committed to excellence in environmental journalism are teaming up to provide reporters and their editors with a tipsheet to highlight emerging news on issues of environmental health and natural resources.

The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) will work in partnership with the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF) and the National Safety Council's Environmental Health Center (EHC). SEJ, EHC and RTNDF have worked cooperatively on a number of previous environmental journalism initiatives. Dubbed "*TipSheet*," the publication marks the groups' first official collaboration on an ongoing level.

"*TipSheet*," to be distributed electronically and by fax nationwide, is designed to provide editors and reporters expanded access to national and regional developments that could have news value within regional circulation and broadcast areas. News of an upcoming regulation or

court decision, key scientific findings, online developments, important hearings, international and financial developments are among the kinds of material routinely provided by "*TipSheet*."

"Our goal is to provide more reporters—whether they're located in a major metropolitan area or in a remote tribal village—more information on key environmental and natural resources activities going on around the country and throughout the world," said Paul Dolan of *ABC-TV News* in New York, a media member of RTNDF's Journalism Advisory Committee and one of the original proponents of such an effort. "With the swirl of claims and counterclaims by various interest groups and with a constant flood of newsworthy developments, it's especially important that reporters and editors have this kind of information from journalistic organizations they know and can trust."

SEJ, RTNDF, and EHC editors say

they hope that reporters receiving the tipsheet will become the best source of ideas for the new journalism service, recommending key upcoming activities that they think journalists nationwide should be aware of.

In addition to being available via SEJ's members "listserv" and on home pages operated by the sponsoring organizations, "*TipSheet*" will be available by fax to SEJ members and newsrooms unable to access it electronically. Contact the SEJ office if you want to register for the fax distribution list, or if you need instructions on subscribing to the SEJ members listserv.

"*TipSheet*" will be posted after a one-week delay and archived on the publicly accessed Web pages of the three groups involved. Initially, "*TipSheet*" will be posted at the following home page address: <http://www.nsc.org/nsc/ehc/journ/tipsheet> and on SEJ's own at <http://www.sej.org>.

SEJ co-founder Howard Chapnick dies of heart attack

Howard Chapnick, president of the Black Star photojournalism agency and a co-founder of the Society of Environmental Journalists, died May 27 at his Somers, N.Y., home after a heart attack.

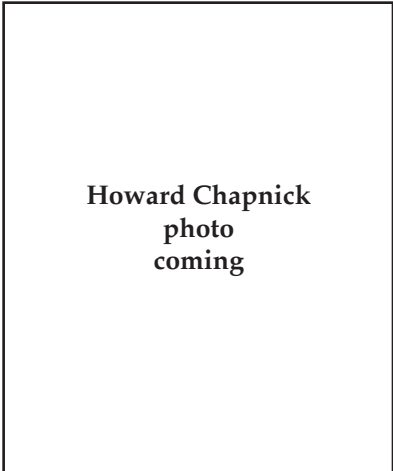
Chapnick was one of the journalists who planned the creation of SEJ at a series of meetings in Washington, D.C., in 1989, and served as one of the 13 members of the organization's founding board of directors. For years he had battled amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, and did not seek election to the board at the first conference in Boulder, Colo.

He was well known for his nature photography and had served since 1964 as head

of Black Star, one of the world's most respected photographic agencies.

Chapnick received the National Press Photographers Association's Kenneth P. McLaughlin Award for setting high standards of professionalism. He also received the association's Sprague Award for contributions to photographic education and the documentation of the civil rights movement by Black Star photographers under his direction.

Chapnick also lectured at universities, wrote a monthly column for Popular Photography magazine and helped edit photo oriented books including *To Do Justice*, about the civil rights movement.



Howard Chapnick, SEJ co-founder

The following list represents new SEJ members recorded from March 1 through June 26. Memberships recorded after June 26 will appear in *SEJournal* Volume 6, Number 3

CALIFORNIA

- Denis Cuff (active), *Contra Costa Times*, Danville

COLORADO

- Robin Kepple (academic), Technical Journalism Department, Colorado State University, Grover

CONNECTICUT

- Remy Chevalier (associate), *Electrifying Times*, Weston
- Steve Grant (active), *The Hartford Courant*, Newtown

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- Colony Brown (associate), RTNDF

GEORGIA

- Jennifer Shelley (academic), Journalism Dept, University of Georgia, Athens

LOUISIANA

- William Hammel (academic), Dept. of Communications, Loyola University, New Orleans

MASSACHUSETTS

- Christopher Ballman (active), "Living on Earth," *NPR*, Public Media Foundation, Arlington
- Jenni Laidman (active), *Bay City Times*, Somerville
- Keith Snow (active), Williamsburg
- Mike Barenti (active), *Nuclear Waste News*, Business Publishers, Inc., Silver Spring

- Thecia Fabian (active), Business Publishers Inc., Silver Spring
- Gwen Moulton (active), *Chemical Regulation Reporter*, Environment & Safety Division, BNA Inc., Rockville

MICHIGAN

- Jeremy Pearce (active), *The Detroit News*, Detroit

MONTANA

- Richard Manning (active), Lolo

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Carolyn Martin (academic), Environmental Studies, Antioch University-New England, Keene

NEW JERSEY

- George Dawson (associate), New Brunswick
- Kerry Dooley (active), *Bloomberg Business News*, Princeton

NEW MEXICO

- Nelda Mier (active), Editorial Hispanic Radio Network, Santa Fe

NEW YORK

- Colin Crawford (academic), Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn
- Maura Mullen, (associate), *Environmental Progress*, American Institute of Chemical Engineers, New York

NORTH CAROLINA

- Rebecca Haynes (active), Chapel Hill

OREGON

- Kelly Andersson (academic), *Oregon Daily Emerald*/Journalism Dept., University of Oregon, Eugene
- Peter Donovan (associate), Enterprise

TEXAS

- Angela Neville (active), *Environmental Protection*, Stevens Publishing Corporation, Waco

VIRGINIA

- Catherine Chang (Associate), *Water Environment and Technology*, Water Environment Federation, Alexandria
- Lisa Neal (associate), Water Environment Federation, Alexandria
- Winifred Thompson (associate), Alexandria

VERMONT

- Shepherd Ogden (associate), *The Cook's Garden*, Green Mountain College, Londonberry
- Kimberly Woodbury (academic), Biology Department, Marlboro College, Marlboro

WISCONSIN

- Carol Hartman (academic), Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Tim Solinger (associate), Editorial Department, J.J. Keller & Associates, Inc., Neenah

CANADA

- Vik Peck (associate), *Nautilus Publication*, Sidney, BC

GERMANY

- Valentin Thurn (active), *Hintergrund Journalsiten-Büro*, Köln

Big business... (from page 1)

media. That reasoning has some merit. But could I give you a specific example of this affecting my own work? No." He noted that *Greenwire* has been owned by *The National Journal* (a Times-Mirror publication) for a few months, and so far the new owners have made no attempt to change what *Greenwire* does or how it's done.

What seems most likely is that fallout to the environmental beat from corporate consolidation (if it occurs at all) would be gradual, subtle, indirect, and difficult to attribute specifically to media ownership. As with covering creeping environmental stories, journalists will have to watch the beat very closely over the next few years to see if any ownership-related changes materialize.

"Changes will take time and will appear gradually. Most of us are in the middle of this issue and can't really see it," noted Bob Griffin, Director of Marquette University's Center for Mass Media Research. "That isn't to say that changes to environmental reporting related to consolidation of ownership are or are not happening. Those kinds of changes would be tough to see unless they were dramatic."

Dire predictions from media critics about the threat of "media monopolization," and the flurry of business activity surrounding the Telecommunications Deregulation Act have increased public consciousness about media consolidation somewhat. On June 3 *The Nation* ran a 10-page cover story ("Free the Media," by Mark Crispin Miller) which discussed the scope and possible sinister consequences of corporate consolidation in the media. This article included a four-page foldout "who-owns-who" schematic for four major U.S. media corporations, with commentary from nearly 20 media critics and practitioners (a few of whom disputed the assertion that media consolidation is a problem). Also, the November/December issue of *EXTRA!* (the magazine of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) contained a nine-article special report, "Mating Season: Consummating the Media Monopoly."

Censorship due to conflicts of interest between news departments and other corporate holdings (such as environmental cleanup divisions) is the most vivid and ominous potential consequence. This possibility has almost Orwellian implications, and these are the issues most commonly raised by concerned members of the public in letters to the editor, Internet discussions, and public meetings on this topic (such as a panel at the Conference on World Affairs, April 1995, at the University of Colorado, Boulder).

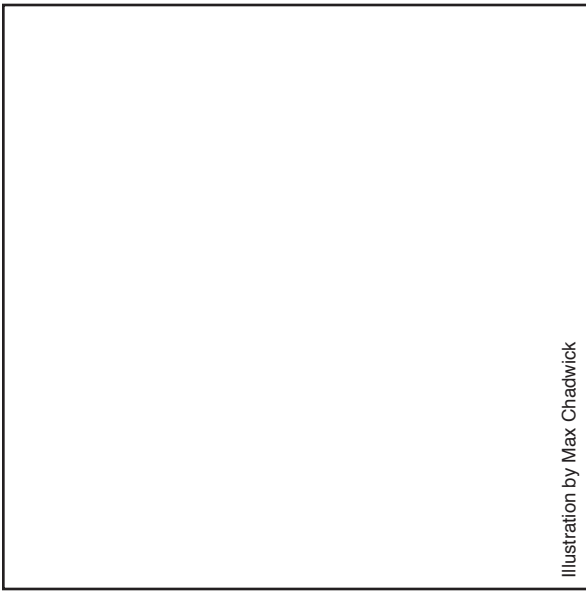


Illustration by Max Chadwick

However, despite public concern, at the moment there appears to be little actual risk of this particular problem—at least in terms of environmental reporting.

In general, media professionals are not as concerned as the public about direct conflicts between news ethics and corporate interests. "I think that people exaggerate the ability of corporations to act in a cohesive, conspiratorial way. I don't see that," said Peter Page, staff writer with the *Trenton (NJ) Times*. "My paper is one of many owned by the Newhouse family, but it has no bearing on my work that I'm employed by this huge organization. I think there's this kind of unspoken fear in many professions, including journalism, that our relationship to corporations somehow supplants our idea of being citizens, that who we work for is more important than our normal civic roles."

Most journalism scholars, critics, and

practitioners agree that all media corporations are not equal. The extent that environmental news could be affected by corporate takeovers may depend partly on what kind of corporation is taking over. According to Ben Bagdikian, media scholar and author of *The Media Monopoly*, whenever a news organization is bought by or merged into a company that is not primarily a news organization, there is a potential direct conflict of interest. "Some industrial corporations that own media companies have other business units that may not be crazy about getting environmental coverage," Bagdikian said. "It's conceivable that in those situations there could be a shift toward backing off on coverage that involves divisions or subsidiaries of the parent company, or on certain environmental issues altogether." However, he noted that when media or communications companies acquire news outlets, it's more likely that such conflicts would arise with business or entertainment news than with environmental news. (In fact, this is widely purported to be the case with *TV Guide* since it was purchased by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.)

In reality, self-censorship is the most likely way that reporters would begin to favor the interests of corporate owners, according to Karl Grossman, professor of journalism at the State University of New York. "In the US, the central committee doesn't issue a party line," he said. "There are no in-house censors actively manipulating news. The real issue for reporters will be the sin of omission. Items that 'rock the boat' too much won't make it into stories in the first place, so they won't have to be edited out or toned down. A reporter for *CBS* (now owned by Westinghouse) probably will just know—without being told directly—that when doing nuclear stories, he or she should be especially careful."

The problem with proving or disproving such statements is that hard evidence of self-censorship (or any other kind of censorship) related to media ownership, is virtually impossible to find—if indeed it exists at all. This is especially true regarding the recent spate of high-profile merg-

ers and acquisitions of broadcast and cable networks. Consolidation of media ownership is only one of many current transformations in the news business, making it difficult to attribute changes in the news specifically to changes in ownership, even in part.

The organization of some media can be a complicating factor that makes it difficult to isolate ownership issues. For instance, reporter Carl Stevens of *KEPR* (the local *CBS* affiliate for the region near the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Richland, WA) claims that the 1995 Westinghouse takeover of *CBS* has had “no effect whatsoever” on his station’s continuing coverage of environmental and other issues related to Hanford. (Westinghouse is the primary contractor for the Hanford cleanup.) Stevens did note, though, that *KEPR* is a *CBS* affiliate, and is not owned and operated by *CBS* (unlike some *CBS* stations in major markets). “Our local news operation is almost entirely independent,” he said, “but I can’t say whether that’s true for all *CBS* stations and affiliates.”

Some TV news professionals report that potential conflicts of interest are less of a concern when the new parent company is primarily an entertainment/communications firm with a good track record for its other news operations. “Am I particularly worried about our environment beat as a result of this merger? No,” said Peter Dykstra head of *CNN*’s Environment Unit, regarding the impending purchase of Turner Broadcasting by Time-Warner. “Time-Warner has established its own reputation for environmental coverage. That makes me worry less.”

However, his own situation aside, Dykstra is concerned about this general issue. “The concerns are getting bigger, and they are much on everyone’s mind. There is no guarantee that bigger is better, and there certainly are reasons to be concerned that (being owned by a larger corporation) would alter news coverage,” he said. “I think the idea of autonomy and independence of news operations is what’s threatened, especially with increasing bottom-line pressures. However, proof of this would be hard to come by.”

Since Disney bought *ABC*, “We’ve continued to do a tremendous amount of environmental coverage,” said Bob Aglow, National Editor for Environmental

Coverage at *ABC News*. “I understand that at Disney’s highest levels, there’s a great deal of environmental concern. At *ABC* we’ve certainly never gotten any signal that our environmental coverage will diminish.” Erin Hayes, a reporter with *ABC News*, concurs but adds a note of caution. “The environmental stories I’ve pitched lately have been enthusiastically received,” she said. “I suspect there won’t be any changes from Disney, but I could be proved wrong.”

A far more immediate threat to environmental coverage is simply increasing pressure to improve the corporate bottom line.

Among journalists, a far more immediate threat to environmental coverage is simply increasing pressure to improve the corporate bottom line. This factor sometimes comes into play during media mergers and acquisitions—although it has become a simple fact of life throughout most of the news industry. Generally, bottom-line pressures increase when there is some kind of a change in corporate culture or priorities—which may or may not coincide with a change of ownership.

Some environmental journalists claim the “remoteness” of corporate management presents problems for the beat. “I do think there is an indirect—but very real—impact of conglomerating ownership,” said David Ropeik, a reporter with Boston TV station *WCVB*, who claims he’s doing less environmental reporting lately. “As I see it, the kinds of stories that I used to do were mostly local, responsible kinds of stories—which doesn’t fit the pattern of what consultants recommend for TV news content. If you have local people running a local station, they’re more attuned to local stories. But to the degree that any news outlet is steered in what it does by corporate bosses, I think that portends poorly for the environment beat.”

“Remote management” also may put in place policies that fail to take into account differences among beats. At Knight-Ridder, one policy designed to encourage more locally-oriented “public journalism” backfired recently when it came to environment reporting at the *Columbia* (GA) *Ledger-Enquirer*.

This paper introduced a new system of editorial “expectations,” which effectively were weekly story quotas, according to Ken Edelstein, former environment reporter for the *Ledger-Enquirer* (currently senior writer with *Creative Loafing*, an Atlanta alternative weekly). “The number of stories (four per week) wasn’t all that burdensome,” recounted Edelstein. “The point was to get more local news stories bylined by staff writers, to get us more involved with the community. But the problem was having that expectation every week, and never being able to drop below it. That meant more emphasis on event-driven stories—which are quicker hits, and which aren’t necessarily the best way to cover the environment. I think it hampered true enterprise reporting.

The fact is that if an environmental reporter is doing his or her job right, that person won’t put out the same number of stories in a year as a police reporter.”

Edelstein contends that, in general, the relative remoteness of corporate media management can lead to the creation of editorial policies with relevance problems. “Once you start working under what is essentially an echo of a corporate policy, a certain unreality sets in,” he said. “While we were trying to satisfy buzzwords, our essential work got pushed back behind those corporate buzzwords and platitudes.”

Ultimately, the most basic bottom-line concern of any news organization is how much it costs to fill the news hole. When, for a example, a newspaper chain acquires a paper (or when a paper is trying to improve its financial attractiveness before putting itself up for sale), there often are new budgetary pressures and cutbacks. This can mean that papers offer smaller raises or are slow to fill vacancies—factors that affect all beats, but especially “specialty” beats like environment reporting. However, such problems also can result from problems unrelated to ownership, such as a rapid rise in newsprint costs.

Dykstra points out that environmental reporting is especially cumbersome and expensive for TV journalists. “If a reporter from the *New York Times* wanted to cover an environment story in the Rockies, he probably could do that by phone or fly out there himself. I’d have

to arrange to transport at least a three- or four-person crew and a ton of equipment. Often that governs what stories we end up doing.”

A great deal of environmental reporting involves investigative journalism—which typically is one of the most expensive types of journalism a news organization supports. Bagdikian believes it is possible that, particularly at newspapers, environmental reporting could be cut back due to the cost of investigative reporting.

Rae Tyson, environment editor for *USA Today*, believes that (at least at some papers) economic decisions are driving a decrease in investigative environmental reporting—but indirectly. “At some papers, litigation costs are a substantial expense. That can end up affecting editorial policy,” he said. “The way it happens is not that management says ‘Gee, you shouldn’t do investigative projects,’ but rather ‘Gee, the paper didn’t make as much money last year, and look at what your litigation costs were.’ Then, some editors may start taking a closer look at what kinds of stories lead to litigation.”

However, Rosemary Armao, executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), reports no evidence of a drop in investigative journalism. “We haven’t looked at environmental reporting in particular, but we have no objective measure that investigative reporting in general has decreased,” she said. “In fact, this year the number of entries in our investigative reporting contest was very high—and one of the big winners was an environmental story.”

Research shows that one significant, direct problem caused by consolidation of ownership, at least for newspapers, is not whether news is censored or “spun,” but rather who gets the news at all. Phil Tichenor, professor emeritus of journalism and mass communication at the University of Minnesota, and two of his colleagues found that when locally-owned papers become part of a chain, typically coverage of local controversy decreases, and rural circulation is cut back. (This research was conducted in the 1980s and involved rural newspapers in Minnesota.)

“We found that when papers became part of a chain, they usually redefine their

editorial commitment to focus on the larger metro area—especially on metro business news,” Tichenor said. For example, this happened with the *Des Moines Register*. “It had been the only paper that reached every corner of Iowa,” Tichenor recounted. “When Gannett took over that paper, it closed the eastern bureaus and made statements that it wanted to concentrate on the Des Moines metro area. That left a lot of people in the eastern part of Iowa without a major daily covering local news.”

Often, at the same time, “Circulation in remote rural areas papers gradually is cut back or abandoned,” Tichenor continued. “Publishers have said they can’t afford distribution way out there in the boonies—advertisers just aren’t willing to pay for that. As a result, many rural areas are left high and dry in terms of availability of big-city papers. Rural stores get very few copies.”

In terms of newspaper circulation, metro vs. rural areas are a classic example of information haves and have-nots.

However, Tichenor thinks it may be possible that in some ways newspaper consolidation may nurture the environment beat. Earlier research showed that specialized writers (like environment writers or science writers) tend to exist mainly in bigger media, he said. Unlike independent papers or small newspaper groups, larger chains have sufficient capital resources to support specialized bureaus or reporters that can serve more than one paper. “One could speculate that consolidation by itself would make it more likely that there would be more specialized writers of any kind, including environmental,” Tichenor said. “Whether that pans out, though, is another proposition.”

Tichenor’s contentions could have some interesting implications. “There’s the whole issue of ecology and environmental protection being a major concern of people in metro and suburban areas—but not to most people in rural areas. Add to that the fact that, in terms of newspaper circulation, metro vs. rural areas are a classic example of information haves and have-nots.” The metro-rural “information gap,” coupled with a lack of inclusion of rural issues and viewpoints in many major

media, could exacerbate conflicts and hostility between urban and rural populations over issues such as grazing or use of recreational areas, he observed.

Stepping back to look at the big picture, Griffin of Marquette University speculated that over time, ownership-influenced changes in the environment beat might occur in a way invisible to individual reporters—a matter of how the beat evolves in general, rather than whether specific reporters’ jobs are affected.

“This may be a trend that affects primarily less-established journalists, or media outlets that don’t have an established environment beat,” said Griffin. “Where environmental reporters already are in place, it probably would take a major shift of some type to dis-establish the beat. That’s not very likely. There are all sorts of reasons why change would not come quickly for reporters who have been on the beat for awhile. The most significant long-term effects might surface in places where the environment beat hasn’t already been established—like on smaller papers, where it’s covered by reporters who also

cover other beats.”

Griffin thinks it may be possible that over time assignments at such organizations might focus less on the environment and more on recreation. Or it could happen that gradually environment stories may arise more by editorial assignment, rather than reporters’ enterprise work. “It will be interesting to see what happens with new hires over the next few years,” he continued. “What are editors telling them with regard to environmental coverage? What do they sense about directions they can take to get ahead in the organization? That’s where the uncertainty is. And unfortunately, if this happens, the affected reporters probably would not be aware of the change—simply because they are new.” This view resonated strongly with many journalists interviewed for this story.

What can be done by environmental journalists who are concerned that corporate consolidation could impair the beat? At this point, there appear to be few proactive options. Most journalists recommend watching the beat closely over time, perhaps with some informal benchmarking.

Awards for environmental reporting can help enhance the profile of the beat with editors and management—though this is by no means a given. This year, the *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer* won a Pulitzer Prize for an investigative environmental story. “That definitely helped, but it should have helped more,” said Stuart Leavenworth, environmental reporter at that paper. “So far, I’m still the only full-time environment reporter at this paper.

We could use another one.”

Joseph Turow, a professor at the Annenberg School of Communications (University of Pennsylvania) strongly recommends independent benchmarking studies of environmental journalism. “It’s almost impossible to prove that coverage changes without good solid studies,” he said. Such data would be invaluable in examining the many factors affecting environmental journalism, including cor-

porate consolidation, he said.

Griffin noted that the act of observation could affect what is observed. “As long as reporters and editors are alert to this issue, that could help,” he said.

SEJ board member Amy Gahran is the managing editor of E Source, an energy-related technical publishing/information services company in Boulder, CO.

Wet field reporting...from page 1

Oceanographic back in the U.S. My field work was done in the briny deep.

The ship was serving as a platform for four weeks of scientific exploration in the Galapagos, to help the four veteran scientists aboard “go where Darwin had never been.” They would do so via scuba gear and a 3,000-foot deep diving submersible. A lone terrestrial biologist worked part-time on land, carefully troweling up fossils imbedded in the sediment of isolated lava tube caves and bringing them aboard ship for evaluation. Results included the discovery of new species of fish and invertebrates, and the development of new theories about evolutionary biology in the cold waters 600 miles off the South American coast.

Hours of topside film and underwater videotape would be shot, and edited into a two-hour documentary that would be first shown on the Discovery Channel this summer as “Galapagos: Beyond Darwin.” My assignment was to follow the expedition as closely as possible, but not so

close that I got in the way of filming or interfered with the actual field science.

For a solid month I wrote daily essays and took digital photographs that in some way evoked the experience. In addition, I helped the scientists field questions that came in almost every day on the Bulletin Board System (BBS) from users of the Web site. The actual writing was done in a rabbit warren of a work station aboard an ever-rocking ship, in a tight cubby behind a console of high-tech gear where my laptop commandeered a few precious square feet of counter space. Usually, it came at the end of an exciting but fatiguingly long day, with hours spent hiking on land, inside lava tube caves, underwater in dive gear, or bouncing about in a small inflatable boat. Twice, I rode along in a shoe box compartment aboard the Johnson SeaLink submersible as it descended some 3,000 feet into the unknown darkness of the sea floor.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles and one satellite-bounce away, my daily uploaded package of essays, photos, and BBS answers were posted. Laid out inside a fancy design on the Web site, they provided ever-changing daily pages of an interactive electronic magazine.

If this sounds like cutting edge journalism, it was. The Net’s World Wide Web and its electronic journalism are still new to most of us. Of the 26 million internet users (at this writing), half signed on in 1995. At the end of 1995 there were 130,000 Web “homepages” and they are increasing at the rate of 100 a day. As a result, there’s lots of literary road kill on this information superhighway. But there’s excitement here, too, and room for expression not found in conventional media.

On the *Discovery* site, for instance, a user can click on any of several originally-produced themed stories in Nature, Science, Exploration, History, etc. Except for longer “Specials,” like the Galapagos, stories are changed every two weeks. Each story leads to other hypertext links, which are screens with related information, inside or outside of the *Discovery* site. Sometimes snippets of audio and video can be downloaded, along with color photos.

Despite the bucks the Discovery Channel was investing in its web presence, and despite the acclaim its site was already earning from ‘net reviewers, this was the first time it had attempted “real time” field reporting from a scientific expedition. I was R&D, pilot project, and commercial application all rolled into one, equipped with technology I had just been introduced to in a Cliff Notes version of a training session in a brief visit to Discovery Channel offices. A veteran print media reporter and writer who used to curse every time he tripped over a TV power cable at a press conference, I found myself mortaring the bricks of my very own paradigm of “electronic” journalism. Suddenly I was as electronically wired as any writer’s ever been.

When things went wrong at sea, I could get e-mail-borne advice. But it was generally up to me to make it all better, jerryrigging the electronics when necessary, working around brutal deadlines and turning out daily copy that was supposed to be evocative, educational, and accurate. All the while, I lived in close quarters with a busy 35-man crew that included scientists, filmmakers, ship technicians, Ecuadorian government observers, and other folks I had never seen before in

Photo of Bill in a diving suit

Bill Belville in the Galapagos Islands

my life. Self-absorption, that malaise of creative thinking, was a luxury none of us could afford. Virtually overnight my mantra went from, "I'm a private person who likes my space," to "Whatever happens, I'll learn from it."

Foremost in my learning experiences was the realization that when you travel with a film crew, you never travel light. Every movement, from plane to tarmac to truck to dinghy to ship, required the transfer of almost two tons of gear, about 70-odd cases. The most fearful was a tiny breadbox-sized case labeled "Danger." Lead ballast for the camera boom, it could take even the most fit of us by surprise if we approached it without respect.

But the physical aspect of the expedition was the least of my concerns. Even the cramped four-man "worker bee" room I shared with three of the film crew could be factored into my new "learning" equation. More tricky were the relationships with the scientists aboard. All eminent in their field, they had already made peace with the notion of having their expedition underwritten by a commercial television channel. (As Dr. Bruce Robison of the Monterey Bay Aquarium told me: "Financing of science doesn't come easy these days, especially anything in the field.") However, that bargain didn't include a last-minute add-on from the Web site, a presence none of them was even aware of until barely a week before the trip itself.

Although not a hard science reporter, I had spent enough time with scientists—mostly marine biologists—in the field overseas to feel comfortable. But on those trips the article or series of articles were written after my return, when I had a chance to research other sources and double-check facts. Here, on the flash-point of exploration, far from the data bases each scientist could use to confirm the taxonomy of daily encounters with the deep, no one was eager to over-commit themselves to "new discoveries".

Even quotes, which could be later edited out from the post-production film process, could take new and terrifying forms if removed from context. That bizarre-looking Stylephoridae the sub just

captured from the sea bottom could be brand new to science, or it could be old hat. Outside of a biomedical expedition, we were the first to explore carefully the depths of these oceanic islands.

Also, answers to BBS questions posed by site users could be complex, even time-consuming. This was not a floating press conference where I could simply walk up to any scientist any time of the day and fire a question at them. But the project worked because the scientists took an interest in what I was doing. Indeed, if I was included in the field expeditions off the ship at all, it was not because of any perceived clout I had as a Discovery writer. The interpersonal skills that any field journalist finds useful were just as valuable as they've ever been,



Bill's other graphic

Discovery Channel's new project on the World Wide Web

from the days when Lowell Thomas reported from "ships at sea" and beyond. For me, it was just as critical to know how to rig up my own dive gear and handle myself in a small boat as it was to was to research, write, and use computer technology.

In my daily "Letters from the Galapagos," my task was to keep my own point-of-view firmly intact, while remaining acutely attuned to how my portrayal of others, and their science, would play. I knew from the get-go that my closeness to the expedition could quickly move me into the realm of advocacy. But I also couldn't become a shill for either the science or the filmmaking.

So I approached the expedition from my perspective as a nature writer, rather than a just-the-facts-ma'am reporter. Within that context, I could evoke my own sense of awe while weaving descriptions of natural history into the narrative of exploration. We all could hint at scien-

tific implications, and towards the end of the month-long trip, even report the genesis of new theories. But the hard news that historically marked field reporting wouldn't work here.

In addition to dive gear, my tools at sea were a MacIntosh Powerbook laptop, a Apple-brand digital camera, a back-up hard drive (in case the main drive crashed), and cables to connect the camera to the computer. Thusly armed, at the end of each day I would write my daily 900-word "Letter," write and edit answers to questions from users, write outlines, and download each day's photos from the digital camera into the laptop—all using relevant software for word processing and photo configuration.

When all was gathered into a neat electronic "folder," I would march with laptop to the captain's private office next to the bridge. There, I plugged in the phone cord to the computer modem, keyed in a special dial-up number back in the states, and opened the software program that let me transfer the folder electronically to that site. It was a system that worked well, if a bit sluggishly, as long as the ship's stern didn't swing around to cut off the satellite access.

Back in the U.S., a technical editor reviewed the folder data, removed any bugs, and sent it along to the Discovery office. There, early the next morning, the Nature editor gave it all a quick review before shipping it to the art director. Sometime the next morning, the entire package was posted on the Web site.

By then, of course, I was already underwater, writing hasty notes on my dive slate about hammerheads and schools of barracuda and little horn sharks being herded into a hand-held plastic bag.

Writer Bill Belleville is based in Sanford, Fla. His articles have appeared in Sierra, Parade, Reader's Digest, Islands, and Audubon magazine. He is currently at work on a documentary about William Bartram's exploration of Florida.

Border muck needs good raking

Good reporting might curb U.S.-Mexican pollution

By KAREN SCHMIDT

If there was an opening theme to the conference, "Environmental Health in the U.S.-Mexican Border Region," March 29–30, it was that pollution and infectious diseases know no political boundaries. If there was a closing lesson, it was that good journalism is still an effective way of bringing social problems to public attention.

The two-day, bi-national meeting of epidemiologists, geographers, community activists, government officials, and six SEJ fellows in Tucson began with the understanding that environmental problems along the 2,000-mile border affect both countries. After

all, water contamination created in Sonora spills into the Arizona watershed, the people of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez breathe a mix of air pollutants generated in both cities, and residents on both sides of the border are exposed to the same infectious diseases.

Population in border cities is booming at a rate of 2.5 percent per year, and the poorest neighborhoods—the colonias—grew by 34 per cent between 1992 and 1995. On the Mexican side, American-owned manufacturers, known as *maquiladoras*, have provided jobs—one reason for the migration there. But the companies have not contributed enough taxes to support the local infrastructure. Some conference participants said the taxes are going straight to Mexico City, rather than being used locally. The simplified scenario: lots of people, lots of industrial pollution, and little investment in public health measures, leading to serious environmental health problems—and little whistle-blowing. According to one conference presenter, investigative journalism, particularly on the Mexican side, is underdeveloped.

The biggest and most obvious threat to public health is sewage. About 20 percent of residents on the U.S. side and about 40 percent on the Mexican side have no sewer service. Many residents have no source of clean drinking water.

That raises the risk of oral-fecal contamination of water and food, leading to easy transmission of bacteria, viruses and parasites that cause diarrhea and other diseases. James VanDerslice of the University of Texas at El Paso reported on the increase in cases of hepatitis A. In 1995 he and his colleagues tested blood samples of El Paso residents for hepatitis A antibodies and found that 65

workers do face significant health risks in the maquiladoras, but they only find out about them accidentally or after-the-fact. The maquila industries do not properly educate women employees about health risks, she said, although these women have begun to publish their own newsletter.

Much of the reporting in the Mexican press, she found, contained only the statements of government officials, with no follow-up on their promises nor any discussion of what was occurring at the grass-roots level. Vidales expressed great interest in bringing together Mexican environmental journalists and SEJ members to share information and learn from one another.

A Border Environmental Health Study by the Morris K. Udall Foundation, sponsors of the conference through the University of Arizona's Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, reinforced the key role that the media plays in informing the public on environmental issues. The Foundation interviewed 800 adults on both sides of the Arizona/Sonora border and found that 96 percent of the Sonorans relied on mass media, primarily TV and radio, for environmental information, compared with 53 percent of Arizonans.

Despite the shortcomings of the Mexican press cited by Vidales, Sonorans appear to be far more concerned than Arizonans about environmental health issues, perhaps because of everyday experiences with bad water, bad air, sewage, garbage, and illness. The Foundation's study found that about 50 percent of the Sonorans interviewed believed water pollution put their families at great risk, and 43 percent believed the same of air pollution. These rates were half as high in Arizona.

Despite the tremendous public concern in Sonora, the Mexican legislature appears to be moving toward relaxing the country's environmental laws, according to Javier Diamant, Subdirector for Border Affairs at SEMARNAP, Mexico's

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Vidales expressed great interest in bringing together Mexican environmental journalists and SEJ members to share information and learn from one another.

percent of teens 14 to 19 years old had been exposed, twice the exposure rate when the same study was conducted in 1986. Today, they estimate, 89 percent of people 29 to 45 years old have been exposed to hepatitis A.

Linking other diseases with environmental exposures isn't as easy. Although there are clusters of lupus and anencephalic births and high rates of certain cancers in the region, many scientists at the conference pointed out the difficulty of connecting these health problems with any particular factor, such as chemical exposure. In a transient population, they said, many factors conspire to compromise health.

Better information about these problems will play a crucial role in the border's future, said Susana Vidales, a Mexican journalist and feminist with *Grupo de Informacion en Reproduccion Elegida* in Meromosillo, Sonora. In her talk she voiced concern that there's little or no investigative journalism in her country.

Analyzing the Mexican press as a MacArthur Fellow for messages about reproductive health and women, she found many health threats, such as women's occupational exposures, were not addressed at all. Top environmental problems cited, in order, were: contaminated water, dust, and issues related to garbage (such as clandestine burning). Women

Junk science: Put it under a microscope

By HOWARD RIS JR.

Since last September, the House Science Subcommittee on Energy and the Environment has held several hearings calling into question the science behind environmental policies. The latest hearing, which was billed as a balanced forum on the science of climate change, was stacked with skeptical scientists, some of whom have financial links to fossil fuel industries that fear future regulation. Generally, these skeptics take the view that climate change cannot yet be detected, is not a serious problem, and does not warrant a policy response.

Contrast this with the announcement made in December by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): climate change is already underway, human activity is partly responsible, and programs must be put in place to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. The IPCC is sponsored by the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Association and has conducted two major assessments of climate change over the last six years, based on the research and/or review of 2,500 scientists from more than 60 countries.

Faced with the challenge of informing the public about the state of the science and the stakes for society, how is a reporter to discriminate between reputable and junk science? While it can take many forms, we define “junk science” as work presented as valid science that in fact falls outside the rigors of the scientific method and the peer review process. This includes the presentation of selective results, politically-motivated distortions of scientifically sound papers, and the publishing of quasi-scientific journals that are intended to appear as something they are not. At its worst, junk science is opinion and speculation lent undeserved respectability by scientists financially supported by self-interested lobby groups trying to confound the real scientific debate.

By attacking junk science, we do not

mean to imply that we believe that criticism of scientific orthodoxy is illegitimate or inappropriate. In fact, the Union of Concerned Scientists has at times challenged the scientific

Viewpoints

is a regular feature of SEJournal, offering a forum to non-journalists who deal with environmental issues and the media

mainstream. Junk science does not include well-formulated, testable hypotheses from honest researchers challenging the majority viewpoint, nor peer-reviewed results that do not conform to that consensus. Indeed, these normal scientific inquiries may advance, even alter, the current paradigm and, ultimately, our understanding of dangers posed to the environment.

As a source to reporters, I know the genuine difficulty journalists face when covering issues related to environmental science. Many environmental journalists are not scientists and often have very large beats that make it difficult to develop in-depth knowledge on any one subject. It can be very challenging to separate the wheat from the chaff.

At its worst, junk science is opinion and speculation lent undeserved respectability by scientists financially supported by self-interested lobby groups trying to confound the real scientific debate.

Most reporters have been trained to assure balanced coverage. But achieving balance is often more difficult when covering environmental science issues than when reporting on, say, politics. In politics, news sources express their own opinions or values, none of which may have more validity than those of other individuals. With science, however, some views are more valid than others because they meet certain standards widely subscribed to by the scientific community.

Yet, I can understand why science and environmental reporters feel obligated to provide opposing points of view. Many of you are sincerely struggling with the challenge of how to accurately describe a scientific debate and give the correct weight to different scientific opinions. Also, you often face a daily deadline, which makes it very difficult to gather additional information or verify the validity of material you've been given. Unfortunately, you may end up an unwitting accomplice to the further proliferation of junk science.

This often shows up in coverage of climate change, which some reporters have covered as if it were a debate between two equally supported groups of scientists. In fact, climate change skeptics represent a tiny minority in the scientific community. The results generated by several of the world's most sophisticated research centers, an extensive peer review process, and a growing body of evidence which shows that the modeling results are beginning to correlate quite well with historical data, all suggest that the scientific community has moved toward consensus where climate change is concerned.

Another important factor leading to confusion is the nature of science itself and the ways that scientists reach a consensus on complex issues. The accumulation of scientific understanding is a slow and deliberate process. Controlled experiments require many iterations and are not always feasible; simulation models are sometimes the only tools available. Some scientific findings evolve over time, and sometimes the new information seems to contradict the old.

This is particularly true of environmental science. The human race is conducting a series of experiments on the planet's natural systems, and scientists are racing to understand the implications even as we keep tinkering with the variables. Given this uncertainty
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Organizing with text retrieval

New database software can speed article research

By **ROBIN ROWLAND**

It's the age of information overload, and the computer hasn't helped. There are more and more stories every day. Not just from the traditional wire services, but from an increasing number of syndication or "personal profile" news services. There's the data stored in commercial information databases such as Dialog and Lexis/Nexis. On the Internet, there is the exponential increase in e-mail and new World Wide Web sites every day. All that information can be hypnotic and even addicting, so you can't give it up. How do you handle it?

A new generation of database software now provides a kind of structure that lets a reporter doing in-depth research organize material. This software goes by several names—text management, text retrieval or free-form database—but all three mean and do the same thing.

Text database software has two advantages for journalists. First, you have a choice of creating when entering data. You can use a formal structure or enter information the way you get it. Second, the software allows you to search for information across an entire database, or multiple databases, or an entire hard drive.

If you search for the word "environment" in a text database, the software will locate "environment" everywhere it can, in a name, a keyword or typed notes. Here are some of the most popular commercial and shareware text database packages:

AskSam for Windows 3.0

AskSam for DOS made headlines when it was used to compile information gathered by the Iran-Contra Committee, but it has a dense programming language that is almost impossible to use for people who lack programming experience. AskSam for Windows uses dialog boxes and tool bars to get around that problem.

I used AskSam for Windows for my last two books, *Undercover: Cases of the RCMP's Most Secret Operative* and *Researching on the Internet*. I tracked the career of Frank Zaneth, the first and perhaps best undercover cop in the history of

the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The project required collating several hundred names of crooks, communists, and cops who kept appearing throughout Zaneth's 30-year career.

AskSam for Windows also has excellent templates for importing data from CompuServe, the Internet and Lexis/Nexis. While I was working on *Researching* I was saving megabytes worth of e-mail, Usenet messages, and Web pages. I also transcribed taped interviews into an AskSam database. Eventually I had about 10 megabytes of data in about 15 chapter-related AskSam databases. Finding something in those databases was easy because of AskSam's search and retrieval capability.

When it came to writing, AskSam also saved a lot of retyping because I could cut and paste quotes into my word processor. I also use AskSam as my contact manager. I have entered almost every contact I've made in the last 10 years in journalism into a large AskSam contact file. The free-form software allows me to include as many notes as I want and search them all at once.

InfoSelect 3.0

I've always liked InfoSelect. If you put it in your Windows 3.1 Startup Group or create a Windows 95 shortcut, it is on your screen all the time and can be popped up any time you want.

I use InfoSelect as an ongoing idea file. InfoSelect organizes material into a series of databases called "topics." Each topic has a device called a "selector," which is a sort of outline. You can start an outline and then create as many notes as you want tied to that outline. It also works in reverse, so that each time you start a note, the title can appear automatically in the Selector. InfoSelect can search across topics and go through all your different idea files or notepads at the same time, if you can't remember exactly where you put something.

InfoSelect also has a calendar and to-do list, plus a name and address database that is compatible with traditional flat-file and relational database software.

InfoSnatch

InfoSnatch is a computerized notepad that takes a different approach, using powerful enhancements to improve the Windows clipboard. You can cut and paste almost anything, text or graphics, directly into an InfoSnatch notebook. Notes are organized into notebooks, libraries, and projects for easy organization. InfoSnatch will search across your hard drive for notes you've misplaced in a word processor file or tucked away in a zipped archive file.

I used InfoSnatch for one of my current research projects, investigating both traditional and alternative medical and health resources on the Internet. I was checking out the controversy over the herbal tea Essiac, which some groups promote as a cancer treatment. By using the Alta Vista search engine, I found there

Where to get it:

AskSam for Windows 3.0

askSam Systems
Box 1428
Perry, FL 32347
(800) 800-1997
<http://www.asksam.com/askSam.htm>

InfoSelect 3.0

Micro Logic
Box 70
Hackensack, NJ 07602
(201) 342-6518
<http://www.miclog.com>

InfoSnatch

Zoot Software
170 West Hill Road
Lincoln, VT 05443
<http://ourworld.compuServe.com/homepages/zoot>

Ecco Pro 3.0

Netmanage Ecco Division
2430 130th Ave. NE
Bellevue, WA, 98005
(206) 885-4272
<http://www.netmanage.com/netmanage/products/eccosum.html>

were more than two thousand references to Essiac on the World Wide Web. Anytime I found something on a Web page that I thought was worth saving, I highlighted the text. When I sent the information to the clipboard, InfoSnatch automatically pasted each new reference into its own InfoSnatch note, creating a complete notebook of Essiac references.

Ecco Pro 3.0

Ecco Pro is a contact manager, but is included here because it has some features of a text database manager. Ecco is based on an outliner. You start typing and use the arrow or tab keys to change the hierarchy of the outline. The outline can stand

alone, or can be tied to the contact manager/organizer aspects of Ecco.

Let's say you are writing a book or major project and you create it first on the outliner. You can then, if you wish, tie the outline to the calendar for planning purposes, writing purposes, or to remind yourself of your deadline. Thus it becomes a project manager as well.

The address book with Ecco Pro is fairly standard but does have some powerful search capabilities, especially if you customize it by adding keywords.

Ecco Pro is produced by Netmanage and it is designed to work with Netmanage's Chameleon Internet suite.

Using a text database—like a word

processor—is a matter of personal experience and taste, but there is enough choice that a journalist will find the one that is right for the job. The best advice is to check out company Web pages (see box) and decide for yourself.

Robin Rowland is a Toronto freelance writer. He works for CBC Television News and teaches Computer Assisted Reporting at Ryerson Polytechnic University School of Journalism. He is author of three books, Researching on the Internet (Prima), Undercover (Reed/McClelland and Stewart), and King of the Mob (Penguin).

Listserv users ponder edges of journalism

By RUSSELL CLEMINGS

When does a journalist stop being a journalist? Where lies the line between journalism and public relations?

To what extent should journalists—environmental journalists in particular—accept or even encourage criticism of their work? Also, what can—or should—they do if they feel the results are biased?

There are among the questions that were tossed around on the SEJ listserv in late March and early April as listserv users put the TJFR publishing and consulting group—and the fact that SEJ has counted at least two TJFR employees among its members at various times—under the microscope. (A listserv is a discussion list of Internet e-mail addresses. For more information on the SEJ members listserv, see *SEJournal* vol. 5, no. 2, Summer, 1995.)

TJFR is a New Jersey-based cottage industry that reports on reporters, mainly for business clients. Among its products are specialty newsletters on various branches of journalism, profiles of individual journalists, and seminars aimed at public relations people. It also does consulting, also mainly for business clients.

Earlier this year, SEJ's membership and online committees determined that TJFR's newsletter employees were eligible for SEJ membership—and access to the listserv—as long as they were not involved in the company's consulting work, or anything else that could be deemed public relations.

As a result, Rifka Rosenwein, an SEJ

active member and editor of TJFR's *Environmental News Reporter*, was given access to the SEJ listserv. Also, the listserv's governing policies were changed to bar subscribers, Rosenwein included, from sharing listserv postings with non-members, such as other TJFR employees. (See "Policy protects listserv privacy," page 14 of Spring 1996 *SEJournal*, for details.)

That was that.

Then, in late March, a story in Rosenwein's newsletter touched a nerve with SEJ member and listserv subscriber Peter Page of the *Trenton Times*. Page was critical of what he termed pro-corporate bias in the newsletter's review of SEJ's 1995 national conference.

"The newsletter is worth reading, if only to get a chance to see ourselves as others see us, and to get a candid look at the biases of the corporate PR types," Page wrote in a listserv posting.

Page noted that TJFR's coverage "dismissed (SEJ keynote speaker and Harvard biologist) E.O. Wilson, without even mentioning his name, as a 'long-winded luncheon speaker' who kept corporate CEOs waiting for half an hour before a handful of reporters trickled in to hear what the big men said in their panel discussion."

From there, however, discussions moved on to other, more prickly questions, such as: What information does TJFR include in its profiles on environmental reporters, and is it accurate? Also, notwithstanding bylaws and membership committee rulings, is there any

place in the SEJ membership for those who make their living by reporting on environmental reporters, especially when their main audience is the corporate public relations industry?

Opinions varied.

On the journalist profiles: "We collect information on people all the time," said SEJ member Paul Raeburn of *Business Week* magazine. "I don't think we want to be in the position of arguing that one can't keep a file on someone without getting his or her permission."

However, Page maintained that the subject of those profiles should be able to review them for accuracy: "This is something like a credit report, except that it is a credibility report, and it is common knowledge that credit bureaus make all sorts of errors that complicate the lives of innocent people."

Scott Powers of the *Columbus Dispatch* offered a lesson based on personal experience. Powers was the subject of a major story in TJFR's March newsletter in which his entire body of work for 1995 was reviewed. His first warning came one day before publication, when the review's author faxed him a copy to check for errors.

"While there were no substantial factual errors," Powers said, "the piece was chock-full of strange, misleading, and unsubstantiated observations, assumptions and conclusions about my work specifically and our profession in general. It was also terribly condescending."

In a subsequent post, Powers elabo-

rated: "I'm not opposed to careful, insightful criticism of journalists' work by PR groups. I welcome it ... (but) poorly concocted criticism can only muddy the waters, and that's why I took such strong exception to the piece done on me."

A day or two into these discussions, listserv manager Amy Gahran invited Rosenwein, who was already subscribed to the listserv, to respond. A few hours later (things happen fast in cyberspace) she did:

"I guess, as a journalist, one always likes to see one's stories being talked about," she said. But, she continued, "I feel frustrated because many of you have probably never seen our publications and are therefore talking somewhat in a vacuum ..."

"Our newsletters...are founded on the premise that journalists and journalism can and should be covered with the same level of scrutiny that journalists give to their own areas of coverage," Rosenwein said.

She concluded by offering a copy of

the newsletter to anyone who requested it. One week later, noting he had received several requests, TJFR chairman Dean Rotbart forwarded the March issue's stories to Gahran with permission for her to send them on to interested listserv subscribers. More than 40 SEJ members requested these articles.

Like most heated discussions on the listserv, this one dropped to a simmer after a week or two, and then subsided—but not without a clarifying word or two from the SEJ board members responsible for membership and the listserv.

SEJ vice president Rae Tyson, who chairs the membership committee, reaffirmed that SEJ admits journalists, academics, and students as members while excluding public relations professionals, lobbyists, and all others. (Non-members are welcome, however, to subscribe to *SEJournal*, attend SEJ's national conferences, or rent its membership mailing list.)

Referring specifically to Rosenwein's newsletter, Tyson then added, "Some of

you want us to exclude a publication because you don't like what they write. We say acceptability of content has never been a consideration for membership in SEJ."

Listserv manager Amy Gahran restated the basic policy governing listserv subscribers, with a caveat. First the policy: Nothing from the listserv may be shared with non-members without permission of its author. Period. Now the caveat: No policy is perfect, so think twice before posting something that could get you fired.

Russell Clemings is an SEJ board member and co-chair, with Amy Gahran, of SEJ's online committee. It should also be noted that he was a classmate of TJFR chairman Dean Rotbart at Northwestern University, and the two worked together on their college paper. In accordance with SEJ listserv policy, all quotes from listserv discussions used in this story are published with direct permission from the original authors.

Ohio water issues studied by region seven

A June 29 regional SEJ conference in Marietta, Ohio, entitled "Whose river is it?" opened with a challenge from Mary Stoertz, head of the Monday Creek restoration project in southeastern Ohio: define, for waterways, a public value that can be sold in a bar in Nelsonville, Ohio.

Seventeen SEJ members and other

journalists attended the Region 7 conference for Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia. They heard talks on a greenways development program in Louisville, Ky, a rivertown preservation effort in Sistrerville, WVa, and the lack of comprehensive river strategies in the Clean Water Act. They visited a contaminated wellfield, a federally-funded farm waste management project,

a sewage treatment plant using ultraviolet light treatment, and a CERCLA cleanup, all near river banks.

Keynoter Peter Kostmayer, former congressman and maverick U.S. EPA Region III administrator, closed by reiterating Stoertz's challenge: strive to define universally-accepted public values for rivers and streams.

Region one scrutinizes New England coast

Understanding pollution and New England's coastal environment was the theme of a regional SEJ meeting June 21 at the University of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay Campus. Co-sponsored by SEJ and URI's Graduate School of Oceanography, the daylong meeting featured speakers from state and federal agencies, environmental groups, fishermen's organizations, and URI. The conference drew 30 SEJ members and other writers and journalists from around New England.

A panel on the cost of environmental cleanups featured lively disagreement between Save the Bay's Fred Massie and Brian Bishop of the Rhode Island Wise

Use Movement over a costly new stormwater treatment system that would improve the health of the upper Narragansett Bay.

Local marine experts gave an update on the North Cape barge disaster, which spilled 828,000 gallons of heating oil on one of Rhode Island's most pristine wildlife areas in January. Dennis Nixon of URI said the oil barges have fewer safety measures than fishing boats and that reforms are being blocked by the shipping industry.

Other panels focused on the basics of water pollution science and future conflicts, including expansion of aquaculture, the fishing industry and global cli-

mate change.

Margaret Leinen, dean of the URI Graduate School of Oceanography, unveiled plans for URI's Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, a new program in which reporters could attend a specialized "summer camp" to pursue research projects in marine science, technology, and policy. The institute is still under development and is supported by *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*.

SEJ members Jackleen de La Harpe of URI, Geoff Oxnam of *Sailing World* magazine, and Peter Lord of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* organized the June event.

EPA takes a new look at cancer risks

BY SARA THURIN ROLLIN

For the first time in 10 years the Environmental Protection Agency is proposing new guidelines for its cancer risk assessments. The overhaul of the assessment process, released April 17, includes a new scheme for classifying the relative risks of cancer, a new approach to analyzing test data, and methods of estimating low-dose cancer risks.

Assuming all changes are implemented, the new guidelines should be in force sometime in the summer of 1997, requiring reporters and editors to learn a new language of cancer-causing potentials. At times

digging into the guidelines will be needed to explain why the federal government set a permit standard, ordered a high level of chemical cleanup, or required a Toxic Release Inventory report.

Among advances that spurred the new guidelines is the growth in molecular biology and metabolism studies. Scientific inquiry over the past decade has focused on tumors in laboratory animals caused by long-term exposure to certain chemicals. The proposals encourage using data from short-term toxicity studies to detect molecular damage that could result in cancer.

Another major science-based change

is EPA's recognition that there may be threshold threats for some pollutants, meaning that doses below that threshold may pose no danger of cancer.

The method of ranking materials for cancer-causing potential would be changed as well. Under the proposal, EPA scientists would write a two-page description of the cancer hazard, listing cancer-causing potential as either "known/likely," "cannot be determined," or "not likely."

This would replace the complicated letter-number system of labeling a substance "Class A," (a known carcinogen), or Class "B2," (probably carcinogenic to humans

but with little evidence to back it up).

EPA cancer risk assessment guidelines have wide application beyond federal government policies. State governments may follow them in formulating state regulation; a bank may refer to them in deciding whether to issue a loan for food grown with pesticide application; lawsuits over cancers possibly caused by exposure to chemicals may pivot on EPA's assessment of the cancer risk.

Sara Thurin Rollin is a reporter for the Bureau of National Affairs.

Science Survey

offers a review of selected environmental science and policy issues in the news

References on Risk Assessment

Reporting on Risk: A Journalists Handbook, by Michael A. Kamrin, Dolores Katz, and Martha Walter, 1995, published by Michigan Sea Grant Communications; (313) 764-1138.

The Reporter's Environmental Handbook, by Bernadette West, Peter Sandman, Michael Greenberg, 1995, published by Rutgers University Press; (908) 445-7762 x 635.

Where to find EPA guidelines

The proposed guidelines were published in the *Federal Register* on April 22, 1996 (61 FR 17960). They also are available on the Internet via the EPA/Office of Research and Development web homepage [<http://www.epa.gov/ord>].

The lead EPA staff member for the guideline project, Jeanette Wiltse, can be reached at (202) 260-7317. Regina Langton in EPA's press office also may be a helpful resource (202) 260-4376.

Junk science...from page 13

ty, and their deeply held respect for the scientific method, many scientists are reluctant to make the kind of unequivocal statements typically sought by the media.

Without the time or training to appreciate the subtleties of the debate, or to closely track the dialogue among the scientists themselves, some journalists, and ultimately the public, may end up feeling confused and misled.

Distinguishing legitimate attempts to refine the science from questionable assertions is a difficult assignment. Your job is made even harder when you are confronted with sophisticated, veiled campaigns deliberately waged to confuse the issues. While I don't envy your task of sorting all

this out for your readers, listeners or viewers, I offer a few tips:

- Avoid making generalizations about the conclusions of scientists when only one is quoted.
- Ask scientists whether their reports have been published in objective journals or peer-reviewed.
- Indicate the relative standing, affiliation, or track record of the different scientists quoted in the story.
- Ask scientists about the funding sources for their work and the steps they have taken to assure the objectivity of their findings.
- Consult a variety of scientists with relevant expertise to interpret the scientific data on a given issue.

• Identify, collect and use as references the major "milestone" studies which point to current scientific consensus on a given issue.

Of course, there is no sure way to smoke out junk science. However, our country faces some tough decisions on how to deal with the risks of climate change and other environmental challenges. Policy makers and the public depend on you to keep them properly informed. And we especially need you to weigh carefully how you choose and use scientific sources in your coverage.

Howard Ris is executive director of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

Into the heart of black gold

AMAZON STRANGER: A RAINFOREST CHIEF BATTLES BIG OIL
by Mike Tidwell
Lyons and Burford, \$22.95

Reviewed by GEORGE HOMSY

Author Mike Tidwell's amazing adventure starts peacefully enough. While researching a story on ecotourism, he hears about an odd Indian chief. A son of American missionaries, born in the jungle, had become the leader of a small community of Cofan Indians.

Perhaps the most tantalizing part of the tale is the chief's battle against oil company incursions of the Amazon preserve which the Cofan call home. First, he leads his people deeper into the jungle, away from the destruction. Then he fights, sometimes with threats, more often in the

media, against the environmental devastation brought by oil exploration.

Unable to resist this story, seemingly ripped from the world of Joseph Conrad, Tidwell travels into the Amazon seeking the blond Indian chief. The more he hears, the more intrigued he becomes with this man of two worlds.

Not far into the book, Tidwell meets his quarry, Randy Borman. Then the exploration really begins. Tidwell spends time with the chief, his family and the people of the Cofan community. Detailed and engrossing descriptions bring to life the daily hunting, fishing, and gathering routine of the Cofan.

But Tidwell's greatest energy is spent trying to understand chief Borman. Despite his sympathy for the man, Tidwell recognizes the leader's many contradictions.

Randy Borman is inconsistent. He is moody. Smiles and frowns come in streaks with him. All of which actually makes a strange world of sense when one considers that nothing in his life is consistent. Nothing. It is as if being half-Western and half-Cofan in his personality left him predisposed to be on both sides of every divide, constantly crossing back and forth, never content to act the same, to hold the same views, to be the same person all the time.

In his battles, Borman says he wants to steer clear of violence, yet he condones the burning of an oil drilling platform. He claims to protect the ancient way of life he has adopted. Then he secures solar panels to illuminate his village at night. Between the onslaught of the oil company and the changes brought by their white chief,

Tidwell rightly wonders whether the jungle lifestyle Borman wants to protect really exists anymore.

Still, it is the oil explorers who are the real agents of destruction in Tidwell's book and the author is vivid and vehement in his disdain for them and the changes they have caused in the jungle.

...we entered the outskirts of Lago Agrio, Texaco's once-small jungle headquarters founded by those men from the sky twenty-five years ago. The place was today a very bad hallucination of a city, squalid and nearly treeless, jammed full in frontier slum fashion with a population of 15,000 people, a good quarter of whose women were prostitutes servicing the run of oil men passing through. Merchants along the oil-splashed main street sold shotguns by the discount dozen and dynamite by the quarter stick. Others offered stuffed macaws with haunting marble eyes and giant tarantulas pickled in the Colombian whiskey.

Tidwell's descriptions and storytelling skill make this a fast-paced environmental adventure. More importantly, the gripping journey detailed in *Amazon Stranger* puts a face on the grim scientific and human rights stories we so often report on from afar.

George Homsy is coordinating producer of "Living On Earth" broadcast on National Public Radio.

Photo: Mike Tidwell and friend

Border muck...from page 12

Ministry of the Environment. Of particular concern, he said, is Mexico's lack of a right-to-know law requiring companies to publicly reveal which hazardous materials they use and how they dispose of them.

NAFTA could soon make life worse for border residents. According to activist Domingo Gonzalez of the Texas Center for Policy Studies in Brownsville, maquiladoras are beginning to move deeper into Mexico, which means the border region may have to deal with its massive

pollution and weak infrastructure while losing its economic base and grappling with high unemployment. It is crucial, he said, that there be open discussion by government officials, scientists, journalists, NGOs, and the public about what is happening along the border.

In the past, he said, poor communication led to suspicions of cover-ups and conspiracies. Under NAFTA the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) was created to foster exchange of

information with the public. So far, Gonzalez said, the BECC does not appear to be up to the job.

Karen F. Schmidt is a freelance writer based in North Carolina and a frequent contributor to New Scientist, Science and other magazines. She writes often about environmental health issues and was one of the SEJ Arizona Fellowship winners.

Media on the Move

Two Pulitzer Prizes were awarded for environmental writing. **Melanie Sill**, **Pat Stith**, and **Joby Warrick** of the *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer* won for their reporting on the health and environmental risks of the state's growing hog industry. Also, *New York Times* editorial writer **Robert Semple** won for his series on protecting Western public lands.

John Wasik, senior editor at *Consumer's Digest* magazine in Chicago, was awarded the Donald Robinson memorial prize for investigative journalism by the American Society of Journalists and Authors.

Exploring the diversity of microscopic life won *National Public Radio's* **David Baron** the first American Society for Microbiology Public Communications Award. His report aired on *NPR's* weekly environmental program, "Living On Earth".

Professor (and SEJ founding president) **Jim Detjen's** extensive career in journalism was recognized recently by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. In April, he received the school's highest alumni honor, the 1996 Columbia Journalism Alumni Association Award. Since 1995, Detjen has been sitting in the Knight Chair in Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University.

Business Week's new senior editor for Science and Technology, **Paul Raeburn**, hopes to broaden the weekly magazine's environmental coverage. Sure, he does more editing than writing now, but still he says, "It will be nice to see a story through to the printed page." That's a rare feeling for Raeburn, who spent the last 15 years filing down a wire for *Associated Press*.

Envirothugs beware. You'll get double coverage from two SEJ members. **Ludmilla Lelis**, of the *Orlando (FL) Sentinel*, divides her beat between environment and police. She spent the last two years at the *Ashbury Park Press* in New Jersey.

For the *Press Enterprise* in Bloomsbury, PA, **Susan Schwartz** covers conservation and cops. Plus she writes about education. Schwartz recently moved over from the *Portsmouth (OH) Daily Times*.

Peter Dykstra is the new Senior

Producer for *CNN's* Environment Unit. He was its Senior News Editor. Those shoes have now been filled by **Diane Hawkins-Cox**.

Also in Atlanta, **Jim Morris**, **Natalie Pawelski**, **Brad Abramson** and **Miranda Hitti** were all promoted to environment unit producers.

The team is pretty busy. With Executive Producer **Teya Ryan**, they oversee "Earth Matters" on *CNN* and "Network Earth" on *TBS*. Earlier this year the two shows developed separate identities, with "Earth Matters" focusing on breaking environmental news. The unit also produces *CNN's* daily coverage of the environment. And, they are developing a new one hour general news magazine program for *CNN* and *TBS*.

Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsy

Since last fall, producer **Eric Coli** has been chief prospector for "Dateline" (*NBC*). He heads a story development staff of four people who survey smaller market newspapers for national stories. "Greenbeat", in the *SEJournal*, "is a goldmine" he reports. Fax him your scoops at (212) 664-4775.

In August, freelancer **Jeff Gailus** heads back to Hungary. He's following his wife, a professional basketball player for a Hungarian Club Team. Gailus just wrapped up as editor of a newsletter for the Regional Environmental Center in Budapest.

After a decade of freelance writing, **David Tenebaum** is now a staff writer for *The Why Files*, an on-line magazine published by the National Institute for Science Education at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The project lures readers into reading science by covering the 'why' angle behind the headlines of stories such as the Oklahoma bombings, mosquito infestations, and inter-species organ transplants. Check it out at <<http://whyfiles.news.wisc.edu>>.

Brazil-based freelancer **Bill Hinchberger** has been elected president of the Foreign Correspondents Association of Sao Paulo. Since 1986 he's covered Latin America for numerous

business and economic magazines. His email address is: <hinch@ax.apc.org>.

"Like most journalists, I steered clear of sciences in college." That's an oversight **Robert Taylor** of the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* hopes to rectify this fall when he studies conservation biology and ecosystems as a John S. Knight Fellow at Stanford University. One of his classmates will be **Joan Laatz Jewett**, a Portland-based reporter for the *Oregonian*. Her focus will be ecology writing and the psychology of change.

On the right coast, more journalists are taking time out to learn at MIT's Knight Science Fellowship program. **William Allen** of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* is a little scared about life without the daily deadlines. "I might start shaking," he reports. (Hopefully not before he finishes his book on a tropical forest restoration project.) His fellow fellows include **Nancy Bazilchuk** of the *Burlington (VT) Free Press*; **Ruth Flanagan**, a freelance writer and contributing editor for *Earth* magazine; **Mark Grossi**, an environmental writer for the *Fresno Bee*; **Asako Murakami**, an environmental writer for the *Japan Times*; and **Gary Taubes**, a freelance journalist and contributing correspondent for *Science* magazine.

Head to your bookstores now! **Phil Shabecoff** discusses the twin dilemma of environmental degradation and economic inequity in his latest book, *A New Name for Peace: International Environmentalism, Sustainable Development and Democracy*, published by the University Press of New England.

Agricultural sustainability is the focus of **Russell Clemings'** new book, *Mirage: The False Promise of Desert Agriculture*, published by Sierra Club Books. His web site is <<http://www.cris.com/~clemings>>.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR WORLD? Change jobs? Win an award? Start a fellowship? Writing a book? Let us know. Send any professional news about you or your colleagues to: George Homsy, Living On Earth, 8 Story Street, Cambridge, MA, 02138-4956; tel: (617) 868-8810; fax: (617) 868-8659; Email: <ghomsy@world.std.com>.

JULY

22–24. International Low-Level (radioactive) Waste Conference (sponsored by the Electric Power Research Institute). New Orleans. Contact: Michele Samoulides, EPRI, 3412 Hillview Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304. Ph: (415) 855-2127; fax: (414) 855-2041; e-mail: msamouli@epri.com

23–25. International Conference on Environmentally Conscious Design and Manufacturing. Cleveland. Contact: James Englehardt, University of Miami, P.O. Box 248294, Coral Gables, FL 33124-0630. Ph: (305) 284-5557.

30–Aug. 2. Integrated Management of Surface and Ground Water (sponsored by the Universities Council on Water Resources). San Antonio. Contact: Wayne Jordan, Program Chair, Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843- 2118. Ph: (409) 845-1851; e-mail: twri@twri.tamu.edu

AUGUST

6–8. International Aerospace Environmental Technology Conference (with sessions on less polluting aerospace technologies, including the replacement of ozone-destroying compounds). Huntsville. Contact: Renee Jackson, Wilson Hall, Rm. 129, University of Alabama in Huntsville, Huntsville, AL 35899-0700. Ph: (205) 895-6372.

12–17. Integrated Management and Sustainable Development in Coastal Zones (sponsored by the University of Quebec and Coastal Zone Canada Association). Rimouski, Quebec, Canada. Contact: Mohammed El-Sabh, CZC '96 Conference Secretariat, Group de recherche en environnement cotier (CREDC), Université du Québec, 310 allée des Ursulines, Rimouski, Quebec, Canada G5L 3A1. Ph: (418) 724-1701; fax: (418) 724-1842; e-mail: mohammed_el-sabh@uqar.quebec.ca

18–23. International Meeting on Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Management (sponsored by the American Nuclear Society and others). Seattle. Contact: Jodi Amaya, SPECTRUM '96, P.O. Box 941, Richland, WA 99352. Ph: (509) 372-4337.

20–22. Pecora 13: Human Interactions with the Environment: Perspectives from Space. Sioux Falls, SD. Contact: Pecora 13 Symposium, P.O. Box 1607, Sioux Falls, SD. 57198-1607. e-mail: pecora13@edcserver1.cr.usgs.gov; Web: <http://edcwww.cr.usgs.gov/pecora13.html>

22–25. International Joint Commission's Biennial Meeting on Great Lakes Water Quality (with sessions on role of biodiversity in sustainable development, effects of toxic contaminants on human health, and air toxics). Duluth, MN/Superior, WI. Contact: Frank Bevacqua, IJC, 1250 23rd St., NW, Ste. 100, Washington, DC 20440. Ph: (202) 736-9024; fax: (202) 736-9015; e-mail: bevacquaf@ijc.achilles

25–29. Sustainable Fisheries: Economics, Ecology, and Ethics (this year's annual meeting of the American Fisheries Society). Dearborn, MI. Contact: Paul Brouha, Exec. Dir.,

American Fisheries Society, 5410 Grosvenor La., Ste. 110, Bethesda, MD 20814. Ph: (301) 897- 8616.

23–31. Profiting from Energy Efficiency. Pacific Grove, CA. Contact: Katherine Gallagher, American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy, Summer Study Office, 2140 Shattuck Ave., Ste. 202, Berkeley, CA 94704. Ph: (510) 549-9914; fax: (510) 549-9984; e-mail: katherine_gallagher%ace3-hq@ccmail.pnl.gov

SEPTEMBER

9–11. Third International Conference on Carbon Dioxide Removal. Cambridge, MA. Contact: ICCDR-3 Secretariat, c/o Anne Carbone, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Energy Laboratory, Rm. E40-469, 1 Amherst St., Cambridge, MA 02139-4307. Ph: (617) 253- 8296; fax: (617) 253-8013; e-mail: hjherzog@mit.edu

15–19. Partnerships to Develop and Apply Biomass Technologies: Bioenergy '96 (with sessions on commercial applications of these new technologies and tests of pilot scale processes). Nashville. Contact: Bonnie Watkins, US Department of Energy Southeastern Regional Biomass Energy Program, Tennessee Valley Authority, CEB 3A, P.O. Box 1010, Muscle Shoals, AL. 35662-1010. Ph: (205) 386-3086.

18–20. Connections: Transportation, Wetlands, and the Natural Environment. Tacoma, WA. Contact: Judy Stratton, Conference Coordinator, WSDOT Environmental Affairs, P.O. Box 47331, Olympia, WA. 98504-7331. e-mail: stratton@wsdot.wa.gov

OCTOBER

6–9. Carcinogenesis from Environmental Pollution: Assessment of Human Risk and Strategies for Prevention (sponsored by the American Association for Cancer Research and International Agency for Research on Cancer, it will host sessions on state-of-the-art research, and take place in an area of the world where pollutant levels have been traditionally high—Central Europe). Budapest, Hungary. Contact: AARC, Public Ledger Bldg., Ste. 816, 150 S. Independence Mall West, Philadelphia, PA 19106-3483. Ph: (215) 440-9300; fax: (215) 440- 9313.

9–10. Sustainable Low-Slope Roofing Workshop (sponsored by Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Buildings Technology Center, this program will investigate the concept of "green" or environmentally friendly roofing materials). Oak Ridge, TN. Contact: Regina Parks, ORNL, P.O. Box 2008, Bldg. 3147, MS-6070, Oak Ridge, TN 37831. Ph: (423) 574-4345; fax: (423) 574- 9338; e-mail: parksrr@ornl.gov

15–17. Superfund XVII (with sessions on RCRA reform, bioremediation, brownfields, groundwater contamination, and "turning a contaminated site from a negative to a positive asset"). Washington DC. Contact: E.J. Krause & Associates, 7315 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814. (301) 986-7800; fax to EJK: (301) 986-4538; Web: <http://www.ejkrause.com/enviroshows>

Green Beat Correspondents

Contribute to Green Beat

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

To submit ideas or copies of series for possible mention in The Green Beat, consult the following list and contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s). They are:

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

Alaska—Vacant.

Arizona and New Mexico—Vacant

Arkansas—Vacant

California:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Florida:

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

South Florida—William Howard at the *Palm Beach Post*, 2751 S. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach FL, 33405, (407) 820-4417.

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

Hawaii—Joan Conrow at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Kava'i Bureau, P.O. Box 3404, Lihue, HI, 96776, (808) 828-0620.

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

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

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

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

Kentucky—Vacant.

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

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

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

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

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

Missouri—Tom Uhlenbrock, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 900 N. Tucker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63101, (314) 340-8128.

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

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

New Jersey—Peter Page at the *Trenton Times*, 513 Berwyn Road, Morrisville, PA, 19067, (609) 989-5701.

New York—Carol Kaplan at *WGRZ-TV*, 259 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY, 14202, (716) 849-5756, Fax: (716) 849-5706.

Nevada—Mary Manning at the *Las Vegas Sun*, 800 S. Valley View Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107, (702) 259-4065 or Jon Christiansen of *Great Basin News*, 6185 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704, (702) 882-3990.

Ohio, Indiana—Charlie Prince at *Ohio*

Environmental Reporter, 516 Ludlow Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45220, (513) 221-0954.

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

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

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

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

Texas and Oklahoma:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Greenbeat correspondents needed

Please note openings for correspondents in several states. If you are interested in filling one of these volunteer positions, please contact Kevin Carmody at (312) 229-2814. Positions are open to any SEJ member, though preference will be given to working journalists or educators.

ALABAMA

► Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) continue to be a problem in Anniston, where a Monsanto plant produced the persistent chemicals for more than 40 years. Monsanto has bought several dozen homes in a neighborhood next to the plant, where PCB contamination was discovered in the soil last year. At the same time, the state has broadened a “no consumption” fish advisory to include part of Lake Logan Martin, where PCB levels in fish exceed federal tolerance levels. For more information, call Tom Spencer at (334) 264-8711, or Elizabeth Pezzullo at (205) 236-1551.

► In Mobile, plans for millions of dollars worth of new development are going ahead on Dauphin Island—a barrier island in Mobile Bay—even after the *Mobile Register* revealed that maps show that storms have periodically wiped out parts of the island in past decades. For more information, call Michael Hardy at (334) 434-8574.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► A war between environmentalists and an Episcopal congregation over one of the last tracts of old-growth forest in the Washington area has ended peacefully. St. Barnabas Church was bequeathed the wooded tract in Prince George’s County, MD, from a parishioner who died in 1959. His will stipulated that the trees never be cut down. But the church and the Episcopal Diocese of Washington tried to develop the land. When that plan failed, they tried to log and sell the property. This enraged environmentalists within and outside the denomination. *Washington Post* metro reporter Susan Saulny wrote June 14 that state officials intervened and agreed to buy the woodland for \$2.5 million. Two conservation groups also agreed to chip in \$500,000 toward the purchase. The church will funnel the money into an endowment for retired clergy. The land will be used for recreation. Saulny may be reached at (301) 952-1391.

► Four environmental reporters at the Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., are sharing a newsletter journalism award from the National Press Club. In June, they won honorable mention for a

February 1995 analysis of regulatory relief legislation considered in the early days of the 104th Congress. A bulk of the report focused on how Contract With America legislation would affect environmental standard setting. Among the seven BNA reporters sharing the prize were four SEJ members: Brian Broderick, Cheryl Hogue, and Katie Stimmel of *Daily Environment Report*; and Sara Thurin Rollin of *Chemical Regulation Reporter*.

FLORIDA

► The *Florida Times-Union* examined Jacksonville’s history of growth management and reported that city officials had refused to make the hard choices necessary to deal with population growth. The result has been traffic slowdowns, less green space and unused infrastructure in some parts of the city. The state’s landmark Growth Management Act of 1985 was little help. In Duval County, 165 square miles of land was zoned for housing under the plan. That’s enough room to accommodate 2.1 million people, about three times the number who now live in the county. For more information, call Steve Patterson at (904) 359-4263

► A range of publications took issue in June with the leadership of the state Department of Environmental Protection under its secretary, Virginia Wetherell. *Florida Trend*, a monthly business magazine, and *The Gainesville Sun* reported criticism of the ecosystems management program touted by Wetherell. *Florida Environments*, a monthly environmental newspaper, called on Wetherell to resign for her role in the dismantling of DEP’s wetlands permitting division. The *St. Petersburg Times* reported a decline of enforcement cases and layoffs of department attorneys under DEP’s new cooperative attitude with regulated interests. Contact Dave Newport at (352) 373-1401.

IDAHO

► In April the *Idaho Statesman* ran a comprehensive look at the environment as an election issue. SEJ member Jonathan Brinckman talked with a host of Idahoans from across the political spectrum who all expressed concern about their quality of life and environmental issues. Water quality and forest issues are important in the state where Snake River salmon are endangered and big game hunting is pop-

ular. Contact Jonathan Brinckman, (209) 377-6200

► The *Idaho Falls (ID) Post Register* did a series of stories outlining major problems facing Yellowstone National Park. Dan Egan reported in March that air quality in Yellowstone in the winter was worse than many urban areas due to thousands of two-stroke snowmobile engines along the park’s roads. The air pollution has even become a health hazard for park employees. In June Egan reported how Yellowstone’s budget crisis is leading to deteriorating park roads, facilities and landmarks. Contact Brandon Loomis, (208) 522-1800.

ILLINOIS

► The concept of a “Chicago Wilderness” has been greeted with a tepid response by the major Chicago dailies. Organized by a consortium of environmental groups led by the Nature Conservancy, the principle would be to restore huge “greenbelts” of Chicago prairie and wetlands throughout the metropolitan area—including areas within the city. Both Chicago papers buried the story inside.

► Meanwhile, *The Chicago Tribune* has been featuring conservation pieces on its front page. On July 2, the daily had a feature on restoring Grizzly bears to the North Woods. On June 4, an article on closing off a cave (near Peru, IL) that was home to 24,000 brown bats was featured. Contact Dion Haynes, (213) 460-3965.

► Both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Daily Southtown* have been closely covering plans by Will County, Ill., to establish a mega-landfill next to the nation’s newest national park, the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The *Southtown* published a five-day, 15-part series beginning April 14 that detailed apparent misconduct by officials responsible for selecting an operator for the proposed landfill, located near Joliet. The *Southtown’s* coverage, by former *UPI* Bosnian War correspondent Dan Yovich and environment/health writer Kevin Carmody, has triggered a grand jury investigation headed by the state attorney general and prompted the firing of the assistant state’s attorney overseeing the

selection process. Despite lingering questions about the environmental suitability of the site and the criminal backgrounds of some bidders, as of late June Detroit-based City Management Corp. was poised to win the contract, which could be worth \$1 billion over 36 years. The *Chicago Tribune's* Bob Merifield has also broken significant stories, revealing the role that U.S. Rep. Jerry Weller (R-Ill.) or his staff played in the secret meetings that brought City Management into the competition late in the process. Contact Kevin Carmody, (312) 229-2814.

MISSOURI

► A loophole in an anti-ATV law is allowing off-road vehicle enthusiasts from around the Midwest to jam one of the Missouri Ozarks' best float streams. A 1990 law makes it illegal to drive motorized vehicles for recreation in Missouri's streams and rivers. Conservation Department research indicated vehicles tear up stream banks and harm fish and other creatures that live and breed in the gravel beds. The loophole allows off-road vehicles to cross streams "at such road crossings as are customary or part of the highway system." Jamie Parks, owner of the Parks Bluff Campground, got the county prosecutor to agree that since off-roaders have been crossing the river at her campgrounds for years, those crossings are "customary." State officials counter that there is no road and that the off-roaders are merely crossing from one gravel bar to another. Thousands of people now jam the river, making it nearly impossible for canoeists to get by. Contact *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* environment writer Tom Uhlenbrock, at (314) 340-8128.

► Apparently trying to sidestep public concern, the Missouri Conservation Department has taken the first step toward allowing Doe Run Co., a lead mining firm, to do exploratory drilling for lead, copper and zinc in state-owned forests in the southeast Missouri Ozarks. Department commissioners voted in June to authorize negotiations for a prospecting permit and lease with Doe Run. The company has requested permits for tracts totaling 7,080 acres. Much of the land is undeveloped and was purchased in 1991 by The Nature Conservancy from Kerr-McGee Corp., then sold to the department. At the time, both the Conservancy

and the department described the land as one of the richest ecosystems in the Midwest. The vote to negotiate the permit was not included on the scheduled agenda of the commissioners' meeting, and was not in a news release on action taken. Contact environment writer Tom Uhlenbrock, at (314) 340-8128.

TENNESSEE

► In January, the *Nashville Tennessean* reported that foxes brought into Tennessee from North Dakota for sport hunting are carriers of *Echinococcus multilocularis*, a tapeworm that can be passed to humans and is usually fatal. To prevent the parasite from spreading, most other southeastern states have already banned importation of foxes. Contact reporter Anne Paine at (615) 259-8071.

► Because of logging restrictions in the Pacific Northwest, timber harvesting in the South has accelerated. But Southern timber companies are cutting trees faster than they're growing them. The December 24th edition of *The Commercial Appeal* featured an extensive article by reporter Tom Charlier on clearcutting in Tennessee's Wayne County. Charlier can be reached at (901) 529-2572.

► With the highest waterfall in the eastern United States (256 feet), Fall Creek Falls is considered the jewel of Tennessee's state park system. But plans by the Skyline Coal Co. to build a mine less than 6 miles from the park have led environmentalists to seek federal protection for the park's watershed and "viewshed." Acidic runoff from the mine could contaminate the park's network of underground springs and caves. Tom Charlier reported this story on January 15th.

► In early February, leaks in an eight-inch-diameter pipeline operated by Colonial Pipeline Company caused more than 60,000 gallons of fuel oil to spill down the side of Lookout Mountain, a popular tourist attraction in East Tennessee. Van Henderson reported in the *Chattanooga Free Press* that the cleanup may take several years. Henderson's number is (423) 757-6408.

WASHINGTON

Karen Dorn Steele of *The Spokane Spokesman-Review* has been reporting on

the plans of Dawn Mining Co., a subsidiary of Newmont Mining Co. of Denver, to import mildly contaminated uranium wastes from the East Coast to a defunct uranium mill near Ford, Washington. Washington state gave Dawn a permit for the long-haul plan, but the U.S. Department of Energy is balking, uncertain it wants to ship Cold War discards from Missouri and New York across the nation for final burial in Eastern Washington.

► Dorn Steele also reported on the fate of several Hanford whistleblowers that Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary honored in Washington D.C two years ago. All three have recently been fired or laid off, and Dorn Steele's June 16 story questioned whether O'Leary was keeping her commitment to whistleblowers.

► In a copyright June 30 story, Dorn Steele reported on a new study by a Russian scientist that challenges the conclusions of a \$27 million U.S. government study on Hanford's past radiation releases. Dr. Alex Klementiev says airborne plutonium releases from Hanford may be 1,000 times greater than the 1-ounce estimate in the government's 1994 dose reconstruction study. His reassessment is based on a recently-declassified 1961 study of Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant by former University of Washington professor George Brabb. Brabb found that double layers of filters in the Hanford plant (also called Z Plant, which today houses 3.9 tons of finished plutonium) were failing to contain fine plutonium particles. Some of them—including several pounds—in 1961 may have gone up the stack, Brabb said. Susan Drumheller, also of the *Spokesman-Review*, has been covering the controversy over the toxic metals moving from Idaho's Silver Valley mining district into Lake Coeur d'Alene and on to Spokane via the Spokane River. During winter flooding, 20 years' worth of lead washed out of old mine tailings and into the watershed in a single day. Much of the lead settles on the bottom of the lake. A U.S. Geological Survey scientist who studies the problem worries that if abundant nutrients are added to the lake, the change in chemistry will allow the lead to become part of the water column and it will move downstream to Spokane. The mining industry, mean-

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while, hired a British Columbia scientist to refute that notion. For more information, call Dorn Steele at (509) 459-5462.

WEST VIRGINIA

► The state Supreme Court agreed to hear *The Charleston Gazette's* appeal of a circuit court ruling which allowed some documents concerning tax breaks for a new pulp and paper mill proposed for West Virginia to remain secret. The *Gazette's* Freedom of Information Act lawsuit has already forced state officials to reveal many previously confidential deals with the developers. Call Ken Ward Jr. at (304) 348-1702 for information.

► Newspapers and television in Charleston have been paying a lot of attention to a proposal by Charleston Area Medical Center to build a new medical waste incinerator near the downtown area.

Call Ward for more information.

WISCONSIN

► SEJ members received a letter in early June from the Madison-based authors of a book criticizing the public relations industry. In the letter, Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber took "Strong Exception" to a story written by *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* environment reporter Don Behm. Behm had challenged some of Rampton's and Stauber's statements in their book, *Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*. (See **Letter**, p. 3.) Stauber and Rampton insist their comments about a fertilizer produced from local sewage sludge are correct. Call Don Behm at (414) 224-2325.

► Six weeks later than originally planned, The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources held a reporters forum

in late May. The topic was environmental aspects of agriculture issues, and featured DNR Secretary George Meyer. But only four reporters (three newspapers, one radio) attended. Contact Chuck Quirnbach at (414) 227-2040.

► Several conservative radio talk show hosts attempted to blame some of this year's increase in gasoline prices on the mandate to use reformulated gas in some ozone non-attainment areas such as southeastern Wisconsin. Meanwhile, the Wisconsin DNR again asked for the media's help in promoting ride sharing and other means of cutting air pollution on days when high ozone levels were expected. For more information, contact Dale Darrow, Wisconsin DNR, (414) 263-8659

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