

# SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

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## Hades has only one environmental problem

# War: Hell gets worse

By RAE TYSON

Throughout history, wars have been waged for a variety of economic, political and religious reasons. Historically, the impact of those skirmishes has usually been measured in victories and defeats. The devastation, when assessed, usually focused on lost lives and damaged infrastructure.

But the equation changed after Vietnam when natives and soldiers were seriously sickened by the potent defoliant Agent Orange. And it was reinforced when Saddam Hussein's forces torched Kuwaiti oil wells and destroyed pipelines, unleashing millions of gallons of raw crude into the Persian Gulf.

So, in 1999, it is not surprising that journalists and activists alike are looking closely at the environmental destruction that accompanied the war in Kosovo. "The natural and life environment of (Yugoslavia), known for its riches and

*"War is hell."*

*William Tecumseh Sherman*

versatility is of an enormous importance for Europe and the world today, and now it is a subject of inconceivable pollution and destruction," said Yugoslavian scientist Momir Komatina in an e-mail from the war-torn region.

Indeed, the SEJ listserv was buzzing with information throughout the war as journalists traded information with each other and with scientists and activists on the front lines. And many agree there was a great deal at stake, given the pre-war environment in Yugoslavia. "Yugoslavia is one of the world's 10 richest countries for its biodiversity," said agronomist Luka Radoja. "Now, I am witness to the disappearing of the most beautiful garden of Europe."

Though the long-term impact is uncertain, scientists and journalists documented an array of environmental problems during the Balkan conflict and

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## Teaching flowery prose

### Journalism training includes outdoor labs

By MICHAEL E. ABRAMS

Sometimes it's good to get off the fast track and smell the flowers. That's what I'm preaching to my journalism students.

The roots go back many years to when I was a young reporter who knew just about everything. I came across a yellow butterfly on a bright red and orange flower cluster in the weeds. It was only a block from the newspaper building and a photographer took a beautiful picture.

Problem. We didn't know what the butterfly was, or the

**Student drawing of Venus plant**

flower. We showed the picture to our gruff old-timey editor who loved to roam the national forests in his jeep, and could write about politicians, trees, spiders, and assorted creatures of the land.

"Why that flower's a butterfly weed," said Malcolm Johnson, who thought we ought to know such things. He had rescued so many plants from the tractors with his Upsy-Daisy Plant Uplift Society that Charles Kuralt came to interview him in Tallahassee.

The cranky old conservative taught us young whippersnappers

*(Continued on page 20)*



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# And the beat goes on

I couldn't help but think of the recent disturbing news: Two of the nation's leading newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, are currently without full-time national environment writers.

The thought came to me as I sat in a university classroom in Missoula, Mont., listening to more than a dozen enthusiastic SEJ members discuss the future of environmental journalism and SEJ.

The scene and my thoughts didn't make sense. How could more than a dozen busy, daily journalists take time to travel to Montana to discuss environmental journalism and SEJ, while the nation's top newspapers ignored the beat?

Before I go on with how I've squared those thoughts, let me make something clear. I suspect that both the *Post* and the *Times* will someday soon have to fill those jobs. Of course, I'd applaud that for I firmly believe that every news organization must have at least one full-time environment reporter if it expects to competently cover the beat, especially if it wants to be a leader in its coverage.

I suspect those newspapers will soon realize the practical problem of not having a reporter assigned full-time to the beat. It leaves quite a void. The topic, so complex and varied and, sometimes, confusing, may consume the time of many other reporters in those newspapers' Washington bureaus if someone isn't dedicated to the subject. In other words, one full-time environment writer may be worth about three others part-time.

But the newspapers' slow movement to fill those posts does make me wonder.

I fear we do have a problem on the beat. Some of it is misperception, not so much with the public but with our own colleagues, most often editors; and some of it is our own failure. A little of each came up with the SEJ members in Montana.

Here's how I see our failure. Too often, I fear, environment stories are long, complex and often without a conclusion. We RAISE great concerns. But we seldom find the answers. (I sound like an editor, don't I?)

What's more, some of the beat's standard fare is hackneyed. There are the

residents fearful of their water tainted by a nearby dump, while regulators assess the possibility. That story usually begins with the residents' concerns and ends with a question.

I am not advocating that we ignore these people, their concerns, and the potential threats of hazardous waste on ground water or drinking water. I'd just like to see more of us find new ways to address those stories. It's not enough to find the people or their potential problem. The challenge comes in conveying their story in a way that makes people—and that includes editors—care.

## Report from the society's president

By  
Mike  
Mansur



How has their struggle to understand their pollution threat changed them? How is their story different from the millions of other residents who live next to hazardous waste dumps? And what does it say about the programs the public's representatives have set up to protect these people?

Or take, as an example, the best-selling book *A Civil Action*. I met its author, Jonathan Harr, recently in Kansas City. He told me he first thought about writing the story from the viewpoint of the families in Woburn, Mass., but then realized it was a story told many times before. He settled on the lawyer. He'd show how the case had changed his life.

He's used a narrative to tell that story—a technique that takes much time (in Harr's case, eight years). But it works, for narratives, truly, are journeys. And journeys are the foundation of journalism. The word's root, after all, comes from journal and journey. We are

journalists, which means we should take people on journeys.

The topic of the environment—as broad, complex, misunderstood and evocative as it is—provides the source of many journeys, whether they be through the halls of a lawyer or regulator's office, up a winding river to its source or into an old mine and its wastes.

Too much national newspaper coverage, I believe, has concentrated on the matters inside the Beltway, inside the halls of the vast bureaucracies that oversee the nation's environmental regulations. Sure, these things are important. And coverage of newly proposed regulations has far-reaching political, medical, social and economic impacts.

But regulations seldom make for good journeys, at least as they've been reported historically in Washington.

I see signs all over the national newspapers of their coverage of the environment. And many of the best stories are outside the Beltway. The same month that I heard of the *New York Times*' lack of a national environment writer, I saw a Page One story in the *Times* of a journey into the Everglades with a researcher trying to save an endangered bird. And there are many other recent examples.

The environment is too big to confine to the Beltway. We see it bleeding over into more and more beats every day. One of our goals, as an organization, is to reach more of those reporters who are confronted on their business or local government beat with complex environmental stories.

So I say, don't despair about a couple of slots in Washington going unfilled for a few months. Think, instead, of all the wonderful journeys that lie ahead.

Finally, I'd like to thank all those journalists, both from the SEJ board and the membership, the SEJ staff, Frank and Maggie Allen of the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources, The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, and the Scripps Howard Foundation, all of whom made donations of time and money to help make the SEJ leadership retreat possible. All of you contributed to a huge success. SEJ can never have too many good ideas and enthusiastic members. ♦



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

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# Selling stories just gets harder

It used to be easy to be an environmental reporter. The issues were clearcut, there were heroes and villains, and there was a large audience for such stories. But times have changed, several journalists said at a regional conference cosponsored by SEJ at Fairfield University in Connecticut.

"I long for the days of the *Exxon Valdez* or Three Mile Island," said Andrew Revkin, who covers environmental issues in the metropolitan area for *The New York Times*. Today's environmental stories are more subtle, he said, and are harder to sell, "even to our editors."

Newsroom colleagues often react to environmental stories with MEGO ("my eyes glaze over"), Revkin said. Even when you have a newsworthy topic, some jaded editors react with: "Didn't we already do global warming?"

"Of course we have to keep writing about such things," he said.

Daniel Jones, an investigative reporter with the *Hartford Courant*, said "The trick is to make the issues relevant to the average reader who has no time and no understanding of subtleties."

The conference was entitled " 'Sound' Reporting: Journalism Techniques and Scientific Tools for Reporting on Long Island Sound and the Environment." Revkin and Jones were joined on the journalism panel by James Motavalli, editor of *E Magazine*, and Jennifer Kaylin, a producer at *WTNH* in New Haven.

A second panel, Scientific Tools for Reporting on Long Island Sound and the Environment, featured Dr. Randy Chambers, assistant professor of biology and a marine wetlands ecologist at Fairfield; Dr. Victor Newton, associate professor of physics; Dr. L. Kraig Steffen, associate professor of chemistry; and Long Island Soundkeeper Terry Backer. Arthur J. Rocque, Jr., commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, delivered a luncheon address.

The half-day workshop in April attracted about 40 print and broadcast journalists. The event was chaired by Dr. James Simon, an English professor at Fairfield who covered environmental issues for *Associated Press*, and Dr. Lisa H. Newton, director of the Environmental Studies Program at Fairfield.

—James Simon

## *SEJournal* submission deadlines

Fall '99 .....	October 15, 1999
Winter '00 .....	January 15, 2000
Spring '00 .....	April 15, 2000
Summer '00 .....	July 15, 2000

Send submissions to Noel Grove, editor, e-mail address [ngrove1253@aol.com](mailto:ngrove1253@aol.com) or P.O. Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 20118. Send Beat submissions to the state correspondent listed on page 21, or to Chris Rigel, [rigel@voicenet.com](mailto:rigel@voicenet.com), or fax to (215) 836-9972.

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# Sign-up list strong for LA conference

The set is ready, the actors are poised, and SEJ's ninth annual conference will swing into action Thursday, July 16, in Los Angeles. Registration at this writing stands at 160, with about 130 of them SEJ members. That's a good showing at this stage of the game.

An impressive list of speakers includes energy secretary Bill Richardson, author Barry Lopez, David Brower of Earth Island Institute, Earth Day co-founder Denis Hayes, Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute, economist Hazel Henderson, actor James Cromwell (*Babe, LA Confidential*), Gretchen Daily of Stanford University, Alden Meyer of the Union of Concerned Scientists, Janice Perlman of the Mega-Cities Project, and Candace Skariatos of Bank of America. The list of speakers and panel members totals nearly 70, with more still to come.

The conference, hosted by UCLA, features some "firsts"—first time held right on the ocean, first time in California, more field trips than ever before, and—no-brainer—first time an SEJ annual conference has been held on the cusp of a new millennium. The latter will be reflected in the conference program which includes three main topics: the megalopolis and the new millennium, Hollywood and the environment, and the Pacific Ocean. Attendees will get more intimate with the Pacific when the *LA Times* hosts a dinner Saturday evening at the Long Beach Aquarium.

The program revolves around seven themes, with a room assigned to each theme to help participants find their way from session to session. The seven themes are The West, The Craft, The Globe, The Economy, The Nation, The Lab, and The Campus.

The conference opens Thursday with an offering of road

trips that includes the nation's most popular—and polluted—beaches in Santa Monica Bay, a battleground over an imperiled songbird in high-end real estate, and a look at the intergalactic environment at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

For anybody who doesn't get carted off in a tour bus, Thursday afternoon's on-campus events include an informal dialogue between scientists and journalists trying to bridge the communication gap between the research lab and the guy reading the morning paper. Guided walking tours of the UCLA campus are also on the agenda, with attention to spectacular architecture, and how engineering has bolstered the campus against earthquakes.

UCLA's Institute of the Environment will add a strong scientific component to the conference in several ways. During the opening reception on Thursday evening, the IoE will present some of its latest research results on a variety of environmental issues. Many of the researchers will be present to discuss their work.

IoE will also hold a press conference Saturday morning to officially release its 1999 Environmental Report Card. The report examines four critical environmental issues: stormwater runoff impact on coastal waters, wildland fire, groundwater quality, and environmental education.

The network lunch, fast becoming an annual SEJ tradition, will be held outside on Saturday, under the blue Southern California sky (and tents, lest we forget the UV rays). This event is a meal and informal talk session all in one, with each table hosting a different topic of interest to environmental journalists, with guest speakers a la carte.

And then there are the relaxed times with evening receptions and dinners, time to get re-acquainted and exchange ideas. Come join your colleagues in LA. It'll be a blast. ❖



## Michigan reporters drawn to land-use bait

One aspect of covering the environment is that you quickly find yourself straying into every beat in the newsroom. Nowhere is that more apparent than in land use, a subject that has led me, an environment reporter, into covering areas as diverse as poverty, school finance, tax policy, farming, and even religion.

So when I proposed an SEJ regional conference for Michigan reporters, I figured land use provided a ready draw for diverse reporters. The key was to make sure that regardless of their beat, reporters realized they had a stake in one of the hottest environment stories going.

An initial planning group considered a series of conferences and tours. But to cut down the logistical headaches, the effort was boiled down to a simple formula: throw together a bunch of smart journalists with a bunch of smart sources.

It wasn't a hard sell. Twenty-five journalists from across the state showed up at the May 24 conference in Lansing. They represented large and small dailies, weeklies, wire services, radio stations, and farm publications. Ten non-journalists also attended, and another 10 were turned away because of space constraints.

David Rusk, a Washington D.C.-based author and urban policy consultant, was keynote speaker. Rusk, who often works with

Michigan communities, had reams of data specific to the state.

But I'm convinced that the real draws were the Michigan-based speakers and the journalists who brought Michigan angles to a national story. It didn't hurt that news was breaking in the state legislature. Speakers were steered into talking about what was going on right then.

Did I make mistakes? Sure. The agenda was too packed. The conference suffered from what is one of my own criticisms of such events—too many speakers and not enough time for questions. One person complained there weren't enough bathroom breaks.

But the response was overwhelmingly positive, and was reinforced by subsequent news stories and editorials that I believe grew out of the regional event.

At the recent SEJ leadership retreat, participants repeatedly remarked on the need to serve reporters who cover environmental stories as a consequence of working other beats. Regional conferences are a great way of reaching such reporters. And perhaps equally important, these journalists are a significant source of new growth for SEJ

—David Poulson





The big news is that *Los Angeles Times* reporter **Marla Cone** received a \$150,000 Pew Fellowship to research contamination in the Arctic Circle and how it affects people and wildlife there. The grant gives Cone the resources to travel to the Arctic and provides a stipend so she can take leave next year and write a book. To her two-year-old son, she will explain her absences by saying "I'm going away to look for Santa Claus."

**Christopher Joyce** of *National Public Radio* in Washington, D.C., is going away for a month in warmer climes. Chris was chosen from among many applicants for a stint as journalist-in-residence in Hawaii for the environmental publication *Environment Hawai'i*. His wife and two children will accompany him. (see story, page 20).

After a decade of Capitol bureaucracy, **Bill Eby** wanted something new. So the former editor of *The Kiplinger Agriculture Letter* in Washington, D.C., pulled up stakes and moved to the Midwest. He is now the managing editor of *Farm Progress Companies*, which is a family of 36 state and regional farm magazines. Based outside of Chicago, Eby will play a large role in story development for all of the publications.

**Zaz Hollander** is covering water issues in northern Idaho as the new bureau chief there for *The* (Spokane, Wash.) *Spokesman-Review*. She left her previous position at *The Daily Astorian* in Oregon earlier this year.

After 10 years of not being able to scoop her competitors at *The Memphis Flyer*, a weekly, **Debbie Gilbert** will "finally be able to cover breaking news." Gilbert is moving to cover the environment for *The Times* in Gainesville, Ga.,

a daily. She will be covering Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee National Forest and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

**J. Robb Brady**, former publisher of the Idaho Falls *Post Register* and currently an editorial writer at the newspaper, now has an environmental reporting award named after him. The Idaho Conservation League announced the creation of the J. Robb Brady award at its annual conference earlier this year. The award will periodically recognize reporters for outstanding coverage of environmental issues. "He was practicing environmental journalism before anyone had ever heard of it," said League executive director Rick Johnson. Brady, 79, started working for his family newspaper

## Media on the Move

Compiled by George Homsey

as a reporter in 1942. He retired as publisher in 1988 and continues to write editorials for the *Post Register*. His last three pieces have touched on suburban growth in Idaho Falls, development of ski resorts and condos on timberlands and mining law reform.

A lot of people are moving "home" these days. **Stuart Leavenworth** is heading back into the trenches near where he was born and raised in California. After two years as editor of growth and development at *The Raleigh* (N.C.) *News and Observer*, Leavenworth will be the growth and development reporter for the *Sacramento Bee*. While Leavenworth is excited about covering the region's boom—another two million people are expected over the

next decade—Leavenworth says he is "intrigued about returning to my old home and working as a reporter."

**Diane Toomey** "had her fill of North Carolina's humidity" and was also anxious to get back to the West Coast. So after five years as the medical/environmental reporter for public radio's *WUNC* in Chapel Hill, N.C., Toomey is jumping to television in Los Angeles. She is helping to produce a six-part series on alternative medicine for the *Discovery Health Channel*, which premieres in August.

Not quite back home, but a lot closer is "Living on Earth's" **Liz Lempert**. Lempert will be the *National Public Radio* program's western bureau chief, based in Boulder, Colo. Originally from California, she looks forward to being "closer to my home state and the environmental issues I grew up with." Lempert had been the show's associate producer based in Cambridge, Mass."

And while we are talking about "Living on Earth," there is news about yours truly. After almost 10 years as coordinating producer of the program, I am leaving to start and become executive producer of public radio's "The Cultivated Gardener". "I really enjoyed co-founding 'Living on Earth' and helping fortify it's position in the environmental media market," I said in a recent interview, "but it's time to move on and try to bring the nation's number one hobby to the public radio masses."

I will still be compiling this column. Send any professional news to ghomsy@world.std.com. If you don't have e-mail, call the SEJ staff and they will let me know. I will have my new contact information by the next issue.

## Students get beat feet wet at D.C. journalism workshop

Approximately 100 students from across the United States participated in the first Environmental Journalism Academy in Washington, D.C., June 14-19, sponsored by the National Environmental Wire for Students (NEWS).

Speakers included journalism professor and SEJ member Karl Grossman, environmental lawyer Jan Schlichtmann, and Senior Editorial Producer of "Nightline" Karen Dewitt. Students also participated

in workshops, lectures, panel discussions and press conferences. Trainers conducted workshops on reporting skills, including pitching stories, researching and interviewing. Peter S. Goodman from *The Washington Post* and Dina Cappiello from the *Albany Times Union* were among those who taught participants about working in real-world journalism.

An environmental tour of the Anacostia watershed gave the students a

chance to leave the classroom and get their feet wet in the field. The tour focused on four topics, including biodiversity, environmental justice, urban sprawl and water quality, and introduced students to government officials, community activists, and local reporters.

For information about NEWS or the Environmental Journalism Academy visit [www.envirocitizen.org/news](http://www.envirocitizen.org/news) or call (202)-234-5993. ❖



# Refinements sought in SEJ retreat

## Leaders ponder improvements at Missoula meeting

By JAY LETTO

Somewhere between the Moose Drool and the white water, a bunch of SEJ members managed to ponder the group's future at a Leadership Retreat in Missoula, Mont., July 1-3.

Retreat planners (executive director Beth Parke and board members Jim Bruggers of the *Contra Costa Times* and Peter Thomson of *National Public Radio's* "Living on Earth") organized the event to identify future leaders, build group ownership, and create excitement about SEJ's potential. Topics discussed were: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing environmental journalism; critical issues in SEJ's future; evaluation of SEJ's current programs and services; how to reach under-served audiences and fill unmet needs in the newsroom; and ideas for new direction for SEJ.

Applications had been solicited months earlier, and 14 members were chosen by the planners. They were: Perry Beeman, *Des Moines Register*; Robert Braile, *Boston Globe*; Cheryl Colopy, *KQED-FM*, San Francisco; Bill Dawson, *Houston Chronicle*; Randy Edwards, *Columbus Dispatch*; Christy George, *Public Radio International's* "Marketplace"; David Hammond, Great Lakes Radio Consortium; Orna Izakson, freelance journalist, Portland, Ore.; Brian Lavendel, freelance journalist, Madison, Wis.; Peter Lord, *Providence Journal*; Scott Miller, *KING-TV*, Seattle; David Poulson, Booth Newspapers, Lansing, Mich.; Paul Rogers, San Jose *Mercury News*; and Deborah Schoch, *Los Angeles Times*.

Several board members joined the group for parts of the retreat, including Peter Dykstra, *CNN*; Russ Clemings, *Fresno*

*Bee*; Colony Brown, Radio and Television News Directors Foundation; David Ropeik, *WCVB-TV*, Boston; Sara Thurin Rollin, Bureau of National Affairs, Inc.; Gary Polakovic, *Los Angeles Times*; Mike Mansur, *Kansas City Star*; and Marla Cone, *Los Angeles Times*. SEJ member Dick Manning and Tracey Stone-Manning of the bioregional news service also attended parts of the retreat.

As background for the meeting, participants answered survey questions to evaluate importance and effectiveness of SEJ programs, and analyze trends in the news business that present both challenges and opportunities to SEJ. Common themes: wired world, newsroom pressures, growth in the number, importance, and complexity of environmental stories to be told, and (related to that) cross-pollination in the newsroom for more environmental stories in business, health, science, law, crime, travel, politics, and government beats.

But it wasn't all work. The first day together was for getting to know each other and building camaraderie. Two-thirds of the group used this day to raft the Clark Fork River (thus explaining the "white water"; "Moose Drool" will be explained later), while others hiked along Rattlesnake Creek in Lolo National Forest near Missoula.

The actual work-meeting convened Friday morning with each participant telling something about him or herself that the rest of the group didn't know. Amid confessions of bad behavior with Little League umps, having a former life as a flack, minor league pitching for the Phillies, and wearing black frilly frocks (a guy), in the small-world category, it came out that two of the 14 members attending were attacked by the same monkey troop in Tibet many years ago.

After a general overview on SEJ's history, structure, and programs, the meeting broke into smaller groups to focus on specific items, such as the *TipSheet*, SEJ newsroom training, regional events, *SEJournal*, SEJ home page, stature of the beat, SEJ national conferences, mentoring, reaching the editors, marketing SEJ to non-beat reporters, and fund raising. Each small group then reported its findings on what's working and what could improve back to the larger group, for more discussion.

Good ideas were recorded, many of which will be built upon in the various task forces that were created to follow up on the meeting's brainstorming sessions. Some of the many task forces include:

- Web site / SEJ Home Page, where members will look into costs and options for a total redesign of the site, to make it more "snazzy" and easier to find your way around, identify various links and clippings services to add in, and figure out ways to use it as a mentoring and outreach tool. Discussion included hiring a professional web designer to work out details.

- Membership, where task force members will review and update SEJ's membership outreach and marketing plan, to help reach more general assignment reporters, reporters who might identify themselves with other beats but actually cover environ-

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No, SEJ is not going activist. Executive director Beth Parke "sniffs" a vanilla tree during the Missoula retreat.



## SEJ retreat...(con't)

ment, radio and television journalists, reporters from smaller newspapers, students, and academics.

- Newsroom training, where members will put together a plan and new materials to help identify and train SEJ trainers for newsroom visits, contact potential trainees, and identify likely arenas to reach those journalists who would benefit most from the training.

- Regional activities, where members will develop an organizing handbook, identify both fun outings and substantive meetings to attract new members, and look into ways SEJ regional events can reinforce "cross-pollination" with other beats or journalists groups.

- *SEJournal*, where members will also look into redesign. The group was generally happy with the content, but felt that the design needed to be upgraded. Perhaps a consultant hired to redesign the homepage will also consult on the *SEJournal*.

- Stature and credibility, where members will address ways to elevate environmental reporting in the newsroom, including creating an awards program to recognize good daily environmental journalism and new ways to help beleaguered colleagues.

- Marketing, where members will work to forward SEJ as THE resource for environmental reporting, looking into ways to expand the appeal of SEJ to colleagues via the web site, national conference, and other programs. Members will also write articles on behalf of SEJ in various journalism magazines.

- Fund raising, where members will

work with staff to put together a plan that will look into creative ways to raise funds, such as enlarging the exhibitor space at national conferences, targeting smaller and local foundations for regional events, and, as always, effective partnering with other journalism groups.

- Mentoring, where members will put together a program structure and guidelines to help younger journalists connect with veterans willing to serve as mentors, contact other journalism groups to see how they do it, and look at creative ways to do this.

The substantive meetings went on all day Friday and through lunch on Saturday, and was followed by the SEJ Board meeting. At the end of the formal retreat meetings on Saturday, each of us gave a few words about what we most enjoyed or appreciated from the gathering. One plane-delayed and late-arriving board member, who had missed out on most of the earlier festivities, said he looked forward to "learning more about the Moose Drool thing."

No doubt he did, as the festivities reconvened later that day with cocktail reception, dinner and evening program at the home of Frank Allen, director of the High Country Institute for Journalism & Natural Resources. "Moose Drool," by the way, is the local microbrew that quickly became the favorite of retreat attendees.

*Jay Letto is national conference manager for SEJ. Beth Parke and Peter Thomson also contributed to this report.*

## Seminar for journalists, academics scheduled

Experts will examine environmental issues in the nation's largest high-tech region, south of San Francisco Bay, at a seminar called "How Green is Silicon Valley," for reporters, editors, teachers, and students. The Center for Environmental Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism will hold the one-day event free of charge on Saturday, Oct. 9, 9:30 A.M.—4 P.M. at North Gate Hall in Berkeley. Cosponsor is the Society of Professional

Journalists's Professional Development Committee. Certificates will be issued at completion. To register and for more information call Jane Kay at (510) 643-9664 or [janeKay@examiner.com](mailto:janeKay@examiner.com).

Need information about the Ninth National Conference? Looking a good book? Want to download a membership application?

Find all this and more when you visit SEJ's web site.

<http://www.sej.org>

## Good reporting mullied at Berkeley

The "doers" and the "teachers" came together at the University of California at Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism May 4 to discuss better ways to teach as well as practice environmental journalism.

Orville Schell, the school's dean, opened the one-day conference by stressing the importance of both parties in training the next generation of environmental journalists. "One without the other is no better than one hand clapping," he said.

Although the two dozen participants hailed from a variety of newspapers, radio stations, institutes and universities several western states, they all seemed to agree on one thing: that basic journalism skills and strong story-telling techniques were the key to solid environmental reporting.

"In order to be a good environmental reporter, you have to be a good reporter," said Len Ackland, director of the Center for Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Other participants believed that aspiring environment reporters should be taking science, economics, and even math courses to help them make sense of the stories they will be covering.

Ed Marston, publisher of *High Country News*, lamented math errors he sees in his and other publications. Paul Rogers, environment reporter at the San Jose *Mercury News* suggested breaking big numbers down into units that readers understand, using, for instance, swimming pools to illustrate volume. "Try to find things in your community that people can visualize," he said.

Elizabeth Burch, assistant professor in the communications department at Sonoma State University, also noted the importance of exposing students to working professionals to inspire and educate them.

Freelance journalist and author Mark Hertsgaard closed the conference by talking about his experiences in collecting material for his recent book, *Earth Odyssey*. During his travels he witnessed environmental effects caused by millions of people climbing out of poverty in countries such as China. "Those people will have better lives," Hertsgaard said. "There is no stopping them."

—Matt Golec





# How I got my job on the beat

The road to becoming an environmental journalist is often long, rocky, amusing, and serendipitous. GABI posted a note on the SEJ listserv asking members how they began writing about the environment. Following are some responses:

- From Mark Schleifstein of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*: "I wrote my first environmental story in 1975 soon after joining the Suffolk (Va.) *News-Herald*, then an 8,000-circulation daily in tidewater Virginia. Riding through the peanut farm countryside one day, I came upon a tiny town of wooden, ramshackle buildings, all with outhouses in their back yards.

"The odor on the street was a bit rank, as sewage ran from the outhouses into the roadside ditches, which drained into a freshwater lake. I stopped the car and talked to a couple of homeowners and learned that this antebellum African-American community had been trying unsuccessfully for years to get help with their sewage problems.

"Fresh out of college I took pictures, wrote it up, and designed a full page for the Sunday paper. On Monday, the publisher called me into his office to inform me he'd been on the phone all morning with the mayor of Norfolk, who was furious because my story was giving his city a bad rap. The lake is the city's water supply.

"My publisher backed me up, and refused to run a retraction.

"After about five years the community finally got their sewage system. And I learned early on that an environmental story can deliver quite a kick."

- From Anne Paine of the Nashville *Tennessean*: "I used to wear my naturally curly hair fairly long, which I guess gave me a shaggy, earth-mother look. When a young woman who was general assignment but bulldoggish about trying to do enviro stories left the paper about fifteen years ago, I was given her desk. I was also general assignment, but when environmental matters were raised they were tossed my way, almost as a joke. That was okay with me. Most of the rest of the

newsroom generally preferred the government or other hard-core, muck-racking news stories. Several years ago when the newspaper decided we should formally have a fulltime environment reporter, I was picked.

"Things change. This year, I was pulled from environment temporarily to cover another slot during a hiring freeze. The beat is supposed to be re-established when the freeze is lifted."

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## Grin & Bare It

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- Susan Saltero in Puerto Rico had to be all wet to get the job:

"I came to Puerto Rico as a weather anchor but I begged, cried, whined and used every possible strategy to get my bosses to allow me to do environmental reports because the need was so great. My uncle and cousin have been former Secretaries of Natural Resources in Puerto Rico and my great-grandfather was an Indian chief, so it's in my blood.

"I finally got permission to get in the water to film manatees (there are only 62 left here so it's hard to get near them) and the series was a hit! Now I have a regular segment and just recently got chosen environmental reporter of the year by the Department of Natural Resources, and all for jumping in to play with manatees!"

- Merritt Clifton of *ANIMAL PEOPLE* writes: "I got my first job in the noosepaper racket on my 15th birthday, when a mob of people tried out for a part-time position on a small daily in Berkeley, California. The editor told us all to go out and come back with a nine-inch story. I was the first one to deliver. The editor looked it over, balled it up, and bounced it off my forehead with a speech about the basic elements of newswriting: 'Who gives a *bleep*, you dumb *bleep*, what's it matter to me, where's my cut, when do I get it, why isn't it here yet, and how do I get it faster? Rewrite. You got 15, no, make it 20 minutes.'

"I rewrote it, handed it in, told him to stick it where the sun doesn't shine,

and left. I saw it in print the next day and got the job.

"About a year later I was opening and sorting the mail, one of my routine chores, and one of the items was an announcement for a rally against the automobile, and afterwards an organizational meeting to plan the first Earth Day. 'Hey!' I shouted, smart aleck that I was. 'It's going to be Earth Day! Take a clod to lunch!'

"Okay, *bleep*-head,' the editor responded. 'You cover it.' So I've been an official *bleep*-head ever since."

- Sometimes, high visibility in environmental journalism is most unwelcome. Consider the Appalachian Trail episode experienced recently by Chicago free lancer Debra Schwartz and SEJ programs manager Chris Rigel, who is also designer for the *SEJournal*.

Whether they were distracted by evidence of gypsy moth damage or the box turtle ambling through the underbrush, somehow the two lost sight of the white blaze marking the AT south of Harpers Ferry. Worried that friends who planned to meet them further down the trail would be concerned, Rigel called 911 on her cell phone. Between the terrible connection and the near-dead battery, only very basic information made it through to the police: *static* lost *static* two women *static* friends at *static* Blackburn Trail Center.

Apparently hikers are not permitted to be lost; three states launched a search. A helicopter from Maryland's finest spotted their campfire and hovering low, beckoned and led the two to a Quaker retreat "in the middle of nowhere."

Did they really want this story in the *SEJournal*? "Couldn't avoid it," said Rigel. "I spilled it to Noel Grove, and he's my editor."

(*Editor's note: But she finds her way very well around a Quark design page.*)

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*Humorous stories that relate to the environmental beat should be sent to Noel Grove at [ngrove1253@aol.com](mailto:ngrove1253@aol.com) or by regular mail to Box 1016, Middleburg, VA 20118.*





## New members from 5/12/99—8/8/99

### CALIFORNIA

- **Kathryn I. Calkins** (*Active*), BioCentury Publications, San Francisco
- **Paul R. Ehrlich** (*Academic*), Stanford University Department of Biological Sciences, Stanford
- **Paul Feldman** (*Active*), *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles
- **Margot Hornblower** (*Active*), *Time Magazine*, Los Angeles
- **Mary James** (*Active*), *Home Energy*, Larkspur
- **David Lauter** (*Active*), *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles
- **Carolyn McMillan** (*Active*), *Contra Costa Times*, Walnut Creek
- **Cynthia Perry** (*Associate*), American Communications Foundation, Mill Valley
- **Jenifer Ragland** (*Active*), *Los Angeles Times*, Costa Mesa
- **Manuel Satorre** (*Active*), *Business Times*, Los Angeles
- **Andrew Silva** (*Active*), *San Bernadino County Sun*, San Bernadino
- **Catherine Zandonella** (*Academic*), UC Berkley, San Francisco

### COLORADO

- **Christie Aschwanden** (*Associate*), Boulder
- **Emily Murphy** (*Academic*), University of Colorado, Boulder
- **Michelle Nijhuis** (*Active*), *High Country News*, Paonia
- **Rebecca Rumsey** (*Academic*), University of Colorado, Boulder
- **Mark A. Scharfennaker** (*Associate*), American Water Works Association, *Waterweek*, Denver
- **Robert S. Weinhold** (*Active*), Durango

### CONNECTICUT

- **Jennifer Bogo** (*Active*), Earth Action Network, *The Environmental Magazine*, Norwalk
- **Susan Panisch** (*Active*), *Outdoor Life Network*, Stamford
- **April Reese** (*Academic*), Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, New Haven

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- **Maria W. Cecil** (*Associate*), Defenders of Wildlife, *Defenders Magazine*

### FLORIDA

- **Nancy Klingener** (*Active*), *The Miami Herald*, Key West

- **Dave McDaniel** (*Active*), *WESH-TV*, Winter Park
- **Tom Visconti** (*Associate*), ProMedia, Inc., Ormond Beach

### IOWA

- **Tamara Jill Johnston** (*Academic*), University of Iowa, Iowa City

### ILLINOIS

- **Kathleen Canning** (*Active*), *Pollution Engineering Magazine*, Libertyville

### LOUISIANA

- **Matthew D'Agostino** (*Active*), *Slidell Sentry News*, New Orleans
- **Aaron Wilkinson** (*Active*), *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, New Orleans

### MASSACHUSETTS

- **Maggie Villiger** (*Academic*), Boston University College of Communication

### MARYLAND

- **Meredith Narcum** (*Active*), Business Publishers, Inc. *Sludge, Ground Water Monitor*, Silver Spring

### MICHIGAN

- **Charles Eisendrath** (*Academic*), Michigan Journalism Fellows, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- **Barry L. Nelson** (*Academic*), Michigan State University, Saginaw

### MINNESOTA

- **David Shaffer** (*Active*), *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Minneapolis

### MISSOURI

- **Elizabeth Alex** (*Active*), *KSHB-TV*, Kansas City

### MISSISSIPPI

- **Patrick Peterson** (*Active*), Morris Network WXXV-TV Fox 25, Gulfport

### NORTH CAROLINA

- **JoAnn Gravely** (*Academic*), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

### NEW JERSEY

- **Tamas Revesz** (*Active*), Cliffs Park

### NEW YORK

- **Clarence D. Basset** (*Active*), *New York Business Environment*, Clifton Park
- **Patricia M. Kennedy** (*Academic*), Syracuse University Newhouse School, Liverpool
- **Malena Marchan** (*Active*), New York
- **Carolyn Shea** (*Associate*), National Audubon Society, *Audubon Magazine*

### OHIO

- **Eileen Beal** (*Associate*), Great Lakes

- Science Center, Cleveland Heights
- **David A. Padgett** (*Academic*), Oberlin College Environmental Studies Program

### OKLAHOMA

- **Carol Bogart** (*Active*), *Advertiser Tribune*, Tiffin

### OREGON

- **Elizabeth Grossman** (*Active*), Portland

### PENNSYLVANIA

- **Robert Scott** (*Academic*), La Salle University, Maple Glen
- **Suzanne Thorne** (*Academic*), Temple University-Philadelphia, Elkins Park

### RHODE ISLAND

- **Heather Franckling** (*Academic*), University of Rhode Island, Pascoag
- **Laura Ricketson** (*Academic*), University of Rhode Island, Cranston

### VIRGINIA

- **Michael Bender** (*Associate*), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Endangered Species Bulletin*, Arlington
- **Rebecca Daugherty** (*Associate*), Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Arlington
- **Jason Dick** (*Active*), National Journal's *Greenwire*, Alexandria

### WASHINGTON

- **Brodie Farquhar** (*Active*), *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*, Walla Walla
- **Ed Hunt** (*Associate*), Ecotrust Tidepool, Rosburg
- **Miguel Llanos** (*Active*), MSNBC.com, Redmond
- **Linda J. Moore** (*Active*), Everett

### WISCONSIN

- **Erik Ness** (*Active*), Madison

### WYOMING

- **Jeff Tollefson** (*Active*), *Casper Star-Tribune*, Casper

### CANADA

#### Alberta

- **Richard L. Sherhaniuk** (*Active*), Edmonton

#### BRITISH COLUMBIA

- **Ian Douglas** (*Active*), Heriot Bay

#### ONTARIO

- **Saul Chernos** (*Active*), Toronto

#### QUEBEC

- **Deborah Schoen** (*Associate*), St Lambert

#### JAPAN

- **Shigeyuki Okajima** (*Academic*), Aomori University, Tokyo

# Y2K: will these bugs bite?

By RUSSELL CLEMINGS

It starts when a computerized control deep within an electric power generating plant notices something unusual.

A few minutes after midnight on Jan. 1, 2000, a process that the control monitors suddenly goes haywire. Readings for a number of parameters swing way out of range, to infinity in some cases. To be safe, the computer shuts down the plant. And with that, the end of the world begins.

Or so you might believe, based on the widespread predictions of global chaos to result from the Year 2000 computer problem, or Y2K. It's going to be TEOTWAWKI, or The End Of The World As We Know It, say various breathless, often self-proclaimed experts.

At the same time, agencies and institutions that control all of those doomed computers are sparing little effort in trying to reassure a nervous and often mystified public that everything is under control.

What's the truth? For technically challenged environmental reporters confronted with Y2K threats that range from nuclear power systems to environmental enforcement dockets, the task of finding the truth amid the morass of digital details might seem an impossible challenge.

In truth, though, the story is not as technical as it seems. Yes, the Y2K problem has its roots in the arcane language of computer programmers—code to the cognoscenti—and that kind of stuff is almost impenetrable. But skilled programmers can solve such problems readily.

The question that reporters must ask is whether the programmers will be allowed to do so. In other words, is the institution's management on top of the problem, or is it hiding its head in the sand, hoping that everything will somehow work out on its own?

If the answer is the latter, then the institution is in serious trouble. Here are some questions to ask in evaluating the Y2K readiness of any institution. If managers can give convincing answers to each of these questions, chances are they have devoted plenty of attention to the Y2K problem and will survive the new year with no more than minor glitches:

- What steps has the institution taken to find Y2K problems?

Experts in Y2K remediation say that institutions must first put together a complete inventory of computer systems and other devices that do date-related processing. Such devices can lurk in the strangest places. An example is an automatic elevator that runs on different schedules on the weekends. If that elevator thinks Thursday, Jan. 6, 2000, is actually Saturday, Jan. 6, 1900, high-rise office workers may spend the day in their building's lobby.

- Once it has found its problems, how is the institution evaluating them?

Some Y2K problems are more serious than others. If the coffee pot doesn't start when it's supposed to because its internal clock goes on the fritz, it's an inconvenience. If a valve at the chemical plant opens at the wrong time, it could be a catastrophe. Clearly, the latter is more mission-critical than the former.

- What's the worst that could happen? Put another way, it's impossible to catch every Y2K problem, let alone fix them all

before the new year arrives. So an institution needs to make contingency plans. Suppose a key relay fails to operate at an electric power substation. Does another substation pick up the slack? Do a hundred homes lose power? A thousand? An entire region?

- How long would it take to fix?

A four-hour power outage, even in mid-winter, is not usually a disaster. A four-day outage can kill people. Does the institution you are studying have credible plans for fixing what goes wrong, and how long is it likely to take? There may not be firm answers to these questions. It's simply not possible to anticipate, find, and fix every conceivable Y2K problem. Rest assured: no matter how much advance work is done, something will go wrong.

But don't assume that a disaster will necessarily follow from that. If an institution is doing its homework now, doing its best to find and fix its Y2K problems, then whatever remaining glitches occur will also certainly be temporary. The information technology department might have to pull an all-nighter or two around New Year's Day. But outsiders might not even notice, any more than they notice the other occasional crises that occur within business and government agencies.



## Sources

Thousands of businesses and government agencies have added Y2K sections to their web sites to provide information, calm fears, and comply with legal requirements to prepare for the magic date. Here are some of the most useful sites:

- President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion. Includes briefings on the status of preparations in dozens of different sectors of the economy, plus the official White House line on the problem. <http://www.y2k.gov>
- U.S. Senate Special Committee on Year 2000 Technology Problem. The most thorough of the congressional panels working on the issue; includes hearing transcripts, testimony and other material. <http://www.senate.gov/~y2k>
- General Accounting Office. This auditing branch of Congress has an extensive archive of reports on the Y2K problem. Check the Inspector General offices in each government agency for more such reports. <http://www.gao.gov/y2kr.htm>
- Securities and Exchange Commission. Publicly traded corporations are required to report on their Y2K preparations. Search through the reports' archive by company name or ticker symbol and look for the most recent 10K or 10Q reports, then find a section titled "Year 2000 Compliance" or something similar. <http://www.sec.gov/edaux/searches.htm>
- Year 2000 Information Center. A section here called Bug Bytes tracks Y2K-related failures: <http://www.year2000.com/y2karticles.html>
- Cassandra Project. If you want to find a Y2K preparedness group in your area, this is a good place to start looking. <http://cassandraproject.org/>

# Modeling risk: EPA tool screens chemical releases

By SARA THURIN ROLLIN

A first-of-its-kind, desk-top computer model that will estimate health risks of chemical releases throughout the United States was released by the Environmental Protection Agency July 16.

The Risk-Screening Environmental Indicators (RSEI) model is expected to have a significant impact on journalists' ability to evaluate independently the possible health risks from more than 500 chemicals at facilities around the country.

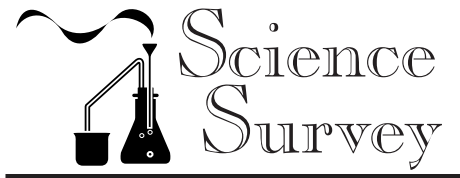
The model allows users to put its outputs—a screening-level risk ranking—into a historical context because RSEI contains data on chemical releases from more than 38,000 facilities reported to the Toxic Release Inventory for the past 10 years, EPA said.

In addition, the analyses can be altered by focusing on poundage released, relative toxicity, population exposed, or relative risk. By evaluating each query to the model by the variables—of pounds, toxicity, population, or exposure—the risk rankings would be expected to vary that could lead to new avenues for research and further analyses, EPA said.

While the outputs of the RSEI model are not actual risk estimates, they are rela-

tive numbers that can be compared against other numbers generated by the model, said EPA sources. They said the model's outputs should be used to identify issues for further research and evaluation.

The model has been under development within EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, which is where the TRI staff is located at present. The scientific underpinnings of the RSEI model were critiqued in 1997 and a report on the RSEI indicator methodology issued in April 1998. EPA said it has made many improvements to the model to strengthen its scientific foundation.



The model works by drawing on chemical release and transfer data filed by companies for the Toxic Release Inventory, and combines that information with other information (on population, fate, and transport estimates of the release) to generate an indicator of risk. The value generated by the RSEI does not have a unit of measure, EPA said.

When the model is more fully developed, the agency says RSEI will have four indicators, even though the July 15 version only generates a Chronic Human Health Indicator. The other three planned indicators are acute human health, chronic ecological health, and acute ecological health indicators, EPA said.

Currently, the model generates hazard-based evaluations for chemical releases and transfers to all environmental media, EPA said. However, the relative risk rankings are available only for air releases at present. Expanding the model to allow users to generate risk-estimates for water releases is underway and expected to be completed within the year, an EPA official said.

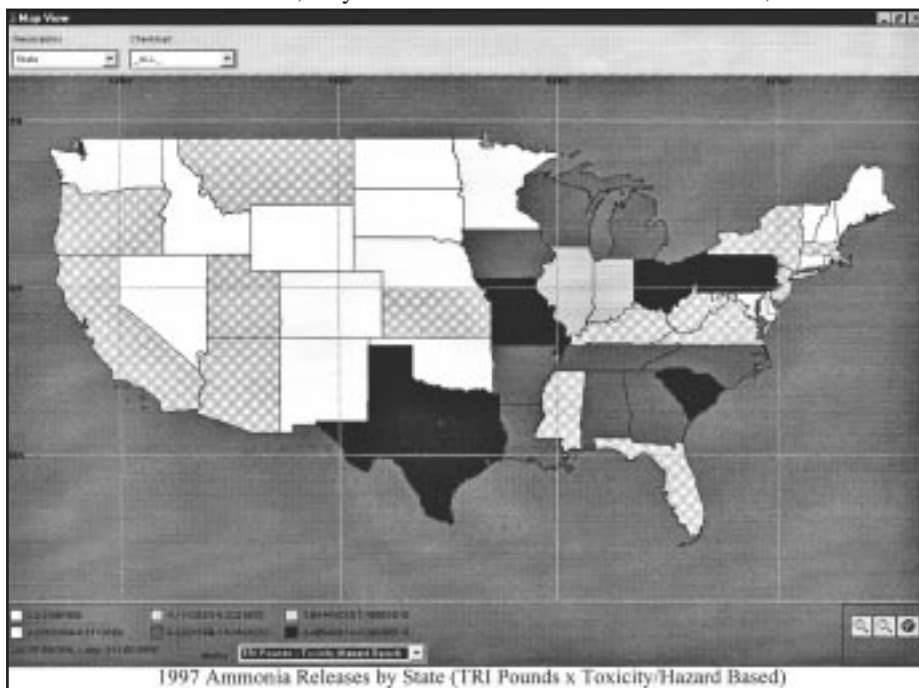
The agency plans several other RSEI enhancements as well in addition to the three indicators. EPA plans to modify the model to perform risk-related disparate impact analyses by socioeconomic characteristics, such as race, income, education level, or age of the population, the agency said.

RSEI is being distributed free of charge by EPA. The model is stored on a CD-ROM and is not expected to be placed on the World Wide Web because it is too large, although the agency has a special Internet homepage describing the model.

The model can be installed on the hard disk of a computer or run off the CD-ROM. When installed, RSEI occupies about 320 megabytes of memory and each unique query takes about 30 minutes to process. The output can be transferred into other computer software for further analysis or incorporation into reports.

Running the model off the CD-ROM is limited in that users will only have access to the analyses contained on the CD-ROM. Using the model under this situation does not allow for individualized queries, EPA said.

To request a copy of Risk-Screening Environmental Indicators model CD-ROM, user's manual and fact sheets, contact Nick Bouwes, EPA, (202) 260-1622, or send a request by electronic mail from [http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/env\\_ind/ind ex.html](http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/env_ind/ind ex.html) on the World Wide Web. ♦



Example of model mapping capabilities: state-level total ammonia releases



# A dam dispute

*Once Upon An Oldman: Special Interest Politics and the Oldman River Dam*

By Jack Glenn

University of British Columbia Press, 321 pp., \$85 (hardcover)

Almost 150 years ago, Captain John Palliser described southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan as "desert" and wrote off the possibility of agriculture there. To this day the area is known as the Palliser Triangle and almost everyone who writes about it begins with a reference to Captain Palliser.

In his study of the Oldman Dam dispute, Jack Glenn appropriately maintains this tradition. After all, when writing about the creation of a dam for the purpose of irrigation, it is clearly significant to note that the area is dry to the point of being unsuitable for agriculture.

In terms of environmental and native rights issues, the Oldman dispute is one of the most important fights in Canadian history, and Glenn is to be commended for reviewing it. The first half of the book tells the story of the dispute, while the second half fleshes out the account in a more detailed and analytical way.

Those reading the book from cover to cover will probably find some material redundant, but the structure makes the book a more useful resource for people studying specific elements of the dispute. Spanning at least three decades, the dispute is a complex one, and Glenn does an admirable job of bringing it all together.

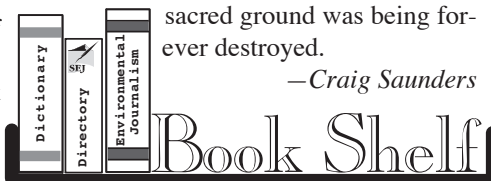
Friends of the Oldman River (FOR) became one of the first environmental groups to pursue significant legal action against the project. Over the course of more than a decade, FOR kept the issue in the courts in a brave and futile attempt to obtain justice when the provincial government was afraid to intervene.

Glenn's book chronicles the many steps the Alberta government took to shut environmentalists and the Pelgan nation out of the decision-making process. The government withheld information from review panels, didn't include the Pelgan in its considerations of the dam prior to construction and not only failed to negotiate with the Pelgan in good faith, but often refused to negotiate with them at all. This

is a government that took every possible step to thwart the process, and it deserves every criticism this book has to deliver.

The book is an excellent account of the actions, decisions, and policies surrounding the dispute, but it does not adequately convey the emotion of the issue, and emotion had a lot to do with it. At the very heart of the dispute was a feeling among the dam's opponents that they were shut out and ignored. For some, sacred ground was being forever destroyed.

—Craig Saunders



## Bad bedfellows

*Toxic Deception: How the Chemical Industry Manipulates Science, Bends the Law and Endangers Your Health*

By Dan Fagin, Marianne Lavelle, and the Center for Public Integrity.

Common Courage Press, 1999 (2nd Ed.), 250 pp., \$17.95 (paperback)

When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued its report on the dry-cleaning solvent perchlorethylene (perc) in September 1998, it did so with little fanfare. The long-awaited report shed more light on the health threat posed by the chemical and on the environmentally safe alternatives.

But the release, according to the authors of *Toxic Deception*, was made under a compromise with the dry-cleaning industry: There would be no news conference, press notice, or materials to help shed light on perc and the safer alternatives. There was only a notice in *The Federal Register*.

That's par for the course, authors Dan Fagin and Marianne Lavelle argue in their book. Far from protecting the public and pushing for safer alternatives to harmful chemicals, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency instead creates "partnerships" with chemical manufacturers. Agency employees take trips paid for by the companies and eventually land jobs with them.

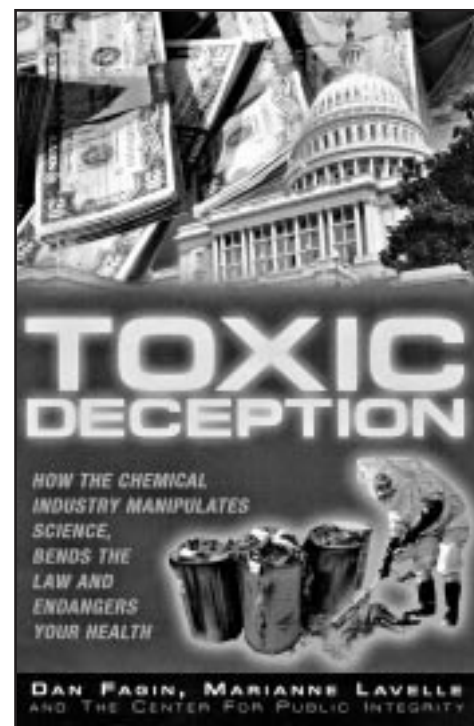
Others get jobs, too, from members of Congress who depend on companies' campaign contributions while voting to create weak laws, to the weed science researchers at universities that depend on grants from the chemical giants. But the target of the book is the manufacturers themselves and their use of sham science, public relations, and loopholes in laws to maintain profits from their dangerous products.

*Toxic Deception* highlights concerns about four chemicals: the agricultural weed-killers atrazine and alachlor, formaldehyde used in making some wood products, and perchloroethylene. The authors use footnoted documents to show how the industry protected its market for the chemicals against lawsuits, laws, and regulatory efforts.

The authors don't mince words. This isn't a discussion about whether a chemical is safe or whether the system is fair. Instead the scrutiny is placed on an industry and system that keeps consumers in the dark about risk and presumes that the economic benefits of a product are more important than public health. The chemical is innocent until proven guilty, and the system is designed so that a verdict never arrives.

And the situation hasn't improved since the book's first printing in 1977, as an update chapter in the book points out. EPA claims to be shoring up public confi-

### Books by Members



dence in the regulatory system. But its actions, including partnerships with the major chemical corporations, help to hide the manufacturers' attempts to thwart or weaken implementation of the laws.

*Toxic Deception* is a model for how environmental journalists need to attack important public issues. Journalists should not let objectivity prevent them from examining the system. Protection of public health is the journalistic responsibility, and that means reporting on a system that the authors demonstrate is rife with greed and politics.

—Bruce Ritchie



## Grim reapers

*Watching, from the Edge of Extinction*

By Beverly Peterson Stearns

and Stephen C. Stearns

Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1999

256 pps, \$30, hardcover

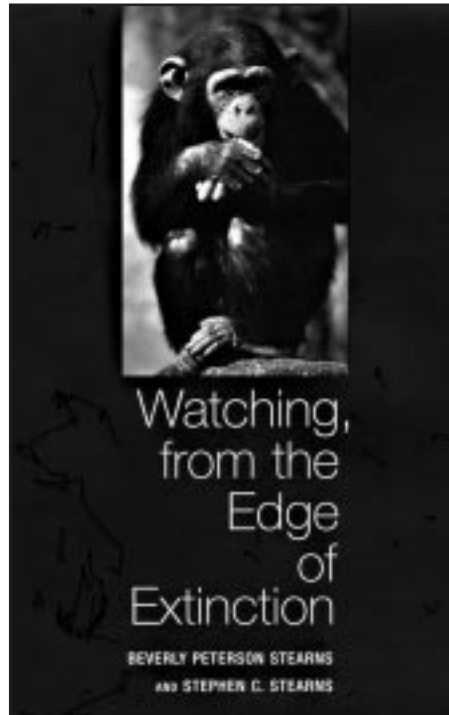
“Extinction is real, and it lasts forever.”

Those words open this series of stories about the efforts to halt the extinction of several species around the world. Roughly two species a day disappear—forever, says Beverly Stearns, the journalist in this husband-wife writing team. Stearn's husband, Stephen, is a University of Basel zoology professor.

The book looks at 10 instances where species have disappeared or are disappearing. The stories chronicle the dwindling of wild dogs in Africa, butterflies in England, and plants species in Mauritius, home of one of the best-known man-induced extinctions, the dodo.

While the title uses the word “Watching,” the stories are about dedicated and passionate people working to save and study species that are disappearing. Often, the villains are scientists and conservation biologists who study their disappearing subjects to death.

These and other books are available on SEJ's web site. Go to the home page and click on the “SEJ Store” link.  
<http://www.sej.org>



The first three chapters look at vanishing species in Hawaii—two bird species and several species of snails. The first story looks at the disappearance of a Hawaiian bird, the O'ō. Biologist Jim Jacobi tells how he is touched by his final sighting of the last O'ō biologists could predictably find, and how the bird reacted to hearing a recording of its own call.

The story of the Barton Springs salamander in Austin points out how an endangered species can become the canary in the coal mine, warning of environmental danger. Residents rally around the salamander to limit development in Texas' capital city.

One recurring theme is how the “business” of saving species often leads not only to a lack of success, but occasionally makes matters worse. A woman working to save the Mediterranean monk seal complains of what she called “cooking the same soup all the time,” or groups getting grants for projects that rely on methods that have already proven unsuccessful.

Of the 10 tales in the book, one of the most interesting concerns the discovery of hundreds of previously unknown species of fish in Lake Victoria in Africa and tells how, in a few years, many of these species were gobbled up by an introduced species. Some now swim only

in specimen bottles.

Most of the stories are engaging and pretty fast-paced. The Stearns say there are many causes of extinction and point a finger at human beings and their consuming nature. The system designed to study and stop the extinction of species can be harmful instead of helpful. Constant management may be the only salvation for some species.

This book does a good job of covering the issues that a journalist must consider when writing about the effort to save endangered, disappearing species.

—Mike Dunne

## Free media directory on global change

The first edition of the *Global Change Media Directory 1999*, published by NASA's Earth Observing System Project Science Office and offering a ready source of international expertise on global climate change science and policy, is available free to journalists and science writers. Copies will be available at the SEJ annual conference in Los Angeles or can be requested at the locations listed below.

The directory includes indices of researchers by area of expertise, affiliation, and geographic location. Listings on researchers include complete contact information, descriptions of scientific and policy expertise, personal Web sites, and their roles in the EOS program.

The 240 scientists included in the directory represent over 30 scientific disciplines at the center of NASA's Earth Observing System program, from ozone chemistry and natural hazards to global warming and land use change.

To request a free copy, contact Emilie Lorditch, NASA EOS Project Science Office, Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md., phone: (301) 441-4031, fax: (301) 441-2432, e-mail: [elorditc@pop900.gsfc.nasa.gov](mailto:elorditc@pop900.gsfc.nasa.gov).

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# The reporting life: A view from the other side

By PETER PAGE

When I last ran into Beth Parke at an SEJ event it was the first time I'd seen her since I left the environmental reporting slot at the *Trenton Times*. Beth recommended I write about my adventures, posing the question, "How differently do you see reporters, the media, and life in general now that you have traded out your life as an indentured ink-stained wretch for the glamour life of state apologist?" Or something to that effect.

It's been nearly two years since I kissed goodbye the reporter's life. My mourning period is over and the changes are taking hold. For instance, I who prided myself on never missing a deadline, am months late submitting this article to *SEJournal*. In government things are due immediately or in the undefined future. That pace is very easy to adapt.

The work-a-day routine is different when I am the one receiving calls from reporters instead of the reporter making the calls. A certain tension is inevitable between the true believers and the apostate, even when the apostate still thinks of himself as part of the tribe. As Vonnegut wrote, so it goes.

Why exactly I pulled the plug on my journalism career is still something of a mystery to me. There was no single cataclysm that sent me skidding out the door on a midlife avalanche, just the fuse of my impulsive nature burning toward an accumulation of irritations and disillusionment.

Two or three years ago I petulantly resigned a column after being irked one time too many by an editor legendary for pomposity and daytime drinking. There was another incident in which I broke a story about some disingenuous state budget shuffling related to an environmental matter. The story caused a brief stir. A year passed. Another reporter at a distant paper wrote the exact same story, causing the exact same stir among the exact same people. My first reaction was indignation that my reporting had been plagiarized. The far more depressing reality is that my earlier reporting had simply been forgotten. More time passed and the story was reported anew every so often, like the periodic "discovery" of America.

I left, and after a brief but sobering

stint in the corporate world, took my present job as director of communications at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. People still ask, "Gee, it must be different now that you are on the inside." Well, yes, sort of, but in large measure I see both the DEP, the very agency I covered for four years, and my erstwhile reporting colleagues just as I always did. The angle of the view is admittedly changed.

When I was drawing a paycheck for writing environmental stories I believed far too much of the environmental reporting on the state level was about funding,

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## Viewpoints

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

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staffing, lobbying, process, the cops-and-robbers aspect of enforcement, vilification of industry and bureaucracy and the gullible acceptance of much that is spoken by environmentalists. I still think so.

The obligation to report facts, or at least purported facts that can be attributed to some seemingly credible source, allows reporters an easy excuse for dumbing down the complexity of the real world. Consider this case in point. The National Audubon Society issued a report in July 1998, "Sharks on the Line," that slammed New Jersey. Merry Camhi, a staff scientist for Audubon's Living Oceans Program, was quoted on the front page of the *Star-Ledger*, by far the state's largest paper, saying "New Jersey is not doing anything to protect its declining shark population."

The one all-encompassing criticism is that New Jersey's shark fishing regulations are weaker than federal regulations. Only in the 14th graph was it reported that 99 percent of the sharks landed in New Jersey are caught in federal waters by people holding federal permits. The unstated touchstone of reality is

that if New Jersey banned shark fishing in state waters and executed people found fishing sharks, almost exactly the same number of sharks would be caught. If the state adopted the federal regulations, exactly the same number of sharks would be caught. A story lurks in there somewhere but it is not that New Jersey is especially callous toward sharks.

The DEP was, and remains, easily lampooned. When I covered it as a reporter I thought of it as a sprawling bureaucracy populated by mostly very bright people who, on good days, do not actively work at cross-purposes. It is a sort of hive intelligence with Down syndrome—slow-moving, eager to please, puzzled by the consistent disapproval of the larger world. It looks a lot like that from the inside, though it is easier to view it sympathetically when it is also the source of my paycheck.

My reporter colleagues, God bless'm, also look a lot the same from this end of the conversation. When they are in a rush, and that's most of the time, they like things simplified and get petulant when matters are complex. They sincerely believe hammering their stories into one-dimensional morality plays—slothful bureaucracy, wicked industry, plucky environmentalists, victimized citizenry—is something different from "spin." It is different in motive but not in consequence. It yields one slice of the truth that, by sole virtue of being published, becomes the sole version of the truth.

What I miss most about reporting, aside from the pure fun of working in a newsroom, is that franchise on the truth market.

There is a warm glow that comes from working a job that is specifically protected by the First Amendment. I traded that for the proverbial seat at the table where policy and regulation are hammered out. Like reporting, it is exciting, though not as consistently, and the results are often just as blurry.

My job here is likely to end when this administration leaves office in a couple of years. Expect me to knock on your doors, asking to be let back into the family. ❖



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## Urban sprawl? How about “house sprawl”

# Building designs getting green tint

By KAREN CHRISTENSEN

If you're looking for feature material about how environmental ideas play out in real life, green design and architecture is a rapidly growing area replete with human interest and some serious dilemmas.

For example, while urban sprawl is a hot environmental topic, green designers are trying to address the problem of “house sprawl.” U.S. houses are getting bigger, while families are getting smaller. Public spending on construction is down but the high-end housing market is strong.

Environmentalists are concerned: building big houses uses more resources and creates more waste, and in the long term these trophy houses—sometimes called McMansions—use excessive amounts of energy, water, and other resources.

Energy efficiency and daylighting—strategic placement of windows for illumination—are also becoming the buzzwords in school construction, to save money, reduce environmental impact, and create a healthier learning environment for students.

The design industry is becoming consciousness of the health and environmental effects of solvents and other art products, and many designers are going with new kinds of paper and recycling materials. Rough textured paper with postconsumer content is used for annual reports from a few major corporations, and Starbucks coffee cups come with a recycled paper wrap. Even Crane, the traditional paper mill in Pittsfield, Mass., which supplies the U.S. government with paper for its currency, manufactures paper made from recycled jeans and a non-tree paper made from kenaf. A switch to hemp paper for currency hasn't yet been suggested, though hemp activists claim that this would be a return to our 19th century roots.)

One trend is use of reclaimed and recycled materials for upmarket furniture and household goods, from tables and chairs crafted of wood reclaimed from old buildings to lamps made

from old bicycle parts. These distinctive high-ticket products, which sell in boutiques and gift shops, often exhibit an innovative and contemporary design sense.

In many parts of the world, of course, using old stuff is considered the way of the pauper. It's no accident that patched and pieced-together jeans and handbags made from old rubber tires sell in good times and in rich countries. The challenge for green designers is to get “reclaimed” into Wal-Marts and airport shops.

Another important trend is towards remanufacturing. Formerly the province of small businesses that refilled toner cartridges and rebuilt office furni-

ture, the remanufacturing industry in 1996 was a \$53 billion business employing 480,000 people in the U.S.

Colleges and universities around the country are now teaching remanufacturing in their industrial design courses and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes a Green Guide to products with recycled and remanufactured content. Major corporations, from DuPont to Kodak to General Motors, see remanufacturing as a way to improve performance and profits.

Architects, landscape designers, and town planners have begun to consider the ecological implications of the buildings, developments, and parks they help to create. This field is burgeoning, though signs at the local level are still sparse. The American Institute of Architects has a Committee on the Environment, and there are now many professional conferences on the subject where people who promote a spirituality in building are turning up on platforms with representatives from floor covering manufacturers.

Green architecture includes planning ways to save trees, avoid damage to tree roots, preserve streams, reduce pollution from the construction process, and replanting native species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Wetlands can be protected from sediment and runoff, and buildings can be designed around natural features and views. The height of buildings can be planned to stay within the height of trees. Ecological design also includes an emphasis on vernacular design—using the materials, colors, shapes, and structures traditional or native to a city or region. The stories are out there.

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*Karen Christensen is an occasional journalist, full-time publisher, and author of The Green Home and other books about the environment.*

*The  
challenge  
for green  
designers  
is to get  
“reclaimed”  
goods into  
Wal-Mart.*



## Resources

*Environmental Building News* (EBN) is a newsletter for professionals. Contact them at [ebn@ebuild.com](mailto:ebn@ebuild.com) or visit their website at <http://www.ebuild.com>

Green Building Resources is an annual issue of EBN that includes books, journals, online information, and videos, available on the Web. Their url is:

<http://www.ebuild.com/Biblio/Biblio.html>

The Committee on the Environment (COTE) is a professional interest area of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) located on the Web at <http://www.e-architect.com>

*Environmental Design and Construction*, a monthly magazine sent free to journalists and the building industry. Request subscriptions at [envdc@aol.com](mailto:envdc@aol.com).

## SEPTEMBER

13-17. **4th International Conference on Modeling of Global Climate Change and Variability.** Hamburg, Germany. This meeting will host presentations on improvements in scientists' ability to model climate, extending such models to deal with monsoons and El Niños, and predicting extreme events. Contact Lydia Dumenil, Max-Planck Institut for Meteorology, Bundesstrasse 55, D-20146, Hamburg, Germany Phone: (49)40-41173-310. Fax: (49)40-41173-366. E-mail: mpi-conference@dkrz.de  
URL: <http://www.mpimet.mpg.de/~mpi-conference>

15-16. **Intensive Forest Management: Impacts on Wildlife.** Columbia, S.C. Contact Chris Isaacson, Phone: (334) 821-922. Fax: (334) 821-9296.  
E-mail: isaacson@preceda.com,

15-16. **International Energy & Environmental Expo.** Cincinnati. With a focus on the needs of commercial and utility energy users, this conference has scheduled sessions on energy-star performance specifications for equipment, sustainable building design, new developments in lighting, effects of climate change on energy efficiency, and life-cycle analyses of energy sources. Contact Ruthie Fowler. Phone: (770) 447-5083. E-mail: info@aeeecenter.org  
URL: <http://www.aeeecenter.org/shows/details.html?id=6>

15-17. **American Petroleum Institute Storage Tank Conference.** San Diego. This meeting features presentations on the leaking underground storage tanks and the development of new technologies that will permit petroleum products to be stored more safely. Contact Madeleine Sellouk, American Petroleum Institute. Phone: (202) 682-8332.  
URL: <http://www.api.org/events>

16-19. **The Ninth National Conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists.** Hosted by the University of California, Los Angeles. Contact Beth Parke, SEJ executive director, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, Pa. 19118-0280. Phone: (215) 836-9970. Fax: (215) 836-9972. E-mail: sej@sej.org.  
URL: <http://www.sej.org/conferences>

20-23. **International Conference on Environmental Radioactivity in the Arctic.** Edinburgh, Scotland. Contact SEPA Public Affairs. Phone: (44) 1786-45-7700. Fax: (44) 1786-44-8040. E-mail: public.affairs@sepa.org.uk

20-23. **EPA Region III Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Conference** (of interest to emergency planners and responders, civilian and military environmental coordinators, medical, and industry personnel). Washington, D.C. Contact Diane Varhola, KRA Corporation, 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 890, Silver Spring, Md. 20901. Phone: (877) 804-CEPP. Fax: (301) 495-9410. E-mail: dvarhola@kra.com  
URL: <http://www.epacepp.com>

20-23. **Food & Forestry: Global Change and Global**

**Challenges.** University of Reading, England. The meeting will focus on environmental consequences of increasing the production of food, agricultural fuels, and fiber; how climate might affect these agricultural systems; and anticipating how climate change will affect agricultural pests, diseases, and weed growth. Contact Sarah Wilkinson, Food & Forestry Conference Secretariat, Elsevier Science, The Boulevard, Langford Lane, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1GB, United Kingdom. Phone: (44) 1865-843-691. Fax: (44) 1865-843-958.  
E-mail: sm.wilkinson@elsevier.co.uk  
URL: <http://www.elsevier.nl/homepage/sag/gcte99/sec.htm>

22-24. **Michigan SAF/Canadian Institute of Forestry Joint Meeting.** Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. Ecosystem/Landscape Management: A Canadian Perspective. Contact Bill Cook. Phone: (906) 786-1575. E-mail: cookwi@pilot.msu.edu

22-24. **Environmental Problem-Solving with Geographic Information Systems.** Cincinnati. Sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency, this meeting will focus on how geographic information systems might be employed to monitor for pollution, assess the magnitude of contamination, model risk, and play a role in cleanup and restoration efforts. Contact Lisa Enderle, SAIC, Ste. 300, 2222 Gallows Rd. Dunn Loring, Va. 22027. Phone: (412) 741-5462. Fax: (703) 698-6101. E-mail: lisa.e.enderle@cpxm.saic.com  
URL: <http://www.epa.gov/ttnbrml/>

23-25. **International Conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration.** (planning symposia on topics such as watershed politics, the restoration of public lands, and the role of local communities in the stewardship of their lands). San Francisco. Contact. Society for Ecological Restoration, 1207 Seminole Highway, Ste. B, Madison, Wis. Phone: (608) 262-9547. E-mail: ser@vms2.macc.wisc.edu  
URL: <http://www.sercal.org/ser99.htm>

24-26. **Conference on the Impact of White-Tailed Deer on the Biodiversity and Economy of Pennsylvania.** Harrisburg, Pa. Agency, academics, hunters, conservationists, farmers, and silviculturists will present the current understandings from their viewpoints of how deer effect the Pa. ecosystem. One major purpose is to enlist hunters to restore the ecological balance. Birds, insects, small mammals, wildflowers, crops, and soil are all affected by excess deer. Contact Cindy Dunn, PA Audubon Society, 1104 Fernwood Ave, Camp Hill, PA 17011. Phone: (717) 763-4981. E-mail: cdunn@audubon.org

25-30. **Estuarine Research Federation's 15th Biennial International Conference.** New Orleans. This conference features sessions on topics ranging from eutrophication and chemical pollution to the restoration of contaminated estuaries and their ecological systems. Contact Denise Reed. Phone: (504) 280-7395. E-mail: djreed@uno.edu  
URL: <http://erf.org/erf99/erf99.html>

27-29. **Earth Technologies Forum: Conference on Climate Change and Ozone Protection** (including sessions on emis-

sions trading, halon management, methyl bromide, forestry, heat island effects, illegal trade in greenhouse emitters, and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol). Washington, D.C. Contact Conference planners, 2111 Wilson Blvd., Ste. 850, Arlington, Va. 22201. Phone: (703) 807-4052. Fax: (703) 243-2874. E-mail: earthforum@alcalde-fay.com. URL: <http://www.earthforum.com>

28-Oct. 1. **Sustainable Land-use Management: the Challenge of Ecosystem Protection.** Salzau, Schleswig Holstein, Germany. This conference, which will be conducted in English, will feature sessions on biological markers of sustainable development, what it takes to protect ecosystems, and case studies. Contact Uta Schauerte, Ecology Center, University of Kiel, Schauenburgerstrasse 112, 24118 Kiel, Germany. Phone: (49) 431-880-4030. Fax: (49) 431-880-4083. E-mail: utas@pz-oekosys.uni-kiel.de URL: <http://www.ecology.uni-kiel.de/slm99/>

30. **Emerging Issues in Environmental Policy.** Washington, D.C. This one-day conference, hosted by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., will take up issues of environmental protection and private property, how the information revolution affects the environment, and what should be on the environmental agenda for the next 30 years. Contact Susan Nugent, Program Assistant, Division of U.S. Studies, Woodrow Wilson International Center, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004-3027. Phone: (202) 691-4147. Fax: (202) 471-4001. E-mail: nugentsu@wwic.si.edu URL: <http://wwics.si.edu>

## OCTOBER

2. **Second Annual "Meet the Editors" Conference.** Boulder, Colo. Sponsored by the Colorado Magazine Writers Institute, this day-long event will bring editors from *Smithsonian*, *Parents*, *National Wildlife*, *Health*, and *Woman's Day* to describe what they look for in freelance articles. Co-sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the American Society of Journalists and Authors and the University of Colorado School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Contact Catherine Dold. Phone: (303) 543-2390. E-mail: asjarocky@aol.com URL: <http://www.asja.org/rockycon.htm>

3-7. **Canadian Institute of Forestry Annual Meeting—Back to the Future in 100 Years.** Banff, Alberta, Canada. Contact Canadian Institute of Forestry. Phone: (780) 422-5587. Fax: 780-427-2513.

4-6. **Rebuild The Cities of Tomorrow: Shaping our Cities for the 21st Century** (major topics include urban energy planning, protection of cultural heritage in building restoration and construction, sustainable mobility and integration of renewable energies in urban planning). Barcelona, Spain. Contact Alberto Douglas Scotti, EnergiaTA-Florence, Piazza Savonarola 10, 50132 Firenze, Italy. Phone: +39 055/5002174. Fax: +39-055/573425. E-mail: eta.fi@etaflorence.it URL: <http://www.etaflorence.it/041099.htm>

12-14. **Aquatic Nuisance Species: A focus on the Southeast.** Charleston, S.C. This meeting focuses on non-native species—weedy flora and fauna—that have arrived in Southeastern waters, movement to stem the flow of new species into U.S. waters, and threats that have already hit elsewhere in North America (such as the round goby) and could arrive in the Southeast. Contact North Carolina Sea Grant, NC State University, Box 8605, Raleigh, N.C. 27695-8605. URL: <http://www.dnr.state.sc.us/water/envaff/aquatic/ansconference.html>

13-15. **Disposal and Utilization of Sewage Sludge Treatment Methods and Application Modalities.** Athens, Greece. Contact Andreas Andreadakis, Organizing Committee, Water Resources department, National Technical University of Athens, 5 Iroon Polytechniou St., 15773 Athens, Greece. Phone: (30)1-772-2897. Fax: (30)1-772-2899. E-mail: andre1@central.ntua.gr

18-20. **International Workshop on Ultraviolet Radiation Exposure, Measurement, and Protection** (including sessions on health effects of exposures from lasers, sun lamps, and outdoor exposure, and the efficacy of protective measures, such as shade, clothing, sun glasses and sun screens). Chilton, England. Contact Colin Driscoll, National Radiological Protection Board, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon, United Kingdom OX11 0RQ. Phone: for press: (44) 1235-822744. Fax: (44) 1235-822601. E-mail: colin.driscoll@nrpb.org.uk URL: <http://www.nrpb.org.uk>

18-21. **15th Annual Conference on Contaminated Soils** (including sessions on bioremediation, chemical analysis, case studies, brownfields, military installations, chlorinated pesticides and other chemicals, jet fuel, MTBE, and role of growing plants in cleanups). Amherst, Mass. Contact Denise Leonard, Environmental Health Sciences, N344 Morrill, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01003. Fax: (413) 545-4692. E-mail: dleonard@schoolph.umass.edu. URL: <http://www.aehs.com>

30-31. **Conservation and Ecology of Turtles of the Mid-Atlantic Region.** Laurel, Md. Contact Chris Swarth, Phone: (410) 741-9330. Fax: (410) 741-9346. E-mail: jugbay@clark.net URL: <http://web.aacpl.lib.md.us/rp/parks/Jugbay>

## NOVEMBER

1-2. **Leadership Conference: Biomedical Research and the Environment.** Bethesda, Md. The biomedical research community and its business, healthcare, and environmental partners are developing a program of pollution prevention in all aspects of biomedical research (e.g., energy efficiency, waste management, construction of facilities). Convened by NAPE, APPA, NIEHS (NIH), and EPA. Contact John Grupenhoff, PhD, National Association of Physicians for the Environment, 6410 Rockledge Drive, Suite 412, Bethesda, Md. 20817. Phone: (301) 571-9790. Fax: (301) 530-8910. E-mail: nape@napenet.org URL: <http://www.napenet.org>



## War...(from page 1)

accompanying NATO bombing. NATO bombing did extensive damage to the Belgrade zoo as many animals were killed by bombs or by soldiers. Doctors are concerned about long-term health problems among residents following the Pentagon admission that it used weapons containing depleted uranium, a radioactive metal. Huge quantities of naphtha and other toxic chemicals were released into the environment when fuel storage depots were destroyed by bombs.

Scientists are particularly concerned about groundwater contamination. "By burning down enormous quantities of naphtha and its derivatives more than a hundred highly toxic chemical compounds that pollute water, air and soil are released. When these three elementary conditions of life are endangered, the basis of life for all the people on the Balkan Peninsula as well as those in the neighboring regions is also in danger," said Radoja.

Vital food supplies were contaminated. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were released into the environment when transformer stations were bombed. Petroleum products leaked into the Danube River following the bombing of the Pancevo industrial center and a refinery at Novi Sad. Ammonia and hydrogen chloride also leaked into the Danube.

Heavy metals, including copper, cadmium, chromium, and lead—all likely byproducts of the battle—have been detected in the Danube in Romania. Bombing and other military activities did extensive damage to wildlife habitats throughout the region. In Yugoslavia, military activity did extensive damage to parks and preserves, including Kopaonik Mountain, Tara Mountain and Sarplanina Mountain National Parks and the Vrsacke Planine Mountains. Natural Reserve.

As a NATO environmental assessment team arrived in late July, residents in Panchevo, Yugoslavia, blamed contaminated soil, air and water for an epidemic of rashes, fever, diarrhea and miscarriages. "Suddenly, it's become dangerous to live, even breathe, here," said Simon Bancov, the government's regional health inspector. "NATO has poisoned us all."

Weeks after the bombing ended, Panchevo's medical clinic was packed with people vomiting in the waiting room, fighting to breathe and covered in full body rashes. Many physicians are advising women to have abortions. And doctors fear that health problems will worsen with time.

But NATO can't take all the blame for the environmental problems. Officials of this town, located 12 miles northeast of Belgrade, dumped 9,500 tons of ammonia

into the Danube River for fear the tanks holding it would be bombed by NATO.

"Now you can smell the chemicals in the air as soon as you arrive," said Pekka Haavisto, Finland's former environmental minister, who was directing the NATO investigative team. "The potential danger is alarming."

Despite the grim short-term situation, most agree it will take time to assess the long-term damage resulting from the Balkan conflict. "The longer-term environmental impacts still need further definition," said a report by The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe.

Destruction of natural resources has long been an inevitable byproduct of military conflict. But the involvement of environmental reporters in war coverage has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Though the bombing of Japan during World War II or the defoliation of Vietnamese jungles obviously attracted a great deal of coverage, the greater issue of long-term damage to human health and the environment was not widely raised until many years later.

Perhaps the first military conflict to attract widespread attention from environmental reporters was the war in the Persian Gulf. *CNN* and networks worldwide joined publications like the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* in sending specialty reporters to Kuwait to document the environmental destruction caused by Iraqi forces. Even those news outlets with general assignment reporters on the scene could not ignore the massive environmental destruction.

More than 600 oil wells were ablaze, filling the Kuwaiti skies with an eerie mixture of toxic black smoke and bright orange flame. Day and night blended together as the smoky blanket blocked the sun. And oil fire experts from the United States and Canada labored under incredibly difficult conditions as they fought to cap the wells and quell the inferno. At least one reporter died when the exhaust system of his four-wheel drive ignited a standing pool of oil.

"If hell had a national park, it would be those oil fires," Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly told reporters on the scene. Other journalists headed south to

*(Continued on next page)*



**Kuwaiti oil fires sparked widespread environmental-angle war coverage.**

© RAE TYSON

## War...(from page 19)

*“If hell had a national park, it would be those oil fires.”*

— William Reilly  
U.S. EPA

Saudi Arabia to document oil spill damage in the gulf that accompanied the Iraqi soldier's demolition of crude oil pipelines at water's edge. Wildlife rescue stations were set up along the Saudi border and interna-

tional crews worked with booms and vacuum trucks to capture the floating crude oil.

Environmentally and ecologically, I think this will rank as one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th Century,” atmospheric scientist Robert R.P. Chase told *Science News* at the time.

Despite the immediate impact on human health and the environment, documenting the long-term impact of war can be more difficult. The South obviously recovered from Sherman's fiery march during the Civil War only to have its environment assaulted later by more peaceful forces. Several generations of Japanese suffered the effects of radiation exposure. The long-term damage to Japanese society is immeasurable.

Though there has been substantial

debate, there is significant evidence that hundreds of American soldiers suffered irreparable physical and mental harm as a result of exposure to Agent Orange. In the Persian Gulf region, the oil well fires have long been extinguished and the long-term environmental damage may be less severe than originally predicted. In Kosovo and the neighboring region, the jury is still out.

On the other hand, some argue that war can actually be beneficial to natural resources. SEJ member Merritt Clifton, editor of *Animal People* and a frequent listserv contributor, reacted recently to the posted suggestion that “the safety of wild animals—some of them endangered—may also be severely jeopardized by human conflict.” Responded Clifton: “This much more often cuts the other way. Much wildlife thrives when humans blow themselves to hell and gone, reducing vehicular traffic, clearing populations out of no-man's-land, leaving abundant carrion lying around.

“The actual fighting is as deadly to animals as to humans, of course, because animals are every bit as vulnerable to explosions, fires and smoke. And animals who can be eaten or whose parts can be profitably sold, like elephants and gorillas, are particularly vulnerable to poach-

ing by guerrillas, too.

“After the fighting, though, particular types of animals tend to do quite a lot better than humans in certain common war-created habitats: amid minefields (e.g. birds), amid high radiation (crustaceans), in the wrecks of sunken ships (reef fish), in old concrete bunkers (bats), and so forth. And don't overlook the value of bomb craters in creating wetlands. The B-52 run that 20 years ago killed everything within a few city blocks may be an enormous boon to today's water birds.

“Most animals also benefit by being able to reproduce faster than humans, and they are also not necessarily dependent upon the same kinds of water sources and food plants as people, so that if we've destroyed our own sources, the animals may benefit more by our absence than suffer from what we've done.”

Few would argue, however, that polluted water, contaminated soils, and dangerous radiation exposure benefit no one.

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*Rae Tyson, SEJ co-founder and former president, has been writing about environmental issues for more than two decades. An adjunct journalism professor at the University of Maryland, he left the profession in 1997 and now works for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in Washington, DC.*

## Flowery prose...(from page 1)

something. He may have been the only one in the newsroom who had any idea what to call either the flower or the butterfly.

Now I want my journalism students to appreciate what's growing outside of city hall. I want them to be able to describe the beauty of natural habitat. I want them to know how to name the trees and flowers, and a lot about the necessity of preserving them. It's a small part of my course, but my favorite part.

We had a visit at our school from a Pulitzer prize winner who covered the Mississippi floods for the *New York Times*. Isabel Wilkerson told my students that the one of the first things she asked people was what kind of trees grew in the flood plain. Knowledge of nature is a tool of the writer.

We all know this from school days. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth—all made nature part of literature. Reading the translation of the novel *Madame Bovary* for the first time recently, I was fascinated by Flaubert's exquisite descriptions of the flowers in the village in which this tragic drama took place. Flaubert knew his violets, although one wonders how every flower seemed to bloom in the same season for him.

Writing about what actually surrounds us is an art practiced only by a few special people. I am reminded of the all-purpose *New York Times* lede that stereotypically starts out “This moss-draped Southern town has seen better times” or something to this effect. Well, at least the reporter could recognize moss.

Newspapers, north or south, are

always importing a hired hand from the Sierra Club to write the important nature piece, or farming articles out to the garden editor. In the quick pace of the news business, many reporters move from city to city without much time to think systematically about our wild surroundings or the flower folklore of our communities.

So here's what I do.

I ask my sophomore journalism students in my Use of Information Resources class to pick flowers, have them identified by an expert, learn their origins and their distribution. Are they edible? Did they have medicinal purposes? Is there a myth behind them?

Truly, this television generation needs to get outside.

“I can't believe you're asking us to do this,” said one young lady. “I don't go outdoors. I don't sit on the grass. I don't

## Flowery prose...(from page 20)

do any of this. And where am I going to find a flower?" So we walk around campus and we see umpteen kinds of wildflowers around buildings, and even in cracks in the sidewalk. Surprise, surprise. Students come back to me, flowers in hands, essays and drawings in their notebooks, and plenty on their minds.

"I'm usually not the outdoors type of person," wrote one young lady, "but since I have done some exploring, I have learned to overlook the bumblebees." She found out that the common "spiderwort" she picked was used by Indians as a cooked vegetable.

Another student chose dandelions, whose jagged leaves come from the French for "tooth of the lion." She wrote, "I heard my great grandmother talk about dandelion tea, so the first thing I did with the dandelion shoots I collected was boil them in water."

She found that the Puritans so treasured dandelions that they brought them over from Europe for medicine, including treatment for internal ailments. They are rich in vitamin A, calcium, and iron and the young shoots make excellent salads.

"The next time I'm in the park," she wrote, "I certainly won't just think, "My, what a pretty flower."

Indeed. We know today, for instance, that 25 percent of all drugs contain at least one component from flowering plants. We can write about the wonders of the St. John's wort in fighting depression. This plant grows around our region in profusion.

One young lady found that the plant with the name "daisy fleabane" can "also be used as flour if roasted and ground." She wrote, "It was nice to have an excuse to 'stop and smell the flowers.'"

A young man with a religious background remembered how I had brought into class a passionflower, whose petals and sepals represented the disciples of Christ to the Spanish conquistadors. The young man examined a clover. "I look at the clover and I see a hundred white winged angels singing praises to the Lord as they watch over the earth."

Moss, my students discovered, is a member of the same family as the pineapple, and was once used to stuff mattresses. Hawksbeard is a relative of the dandelion. The evening primrose is a food, a medicine and a source of Vitamin F. One student found that his grandmother long ago made an alcoholic beverage from summer's mulberry juice and used to sell it to people at Christmas time.

## Bidding for the paradise beat

It was the kind of offer that makes journalists' mouths water.

Come to Hawaii for a month, all expenses paid, plus a stipend of \$2,000. Housing and travel costs around the islands included. Work on a single in-depth environmental research project to be published as a cover article in *Environment Hawai'i*. And maybe give a lecture at the University of Hawaii on the side.

Mouths watered, and inquiries poured in—"more than a hundred, with about 30 serious applications," according to *Environment Hawai'i* editor Pat Tummons.

"I was very impressed with the quality of applicants," said Ms. Tummons. "The downside was writing so many rejection notices to such obviously capable and talented people." She

hopes the program can be repeated in the future.

And the winner this year was...Christopher Joyce, of *National Public Radio*, based in Washington. He will travel to Hawaii for the month of September, accompanied by his wife and two children.

His project was undetermined at this writing, but according to Ms. Tummons, "he will be looking into management of natural-area reserves out here."

*Environment Hawai'i* is a monthly newsletter now in its 10th year of publishing long, investigative articles on subjects that pertain to Hawaii's environment. The journalist-in-residence program is sponsored by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL ABRAMS

**Victoria Brown studies *Lantana camara***

When we went on a visit to a wildlife refuge some years ago, one of the students pointed to the cattails in the swamp and said, "I remember my grandmother used to use those for cooking."

Another former student, Victoria Brown, now reports for the *Tallahassee Democrat* as I did 20 years ago. She's an excellent reporter with a fine writing touch. She stops to smell the flowers. She wrote the following in the class years ago:

"I will never write a story the same way again. Now I will sprinkle it with details about the weather, flowers on the ground or the fragrance in the air."

That's a big part of what I want to teach.

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*Michael Abrams is a journalism professor at Florida A&M University, a member of the Native Plant Society, and the photographer and designer of Florida Wildflower Showcase at <http://www.flwildflowers.com>. He recently joined SEJ as an academic member.*



# The Beat Correspondents

## Contribute to The Beat

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

To submit ideas for possible mention in The Beat, contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s) or contact Beat editor Chris Rigel at (215) 836-9970 or rigel@voicenet.com.

### Alabama—Vacant

**Alaska**—Elizabeth Manning, *Anchorage Daily News*, 1001 Northway Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99508, emanning@adn.com, (907) 257-4323, fax: (907) 258-2157

**Arizona and New Mexico**—Patti Epler, *Phoenix New Times*, P.O. Box 2510, Phoenix, Ariz. 85002, pepler@newtimes.com, (602) 229-8451

**Arkansas**—Robert McAfee, Thinking Like A Mountain Institute, 2610 West Hackett Rd, Hackett, Ark. 72937, arkenved@aol.com, (501) 638-7151

### California:

**Northern California**—Mark Grossi, *Fresno Bee*, 1626 E Street, Fresno, Calif. 93786-0001, mgrossi@pacbell.net, (209) 441-6316

**San Francisco Bay Area**—Jane Kay, *San Francisco Examiner*, Box 7260, San Francisco, Calif. 94120, janekay@examiner.com, (415) 777-8704

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

**Colorado**—Todd Hartman, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 30 S. Prospect St., Colorado Springs, Colo. 80903, toddh@gazette.com, (719) 636-0285

**Connecticut, Rhode Island**—Peter Lord, *Providence Journal*, 75 Fountain St., Providence, R.I. 02902, plord@projo.com, (401) 277-8036

**District of Columbia**—Cheryl Hogue, BNA, *Daily Environment Report*, 1231 25th St., N.W., Room 361-S, Wash., D.C. 20037, chogue@bna.com, (202) 452-4625, fax (202) 452-7891

### Florida

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**South Florida**—Andrew Conte, *Stuart News*, 1591 Port St. Lucie Boulevard #K, Stuart, Fla. 34592, conte@stuartnews.com, (561) 337-5827

**Georgia**—Christopher Schwarzen, *The Macon*

*Telegraph*, 120 Broadway, Macon, Ga., 31208, (912) 744-4213, fax (912) 744-4385, cschwarzen@macontel.com

**Hawaii**—Pat Tummons, *Environment Hawaii*, 282 Ululani Street, Hilo Hawaii 96720, (808) 934-0115, fax: (808) 934-8321, pattum@aloha.net

**Idaho**—Rocky Barker, *Idaho Statesman*, 2875 Harmony Street, Boise, Idaho 83707, (208) 377-6484, rbarker@micron.net

**Illinois**—Jonathon Ahl, *WCBU 89.9*, 1501 W. Bradley Avenue, Peoria, Ill. 61625, ahl@bradley.edu, (309) 677-2761

**Iowa**—Perry Beeman, *Des Moines Register*, P.O. Box 957, Des Moines, Iowa 50304, pbeeman@news.dmreg.com, (515) 284-8538

**Kansas**—Mike Mansur, *Kansas City Star*, 1729 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo. 64108, mmansur@kcstar.com, (816) 234-4433

### Kentucky—vacant

**Louisiana**—Mike Dunne, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, Box 588, Baton Rouge, La. 70821-0588, mdunne@theadvocate.com (504) 383-0301

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

**Maryland and Delaware**—Tim Wheeler, *The Sun*, 501 N. Calvert St., Baltimore, Md. 21278, tbwheeler@aol.com, (301) 332-6564

**Massachusetts**—David Liscio, *Daily Evening Item*, 38 Exchange Street, Lynn, Mass. 01903, dliscio@aol.com, (781) 593-7700

**Michigan**—Jeremy Pearce, *Detroit News*, 615 W. Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit, Mich. 48226, (313) 223-4825

**Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota**—Tom Meersman, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 425 Portland Ave., Minneapolis, Minn. 55488, meersman@startribune.com, (612) 673-4414

**Missouri**—Bill Allen, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 900 N. Tucker Blvd., St. Louis, Mo. 63101, 72263.3236@compuserve.com, (314) 340-8127

**Montana**—Todd Wilkinson, P.O. Box 422, Bozeman, Mont. 59771, tawilk@aol.com, (406) 587-4876

**Nebraska**—Julie Anderson, *Omaha World-Herald*, 1334 Dodge Street, Omaha, Neb. 68102, julieand@radiks.net, (402) 444-1000 ext. 1223

### New Jersey—Vacant

**New York**—Erik Nelson, *Long Island Voice*, P.O. Box 583, Miller Place, N.Y. 11764, envirovox@aol.com, (516) 744-5161

**Nevada**—Mary Manning, *Las Vegas Sun*, 800 S. Valley View Blvd., Las Vegas, Nev. 89107, manning@lasvegassun.com, (702)

259-4065

### North Carolina—vacant

**Ohio, Indiana**—Charlie Prince, *Ohio Environmental Reporter*, 516 Ludlow Ave. Cincinnati, Ohio 45220, (513) 221-0954, chasprince@aol.com,

### Oklahoma—vacant

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

### Puerto Rico/Caribbean Islands—Vacant

### South Carolina—Vacant

**Tennessee and Mississippi**—Debbie Gilbert, *The Memphis Flyer*, 460 Tennessee Street, Memphis, Tenn. 38103, (901) 521-9000, gilbert@memphisflyer.com,

### Texas :

**North Texas**—Randy Loftis, *The Dallas Morning News*, 508 Young St., Dallas, Texas 75202, loftis@ix.netcom.com, (800) 431-0010

**Central and West Texas**—Robert Bryce, *The Austin Chronicle*, 3812 Brookview, Austin, Texas 78722, rbryce@compuserve.com, (512) 454-5766

**East and Coastal Texas**—Bill Dawson, *The Houston Chronicle*, Box 4260, Houston, Texas 77210, bill.dawson@chron.com, (713) 220-7171

**Utah**—Brent Israelsen, *Salt Lake Tribune*, 143 South Main, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111, israel@sltrib.com, (801) 237-2045

**Virginia**—Jeff South, Virginia Commonwealth University, 21st Century News Center, 10215 Windbluff Drive, Richmond, Va. 23233, jcsouth@vcu.edu, (804) 827-0253, fax: (804) 827-0256

**Washington, Wyoming**—Michelle Nijuis, *High Country News*, Box 1090, Paonia, Colo. 81428, michelle@hcn.org, (303) 527-4898, fax: (303) 527-4897

**West Virginia**—Ken Ward, *Charleston Gazette*, 1001 Virginia St. East, Charleston, W.Va. 25301, kenward@newwave.net, (304) 348-1702

**Wisconsin**—Chuck Quirnbach, *Wisconsin Public Radio*, 111 East Kilbourn Ave., #1060, Milwaukee Wis. 53202, quirnbach@vilas.uwex.edu, (414) 271-8686 or (608) 263-7985

**Canada**—Doug Draper, *The Standard*, 17 Queen Street, St. Catherines, ON L2R 5G5, (805) 684-7251 ext. 229.

## ARIZONA

► Bald eagles are thriving in most parts of the United States. But Arizona's desert-nesting bald eagles are still in bad shape, according to a July 2 story in the *Arizona Republic* by Jeffry Nelson. The article notes that a federal recommendation to remove the bald eagle from the Endangered Species list would mean a cut in needed federal funds for recovery efforts in Arizona. For more information, contact Nelson at [jeffry.nelson@pni.com](mailto:jeffry.nelson@pni.com) or (602) 444-7117.

► Several major copper miners announced substantial cutbacks in Southwest mining operations this summer, sparking extensive coverage of economic and environmental ramifications in Arizona and New Mexico newspapers. Phoenix-based Phelps Dodge Corp. said it will lay off 900 workers in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, while BHP Copper is ceasing all U.S. operations, eliminating 2,200 jobs in Tucson, according to July 1 articles in the *Arizona Daily Star* by reporter Richard Ducote and in the *Albuquerque Journal* by reporter Aaron Baca. For more information, contact Ducote at (520) 573-4220 or Baca at (505) 821-1800.

► The U.S. Forest Service has agreed to set aside a four-square-mile wilderness reserve in southern Arizona to protect a rare stand of wild chiltepinos, the small but searing red-hot pepper. The reserve will be the first of its kind on national forest land, according to a May 18 story by reporter Thomas Ropp in the *Arizona Republic*. For more information contact Ropp at (602) 448-8100 or [thomas.ropp@pni.com](mailto:thomas.ropp@pni.com).

► Bush Wellman Inc.'s beryllium plant in Tucson was the subject of a three-part series in the *Arizona Daily Star*. The report, by staff writers Enric Volante and Rhonda Bodfield Sander, detailed how workers had contracted a potentially deadly lung disease as well as the company's efforts to defeat stricter safety measures. The backdrop: a lawsuit by affected workers and their families. (See District of Columbia story, page 23.) For details contact Volante and Sander at (520) 573-4220.

## CALIFORNIA

► Searchers found a few northern pike in Lake Davis, the Plumas National Forest lake that was poisoned 19 months ago to eradicate the predatory fish. The fish either survived the poisoning or were dumped illegally afterward, according to the California Department of Fish and Game. The discoveries make officials uneasy because of the controversy surrounding the poisoning, which left the lake toxic from mid-October to late November in 1997.

Authorities say they are not certain what they would do if there is another infestation, but they are not talking about further poisoning. For details on this May 29 story, contact *Sacramento Bee* reporter Nancy Vogel at (916) 321-1020 or [nvogel@sacbee.com](mailto:nvogel@sacbee.com).

► A group of young California researchers has determined a parasitic worm may have something to do with troubling frog deformities, a discovery that could help answer questions about shrinking frog populations worldwide. The findings, led by Stanford University graduate Pieter Johnson, sheds a more pedestrian light on the possible cause, which had attracted theories ranging from ozone depletion to pesticides.

Taking clues from ponds in Santa Clara County where they found many polliwogs with extra or missing hind legs, Johnson and his colleagues discovered that certain flatworms burrow into polliwogs' limb buds. The fast-growing cells in those parts of the body were disrupted at a critical development stage.

Johnson, now a research associate at Claremont McKenna College in Southern California, said he does not believe a single cause can be blamed for the deformities. For more information on this April 30 story, contact *Sacramento Bee* reporter Edie Lau at [Elau@sacbee.com](mailto:Elau@sacbee.com) or (916) 321-1020.

► As the rising population of the once-endangered California gray whales approaches 26,000, more and more of their bodies are turning up on beaches, perhaps signaling the limit of the Pacific's capacity to support their numbers. West Coast beach strandings reached record numbers this year, includ-

ing 32 on California's own shores. In Mexico alone, the corpses of 65 whales were reported washed up on the Pacific beaches of the Baja peninsula. Experts caution that it is too early to know if this is some kind of natural limit. But the body count will rise if the ocean's "carry capacity" has been reached and the food supply is being stretched for this giant. Contact John D. Cox, *Sacramento Bee*, at [jcox@sacbee.com](mailto:jcox@sacbee.com) or (916) 321-1020 for details on the June 9 story.

► Californians already pay recycling deposits on 13.3 billion bottles and cans each year. Under a bill that's gaining strength in Sacramento that figure could go higher—2.8 billion higher. In a legislative battle that largely pits companies who make beverages against the supermarkets and drugstores that sell them, the bill calls for requiring 2.5-cent or 5-cent deposits on many kinds of containers that were exempted from the state's original bottle law in 1986. Plastic, glass, aluminum, and steel-tin containers holding carbonated and noncarbonated water, noncarbonated soft drinks, sport drinks, ice tea, fruit juice, coffee, and tea would all have to carry a "California Redemption Value" label. With seemingly sympathetic Democrats controlling both the Senate and Assembly, and a Democrat in the governor's mansion, environmentalists see this as their best chance ever to strengthen the bottle law. The July 27 story ran in the *Contra Costa Times*. For more information, contact Jim Bruggers at (925) 943-8246 or [jbruggers@cctimes.com](mailto:jbruggers@cctimes.com).

► The popcorn at your movie house could be made from plants designed to fight off a voracious pest called the corn borer. Your baby's formula could come from soybean plants biologically transformed to withstand the herbicide Roundup. The bags of potato chips on your grocer's shelves could be sliced from spuds containing a gene that poisons Colorado potato beetles. A dramatic increase in reliance on genetic engineering may be helping produce bumper crops, but it also is raising concern that labeling laws are weak and that too little is known about potential effects on humans and the environment. As of last year, growers in the U.S., Argentina,

Canada, Australia, Mexico, Spain, France and South Africa dedicated 69.5 million acres to genetically modified crops, a 16-fold increase over just two years. The story ran on July 11 in the *San Francisco Examiner*. Contact Jane Kay at (415) 777-8704 or [janekay@examiner.com](mailto:janekay@examiner.com), or visit [www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com).

► A *San Jose Mercury News* story showed how Gov. Gray Davis and the Clinton administration are doing their best to drive a stake through the heart of one of California's most controversial environmental ideas—building a 44-mile concrete canal around San Francisco Bay's delta to make it easier to ship water to Southern California. The channel, known as the Peripheral Canal, has been at the center of bitter water fights for more than 20 years. Now it is dead until at least 2007—coincidentally, when Davis' second term will end if he is re-elected. Building the canal is not an option listed in an exhaustive environmental study by a collection of 15 state and federal agencies known as CalFed. According to the June 25 story, the group has been seeking ways since 1995 to repair the struggling ecological health of the bay and delta while providing more water for the state's farms and cities. For more information, contact Paul Rogers and Frank Sweeney, (408) 920-5045 or [progers@sjmercury.com](mailto:progers@sjmercury.com).

► Here are four words that we never thought we'd hear: "John Muir: The Musical." You don't think "high-kicking musical" when you think about the great East Bay naturalist and writer. But a Tony-nominated lyricist is writing a huge epic that will premiere next year at the Concord Pavilion. Why Muir Mania now, 85 years after his death? According to this June 24 *Contra Costa Times* story, it's the millennium, of course. Folks see in Muir the embodiment of the spiritual connection between man and nature that many long for at the turn of the century. A 21st-century environmental visionary clutching a 19th-century leaf press. He's New Agey to some, yet to others he's hard-core retro. He's a pacifist. An activist. A solitary writer who founded the Sierra Club. A man who battled the federal government yet inspired it to save millions of acres of wilderness. And he's

sexy. Need more? Contact Joe Garofoli at (925) 943-8061 or [joeg@cctimes.com](mailto:joeg@cctimes.com).

► Land managers across California are reviewing their controlled burn plans in the aftermath of an intentionally set fire that ran wild, destroying 23 homes near the Northern California town of Lewiston. Those who ignite fires for beneficial purposes are worried that the public trust they've gained in the past decade could go up in smoke because of one agency's big mistake. On July 2, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management was trying to rid 100 acres in Trinity County of yellow star thistle, a noxious invader that has blanketed much of California including the East Bay. But the flames escaped across 2,000 acres, causing \$2.25 million in damage. The BLM apologized and pledged to rebuild the homes. In the coming year, agencies plan to burn more, not less. Jim Bruggers reported on the story in the *Contra Costa Times* on July 30. For more information, contact Bruggers at [jbruggers@cctimes.com](mailto:jbruggers@cctimes.com) or (925) 943-8246.

► California has a June 2000 deadline to adopt clear, uniform, and enforceable regulations concerning methyl bromide use, according to a July 1 report in *Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News*. The compliance order settles a case brought by environmental groups against the state Department of pesticide Regulation. Methyl bromide, widely used in agriculture and structural pest control, will be banned in 2005 as an ozone depleter. For details, contact Janet Byron at (510) 848-4008 or [bjanet@earthlink.net](mailto:bjanet@earthlink.net).

► Oil refineries in Contra Costa County may be subject to surprise inspections, according to an Aug. 4 report in the *Contra Costa Times*. County health officials are to draw up a protocol for conducting the surprise visits at refineries and other industries where large amounts of hazardous waste are present. For more information, contact Denis Cuff at (925) 228-6172 or [dcuff@cctimes.com](mailto:dcuff@cctimes.com).

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► On July 15, Energy Secretary Bill

Richardson admitted that thousands of workers were exposed to the toxic metal beryllium while developing nuclear weapons beginning with the WWII-era Manhattan Project. That day, President Clinton signed a memorandum saying those workers deserved medical treatment and compensation.

But in the months leading up to the government's mea culpa, three newspapers offered in-depth reports documenting how people at government labs and private weapons contractors were unnecessarily poisoned, then callously abandoned by the government they served. Several congressmen said the news reports had increased momentum for possible legislative action and prompted a pending GAO study, although Energy Department officials said Richardson had already been considering the policy change.

On March 28 to April 2, The *Toledo Blade* reported that federal authorities knowingly allowed the private companies that produce beryllium for government weapons programs, particularly Brush Wellman, to expose workers to dangerous levels. Reporter Sam Roe's 22-month investigation included compelling profiles of dying victims and documented how cabinet-level officials helped block tighter occupational safety regulations for beryllium two decades ago.

The Chicago *Daily Southtown* on May 2-4 reported that hundreds of Manhattan Project workers at the University of Chicago were intentionally kept in the dark or misled about health risks they faced from heavy exposure to beryllium between 1943 and 1948. Based on declassified documents and interviews with survivors, reporter Kevin Carmody revealed that government officials participated in a decades-long campaign to prevent ill A-bomb workers from collecting workers compensation or suing for damages.

On May 11-19, the *Arizona Daily Star* examined how Brush Wellman had moved its most dangerous beryllium production operations to Tucson with the help of local government officials. Rhonda Bodfield Sander and Enric Volante reported that at least 25 workers had been poisoned. (See Arizona, page 22.) For more information contact Roe at (419) 724-6181, Carmody at (708)



633-5970, or Bodfield at (520) 573-4400.

► Who's in the rabbit suit heckling Vice President Al Gore at public appearances? Reporter Sara Thurin Rollin of the Bureau of National Affairs found out. Animal rights advocate Jason Baker is protesting Gore's endorsement of a voluntary program for chemical manufacturers to test industrial substances produced in the greatest volume. Currently, little is known about the effects of these chemicals. Rollin's interview with Baker appeared in the July 23 issue of *Chemical Regulation Reporter*. She can be reached at (202) 452-4584.

## FLORIDA

► A public-access battle over a small creek near Lake Okeechobee is over, according to a May 12 report in the *St. Petersburg Times*. The players—Florida's attorney general and two small environmental groups vs. Tampa-based Lykes Brothers—have agreed to a settlement that turns 18,000 acres into a state-owned wildlife management area. The settlement includes sale by the corporation of a conservation easement to 42,000 acres which will remain undeveloped. For more information, contact Craig Pittman at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

► Beginning in May 1999, economy will be added to the list of criteria in determining whether an animal should be listed as endangered. After state biologists determine an animal's eligibility to be listed, the game commission will examine social and economic impacts of listing the critter. The commission would consider, for instance, job loss or effects on development. Environmentalists question whether economy will take precedence over science. For details on this June 1 story, contact Craig Pittman at the *St. Petersburg Times* at (727) 893-8530 or [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com).

► University of Tennessee's Stuart Pimm is standing against such forces as Rush Limbaugh, the Miccosukee Tribe, St. Lucie River anglers, and an entire Dade County community in an attempt to

keep the Cape Sable seaside sparrow from joining the extinct list. The sparrow, which weaves its nest close to the ground, became threatened when the River of Grass was diverted. The river now floods the sparrows' nests annually before the young have time to fledge. For details on this June 3 story, contact Craig Pittman at (727) 893-8530 or [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com).

► Collier County, primary habitat of the Florida panther and largest nesting colony of endangered wood storks, is on the sprawl. The city of Naples is growing faster than any other metropolitan area in Florida, according to the June 14 report. Environmental groups wait to see how Gov. Jeb Bush, formerly in the real estate business, will handle the Collier county problem. For more information on this *St. Petersburg Times* story, contact Craig Pittman at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

► A thousand birds died from pesticide contamination when water managers flooded 9,000 acres of muck farm in efforts to clean up Lake Apopka, according to a June 20 report in the *St. Petersburg Times*. Apparently the shallow water attracted the birds, who were then overcome by the pesticides. The situation has alerted environmental officials to a potentially more devastating problem if the same methods are used on the 62,000 acres of sugar fields slated for a return to wetlands. Contact Craig Pittman at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

## GEORGIA

► Georgia Power confirmed in July it is being investigated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for releasing more pollution than allowed under the Clean Air Act. The EPA is studying whether seven of the utility's nine coal-powered plants needed a permit to expand electricity production after being grandfathered under the 1990 law. Georgia Power officials deny wrongdoing, saying they are only operating under the confines of the Clean Air Act. Two of the plants, Scherer and Branch, sit close to the city of Macon. Scherer is one of the largest coal-burning plants in the United States.

Earlier in the month, Georgia Power released toxin emission figures, the first time required by the EPA. The utility released about 58 million pounds of regulated toxins. Three plants surrounding Macon accounted for one-third of those emissions. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division is studying whether those emissions help form fine particulate matter, shown to cause serious health problems in other studies. Contact Christopher Schwarzen, *The Macon Telegraph*, at (912) 744-4213 or [cschwarzen@macontel.com](mailto:cschwarzen@macontel.com).

## HAWAII

► Hawaii is one of the states most vulnerable to sea level rise, and the July issue of *Environment Hawai'i* covers what the state can expect, should experts' global warming predictions prove to be right. For details contact Pat Tummons at (808) 934-0115 or [pattum@aloha.net](mailto:pattum@aloha.net).

► Efforts to sequester carbon by planting quick-growing agricultural crops could have serious effects on groundwater, according to a story in the July issue of *Environment Hawai'i*. The procedure could release substantial soil-bound nitrogen into irreplaceable underground aquifers. Contact Pat Tummons at (808) 934-0115 or [pattum@aloha.net](mailto:pattum@aloha.net).

► The proliferation of genetically engineered crops—particularly papayas—was the subject of the June edition of *Environment Hawai'i*. Staff writer Teresa Dawson discovered that the state's foremost researcher in this field was recently fined by the USDA for his failure to abide by quarantine restrictions on a test field of transgenic papayas. In addition, Dawson describes how the state and USDA both allowed rampant theft of GM papaya seed that was not yet approved for marketing and distribution. Contact Pat Tummons at (808) 934-0115 or [pattum@aloha.net](mailto:pattum@aloha.net).

## MAINE

► Media organizations nationwide reported in July on the breach ordered by the federal government of the 162-year-old Edwards Dam, a 24-foot-high, 917-foot-wide hydropower facility on the

Kennebec River. About 1,000 people attended the event, including Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Maine Gov. Angus King. The dam's removal, which will take to November to complete, is intended to restore the river ecologically, and represents the first time the federal government has ordered a dam removed against its owner's wishes. It is expected to allow shad, alewives, and Atlantic salmon to reach vital spawning grounds.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which ordered the breach, determined the river's recovery to be more important than the one-tenth of one percent of Maine's power the dam generated. Contact Dieter Bradbury at the *Press Herald*, (207) 791-6328.

► The *Portland Press Herald* reported in June that the Maine state Department of Environmental Protection planned to ask the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to investigate the deaths of three department employees in the last decade. The employees worked in the department's emergency response unit, which cleans up hazardous waste spills. They were all in their 40's and died of brain cancer. Should NIOSH consent to the request, it would be the federal agency's first investigation in the country of emergency response units and whether their work exposes them to elevated cancer risk. Contact Dieter Bradbury at the *Press Herald*, (207) 791-6328.

## MARYLAND

► The *Baltimore Sun* published June 13 a two-page report on the Chesapeake's mixed health. Regional efforts to revive the nation's largest estuary has only partially fulfilled its central pledge, made in 1987, to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus flowing into the bay by 40 percent by 2000. Some river tributaries are responding to the nutrient diet, but the bay itself shows no significant improvement in water quality. Striped bass have rebounded, but blue crabs, oysters, and other living resources remain below historic levels. State and federal officials are mulling a new set of goals to reflect the more complex nature of saving the bay. Contact Heather Dewar at. (410) 332-6100.

► The *Baltimore Sun* reported May 26 that Maryland is launching an ambitious campaign to wipe out a spreading infestation of water chestnuts, a noxious aquatic plant that has reappeared in some upper Chesapeake Bay tributaries. The chestnuts, believed to have been introduced in the United States in the late 1800s from Eurasia, can grow so thick they impede boating, and their spiky seed pods can be painful for a wader or swimmer. State plans to try to mow and uproot the plants before they go to seed in summer. If that fails, officials say they may resort to herbicides, likely to be controversial. For details contact Joel McCord at (410) 332-6100.

## MISSISSIPPI

► Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt toured the Mississippi Delta region in mid-July to assess the environmental impact of various U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood-control projects, particularly the Corps' proposal to build the world's largest flood-control pumping plant in Issaquena County, Miss. Six major national conservation groups have implored President Clinton to oppose the project, which they say could drain 100,000 acres of critical wetlands every year. Bruce Reid of the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* traveled with Babbitt and wrote several stories on this issue. His number is (601) 961-7063.

► International Paper is developing a plan to save the endangered gopher tortoise—the only surviving tortoise east of the Mississippi River—by conserving habitat on nearly 300,000 acres of timberland the company owns in southern Mississippi and Alabama. This is the first time a major private landowner has worked with the state of Mississippi to preserve a threatened species. Bruce Reid wrote about this in the May 2 *Clarion-Ledger*.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

► The *Boston Globe* reported in June on a draft state agency study which revealed that New Hampshire imports nearly six times as much trash as it exports—a trend that, left unchecked,

could soon leave the state with a shortage of trash disposal options. Most of the 703,756 tons of imported trash a year, compared to only 124,758 tons of exported trash, is coming from Massachusetts. It is headed to New Hampshire's largest landfill, Turnkey, operated by Waste Management Inc. in Rochester. For more information, contact Robert Braile at the *Boston Globe*, (603) 772-6380.

## NEW MEXICO

► Federal biologists have concluded that the Rio Grande is dying and two species are going extinct. But the report, which recommends sweeping changes in federal dam and levee management, has been shelved while government officials seek a way around the costly and politically unpopular recommendations, according to a June 27 story in the *Albuquerque Tribune* by Mike Taugher. Contact Taugher at mtaugher@abqjournal.com or (505) 823-3833.

## PENNSYLVANIA

► Worse than the Great Northeastern Drought of 1964 is what Pennsylvanians are saying about 1999's drought conditions, according to a July 25 story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Staff reporter Sandy Bauers looked beyond the brown lawns and parched corn fields to explain the economic crises and compromised emergency procedures that can result if the drought doesn't break before water supplies are seriously depleted. For more information contact Bauers at sbauers@phillynews.com or (215) 313-8220.

► The Delaware River has rebounded from severe pollution. The evidence? The fish are back. In a July 23 *Philadelphia Inquirer* story, staff writer Mark Jaffe wrote that oxygen content in the river has quadrupled in the last 20 years, while harmful ammonia and bacteria are at about half the levels they were. The Delaware's problems are still far from over, however. This story details a history of industrial dumping and poor sewage management that has left a toxic legacy severe enough for the state's. Department of Environmental

Protection to recommend people consume only one river fish in one to four weeks. For more information, contact Mark Jaffe, (215) 854-2430 or [jaffe.pia@phillynews.com](mailto:jaffe.pia@phillynews.com). Penna DEP's number is (814) 359-5147.

## TENNESSEE

► Residents of Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga will soon have the option of paying a little extra in order to get some of their electricity from environmentally friendly sources such as solar or wind power and landfill gas. But Memphis Light, Gas and Water, the Tennessee Valley Authority's biggest customer, is balking at participating in the "green power" pilot program. MLGW says TVA has been vague about the administrative details; environmentalists say customers have a right to choose where their power comes from. Tom Charlier wrote about this in *The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal* on June 28. For more information, contact him at (901) 529-2572.

## UTAH

► Following a two-week trial in June, a federal judge is reviewing evidence of safety problems at the Army's chemical-weapons incinerator in western Utah. The trial was prompted by a lawsuit brought by three activist groups who say the \$650 million incinerator routinely malfunctions, putting the public, including the urban Wasatch Front, at an unacceptable risk of catastrophe.

Perhaps the most damning example they cited was an incident in March when the incineration of a 220-pound bomb supposedly leaked unburned nerve agent into the sky. Witnesses for the Army and its contractors denied agent was released. U.S. District Judge Tena Campbell is expected to rule on the lawsuit in several months. For more information, contact Jim Woolf, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045 or [jwoolf@sltrib.com](mailto:jwoolf@sltrib.com).

► Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt and Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt have negotiated a proposal to resolve a major portion of Utah's wilderness debate. It

would set aside just over 1 million acres of Utah's west desert as federally protected wilderness areas. County commissioners have yet to endorse the proposal but they agree with Leavitt and Babbitt that a successful western Utah wilderness bill could pave the way for compromise on more controversial wilderness proposals in southern Utah's "redrock" country. For details, contact Jerry Spangler at *The Desert News*, (801) 237-2157.

► People For the USA (PFUSA), one of the most active counter-environmentalist groups in the country, has embarked on a major membership campaign in Utah. The Pueblo, Colo.,-based group, formerly known as People For the West, has organized chapters around the state, primarily in southern Utah, where public land debates are legion. In mid-July, PFUSA organized a statewide convoy of SUVs, motorcycles, pickups, logging trucks, and utility vehicles to protest environmentalist proposals that would designate 9 million acres of public lands in Utah as federally protected wilderness. The convoy ended at the State Capitol. For more information, contact Brent Israelsen or Jim Woolf, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045.

## VERMONT

► The *Burlington Free Press* reported in July that hiking has become so popular on the Appalachian Trail through Vermont that land managers are considering whether to require group hiking permits. The *Free Press* said the surging interest in hiking extends well beyond Vermont, citing among other statistics a 53 percent increase this spring over last in the number of people who set off to hike the entire trail from Georgia to Maine—2,300 people this year, an all-time record.

At the same time, hiking groups are especially becoming a concern, endangering fragile alpine plants, crowding limited camping facilities, and causing other problems. The land managers, members of the many volunteer groups that care for the AT, are expected to take up the issue at their September biannual meeting in Virginia. For more information, contact Nancy Bazilchuk at the *Free Press*, (800) 427-3124, ext. 1873.

## VIRGINIA

► Over the state's objections, the Environmental Protection Agency has added the main channel of the Chesapeake Bay to Virginia's "dirty waters" list, A.J. Hostetler of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported May 13. The action came a year after the EPA put the bay's Maryland portion on that state's list. States use the lists to guide pollution studies and cleanup efforts. Virginia officials had fought to keep the bay off the state's list. For more information, contact Hostetler at (804) 649-6355 or [ahostetler@timesdispatch.com](mailto:ahostetler@timesdispatch.com).

► Other states sent Virginia 3.9 million tons of trash last year, up from about 2.7 million tons in 1997, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported June 17. "These rising import numbers are a cry for strong action at the national level," said Jim Sharp, director of Campaign Virginia, an environmental group that wants Congress to let Virginia and other states limit garbage imports. Virginia imports more trash than any state except Pennsylvania. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or [rspringston@timesdispatch.com](mailto:rspringston@timesdispatch.com).

► Although Virginia's General Assembly recently passed legislation limiting trash imports and prohibiting garbage barges from certain rivers, a federal judge blocked the laws from taking effect July 1, Tom Campbell of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported June 30. U.S. District Judge James R. Spencer said Waste Management Inc. appears likely to win its suit challenging the laws as unconstitutional. For more information contact Campbell at (804) 649-6416 or [tcampbell@timesdispatch.com](mailto:tcampbell@timesdispatch.com).

► You wouldn't know it from his honey-smooth voice or bow-tie persona, but W. Tayloe Murphy Jr., an unassuming Democrat in Virginia's House of Delegates, has been the father of most major pieces of environmental legislation in the state, Patrick Plaisance of the *Daily Press* of Newport News reported on June 21. Murphy, who has served in the General Assembly for 18 years, had a hand in landmark laws involving such issues as trash barges, waterfront



development, pesticide use, and chicken manure. But this year will be Murphy's last in politics: He will not seek re-election. For more information, contact Plaisance at [pplaisance@daily.press.com](mailto:pplaisance@daily.press.com).

► Several hundred fish died from shock in Norfolk's shallow Stumpy Lake, where water temperatures reached 100 degrees, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported July 7. The fish deaths, mostly involving largemouth bass and carp, came months after Norfolk started pumping million of gallons of water from the city-owned lake in preparation for the sale of surrounding wetlands and forests to a developer. That lowered Stumpy Lake, a city reservoir, from an average of three and a half feet deep to two and a half feet. For more information, contact Harper at [sharper@pilotonline.com](mailto:sharper@pilotonline.com) or (800) 446-2004, ext. 2340.

► At a converted ranch home in the seaside vacation town of Chincoteague, horseshoe crabs are making a vital contribution to modern medicine, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported May 25. In the 12 years since turning the home into a lab, BioWhittaker Inc. has drawn blood from hundreds of thousands of horseshoe crabs caught from the Atlantic Ocean under a special state permit. Proteins coaxed from white blood cells are later converted to a fluffy powder that can uniquely detect a dangerous toxin in new drugs and medical devices. After their blood is drawn, the crabs are stored in plastic bins and later released into the ocean. About 1 percent die from the experience, lab officials said. For more information, contact Harper at [sharper@pilotonline.com](mailto:sharper@pilotonline.com), or (800) 446-2004, extension 2340.

► Health officials have found at least 36 Appalachian Trail hikers who experienced several days of nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea after passing through Virginia's Catawba area, C.S. Murphy of the *Roanoke Times* reported June 16. Molly Rutledge, medical director for the Allegheny and Roanoke City Health District, said hikers may have picked up a virus by sharing contaminated food or by drawing water from the same source. Water has been scarce on parts of the

Appalachian Trail in recent weeks because of drought, and the wells at two stores in Catawba have been found to contain pollutants. For details, contact Murphy at [cindym@roanoke.com](mailto:cindym@roanoke.com).

► There are more lead-contaminated areas in Portsmouth's Washington Park public housing complex than the Environmental Protection Agency previously told the city's housing authority or complex residents, Stephanie Crockett of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported June 30. A report completed in 1993 but not made public until recently shows that soil around 10 to 15 buildings contains elevated levels of lead. On July 8, Crockett reported that U.S. Rep. Norman Sisisky, a Democrat who represents the area, said the housing complex should be torn down because of the contamination. Contact Crockett at (800) 446-2004, ext. 2949.

► Shrubs planted in Richmond-area highway medians lured hundreds of federally protected birds to their deaths, according to a June 8 report by Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. More than 400 sleek, brownish birds called cedar waxwings died in April. Federal agents believe migrating flocks got hit by cars and trucks when the birds flew in to pick berries from the shrubs. On June 29, Springston reported that federal and state officials had agreed to monitor highways next spring and to act quickly—even digging up shrubs—if they start finding feathery bodies again. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or [rspringston@timesdispatch.com](mailto:rspringston@timesdispatch.com).

► The State Water Control Board has approved a permit that allows a fertilizer company to spread treated human waste on nearly 3,000 acres of farmland in the Shenandoah Valley, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported June 16. Several Rockingham County residents opposed the permit, saying the sludge could contaminate underground water, spoil nearby land, and hurt people. State officials said the sludge was safe, and the board voted 4-1 to approve the permit. For more information, contact Springston at [rspringston@timesdispatch.com](mailto:rspringston@timesdispatch.com) or

(804) 649-6453.

### WASHINGTON

► In northern Washington state, a 100-year-old system of irrigation has turned the dry Methow Valley into a well-watered oasis. This year, more than a month after these canals typically fill with water, some of them remain bone dry. In April, the federal National Marine Fisheries Service ordered the Forest Service to shut off the water on six irrigation ditches near the town of Winthrop, Wash. The Fisheries Service says the move is necessary to protect endangered salmon in the Methow River, but local farmers says they're being unfairly targeted. Dustin Solberg reported on this story in the June 21 edition of *High Country News*. Contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or [dustins@hcn.org](mailto:dustins@hcn.org), or visit [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

► When the U.S. Department of the Interior derailed the proposed Crown Jewel gold mine on March 25 with a close reading of the 1872 Mining Law, grassroots activists who'd battled the mine for seven years thought the news was too good to be true. They were right. Just weeks after the decision, Washington Sen. Slade Gorton (Rep.), helped the industry get a rider through Congress overturning the government's ruling. Dustin Solberg reported on this story in the June 7 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or [dustins@hcn.org](mailto:dustins@hcn.org), or visit [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

► In a surprise May 19 ruling, a federal appeals court sent a land exchange in western Washington back to the drawing board. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decided that the controversial Huckleberry Land Exchange needed more study, and told company loggers to stop cutting the traded land. The exchange gave Weyerhaeuser Co. 4,300 acres of public land on Huckleberry Mountain in return for 30,000 acres of company holdings. Lynne Bama reported on this story in the June 7 edition of *High Country News*. For information, contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at [www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org).

## WISCONSIN

► Public interest in the environment has moved up a notch, according to the latest opinion survey from Saint Norbert College in DePere, Wis. A research effort asking residents to name the most important issues facing the state ranked the environment in fourth place. A previous survey had the environment in fifth place. But the new poll had the environment overtaking welfare issues for the fourth spot. Taxes, education and crime/safety held the top three spots in both surveys. *Wisconsin Public Radio* helped fund the research. For more information, contact *WPR*'s Joy Cardin at (608) 263-2662.

► The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

is including the environment in an eight-part series on the new century/millennium. An Aug. 1 installment of the "Wisconsin 2000" series was to include a report entitled "State of Nature: Environmental Villains—and Heroes." For more information, contact the paper's environment reporter, Tom Vanden Brook, at (414)-224-2000.

► The newly merged weekly newspaper in Milwaukee, *Shepherd Express/Metro*, has retained an occasional environment column that used to be carried by the *Shepherd Express*. The new paper also ran a lengthy feature on efforts to cut mercury pollution in Wisconsin. For more information on these stories, contact editor Bruce Murphy at (414) 276-2222.

## WYOMING

► Protests from eight Plains tribes halted a plan to bring more visitors to the century-old Medicine Wheel, a Native American sacred site in northern Wyoming. A 1996 agreement between the tribes and the Forest Service previously closed a road and put new land-use rules on 18,000 acres of land surrounding the Medicine Wheel. But a lawsuit brought by Wyoming Sawmills, represented by the Mountain States Legal Foundation is attempting to overturn the agreement. Michael Milstein reported on this story in the June 7 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, contact HCN at editor@hcn.org or (970) 527-4898, or find the story at www.hcn.org.

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