

# SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

Vol. 10 No. 2

## High Country News matures Little paper on the West exerts outsized influence

By KATY HUMAN

Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt reads *High Country News* regularly. So do cattle and sheep ranchers, copper-mine managers, timber company executives, wilderness advocates and, yes, hundreds of journalists.

The newspaper is as small as Paonia, the Colorado town where it is published every other week in a remodeled feed store. A 16- to 20-page tabloid, it has a paid circulation of about 21,000 and a staff of fewer than 20. But the paper's reach and influence belie those numbers.

*HCN* is a bit like the composer Billy Strayhorn, who wrote great music for Duke Ellington and other jazz legends while he lived unpretentiously in their shadow. Publisher Ed Marston, his wife

and *HCN* editor, Betsy, and their tiny staff go about their business quietly, but their publication orchestrates the country's understanding of environmental issues in the West.

"If as much as your life involves Western issues as ours does, it's a necessity," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt's communications chief, Mike Gauldin.

Reeves Brown, a rancher and member of the Colorado Cattlemen's Association, reads *HCN*, as does Pam Eaton, Four Corners regional director of The Wilderness Society.

"It's both a sentinel and a conscience for the West, looking out for what's happening, explaining what it means and offering a sense of why it all matters," said Frank Edward Allen, former

environment editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. Allen, now president of the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources in Missoula, Mont., said he thinks all communities need that kind of service. "But the West is hard to hold together," he said. "It has a rough history and it continues to be changed by wave after wave of immigrants."

Voices of those immigrant and native Westerners speak from the pages of *HCN* every two weeks on a wide range of subjects. Two years ago, Pulitzer Prize-winner Tom Knudson of *The Sacramento Bee* wrote a cover story for *HCN* called "Western Water: Why it's Dirty and in Short Supply." A year later, *HCN* contributor Tony Davis

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## Dotcom upstart a costly flop

By CHRIS CLARKE

To this environmental journalist, Verde Media started under an alluring cloud of promises and money. Verde, an Internet startup that fledged in San Francisco early this year, crowed that it would be the leader in environmental news on the Web, and I was ready to believe.

I interviewed in late January for a position in the news department. Programming Vice President Kelley Rickenbaker—an affable if imposing CNN veteran—bragged that Verde was "not going to be a garage band." Verde's investors, he said, had bankrolled the company well enough that they'd be able to do things right. Verde would be buying the best equipment and paying top-notch salaries.

Where do I sign? I thought.

I joined Verde around last Valentine's Day. Just four months later I was unemployed, along with almost all of my coworkers, and Verde was deep in bankruptcy. The promises, it seems, were bigger than the money.

The short, troubled life of Verde.com illustrates the perils of the Internet startup frenzy that peaked last spring. It is a story of lavish spending without demonstrated revenues or backup capital, a story of a good idea that was badly executed.

Verde's plan was ambitious: Raise a fat bankroll. Hire a mix of new talent and experienced journalists. Amass the largest environmental reporting staff in U.S. history. Put it to work building the best source of environmental news,

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# SEJ: Training a generation

My grandfather was Jose Guadalupe Olivarez. He was my family's strong head, its financial and moral rudder. He came to the United States in the 1920s from a small village outside Guadalajara, Mexico.

It may seem strange to bring him up today in this way. He's been dead since 1985. But I've been thinking a lot about him of late.

We all need models for our personal and professional lives. We need them to help us form our own strong rudders. Today, one could say the waters are so treacherous that those rudders must slice deeper and hold their course with more assurance than ever before. I won't get off into the ills of our modern culture. But I do want to address the treacherous waters of American journalism.

I had the wonderful opportunity this spring to go to Mexico City, where I attended a conference organized by the North American Institute. It was held in a grand plaza and conference room at the *Reforma* newspaper. Across the enclosed plaza, we could see the *Reforma* newsroom at work.

It was an intoxicating time in Mexico. It appeared that the opposition party, the National Action Party or PAN, had a shot at winning the presidency and dethroning the Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI, which had ruled Mexico almost since the time my grandfather left Mexico. Of course, we know today that Vicente Fox did win. But then it seemed like a wild dream. We knew it might be true, but hardly anyone could believe it. In the newsroom across the Plaza, reporters worked until midnight, their deadline. And I thought of how much we take for granted.

We not only take for granted the incredible press freedoms we have, but we also have allowed those freedoms to be eroded in significant ways in recent years. This erosion can have its deepest impacts on the most serious beats in newsrooms. Of course, I'd include the environment among them.

I decided I needed to say this at the conference. Our panel would address coverage of the environment in the Americas. SEJ board member Jacques Rivard of CBC and SEJ member Frank

Allen, our moderator, joined a Mexican environmental activist on the panel. An account of that session ran in our last *SEJournal*.

The corporate takeover, I said, and the increasing concentration of media outlets under giant corporations is creating all sorts of difficulties that regularly disintegrate our credibility. There's the Staples Center controversy in LA. Or more minor affairs. When ABC held a story on allegations of pedophilia at theme parks, including Disney World, it didn't matter whether there were legitimate journalistic reasons to hold the story. Not when everyone knew that Disney owns ABC.

## Report from the society's president

By  
Mike  
Mansur



We also see more and more ideologues posing as reporters at media outlets. To boost ratings, news managers, both print and broadcast, don't label them as commentators, which would be appropriate. They try to pass it off as news, like a bookseller selling fiction as fact.

Then there's the corporate-minded operation of most American newsrooms. More and more, they are operated, ultimately, by business men and women, not journalists. As a result, the operating principle for the managers below them—those who actually produce and edit the news—becomes not making mistakes, not creating threats to the continued increase in revenues. Whatever you do, don't get sued.

Obviously, this can get in the way of courageous journalism.

Of course, some readers of this column will by this point be saying, this is

naive. Grow up. Of course, our primary purpose for being is to make money. Every newspaper has always had this as its goal. And, of course, I understand this.

But years ago this penchant for pennies was more in balance with the more noble goals of informing the public and living up to the special freedom that the nation's founders bestowed on the press. When families, not corporations, owned the city newspaper, they could cover the city fairly and honestly and look with pride on their product. And they could take a good profit, too. But they didn't have to worry about increasing that profit every year for shareholders.

Yet, we are where we are. We still have more freedom than any other press in the world. It's something worth fighting for and keeping. SEJ's mission is to improve the quality of environmental journalism around the nation. It's not to topple the increasing concentration of the media under a few companies. Is there anything we can do?

In rough waters, you set a course and you point the bow toward it. You do the best you can. You tell the truth. You deal with the consequences. This is what we do.

Every night, before an altar with a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe looming over him, my grandfather prayed for thanks and guidance. And he closed his eyes so tight that I thought he looked like a small boy. That night, like every night, he was doing all he could do.

At SEJ, this has been one of our most successful years in our 10-year life. Thanks to the diligence of staff, led by Beth Parke and Chris Rigel, and several key board members, we've been successful in acquiring new funding that has prompted much discussion about priorities for 2001. In 2000, the board set three priorities for new initiatives. Of course, you should realize that current programs—such as putting on a national conference—would be accomplishments enough for most organizations. But the board wanted to address several needs. Those 2000 priorities: Upgrade the SEJ Web site, improve our newsroom outreach program, and explore the possibili-

*(Continued on page 3)*



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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 more than 1,000 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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## Beat listserv launched

The SEJ-Beat mailing list, a listserv that extends the SEJournal's Beat section to the immediacy of the Web, was launched on Sept. 10. Moderated by Mike Dunne, environmental reporter at the Baton Rouge *Advocate*, SEJ-Beat will enable members to post a recap of environmental stories without having to wait for the newsletter's quarterly deadlines.

"There are advantages to this," said Beat editor Chris Rigel, "that I know our reporters can use. Often URLs for posted stories are stale by the time the newsletter goes to print. SEJ-Beat makes it possible to get the whole story in front of colleagues right away."

The list will include summaries of published or broadcast environmental stories, when and where the story ran or aired, and contact information of the story's reporter or reporters. SEJ members who want to subscribe to the SEJ-Beat should contact the SEJ office for more information. E-mail [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org) or call (215) 884-8174 . ❖

## President's column...from page 2

ties of a book on environmental journalism.

I'm proud to say we've made significant progress on all three. In addition, the SEJ board has also voted to explore the possibility of launching a major-gifts campaign that could help secure the organization's financial future for decades to come. The development of this is in its infancy and updates on its progress will come soon.

But now we must look to 2001. I invite SEJ members to e-mail me with suggestions on priorities. Please contact me at [mmansur@kcstar.com](mailto:mmansur@kcstar.com). Thanks. ❖

### SEJournal submission deadlines

Fall '00 .....	October 15, 2000
Winter '01 .....	January 15, 2001
Spring '01 .....	April 15, 2001
Summer '01 .....	July 15, 2001

## SEJ has new headquarters

Please make a note of our new phone numbers.

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## National conference update

# Agenda a smorgasbord of environmental issues

By CHRIS RIGEL

An address by David Suzuki, PhD geneticist, environmental activist and popular Canadian broadcaster will highlight SEJ's Tenth Annual Conference at East Lansing, Michigan.

Suzuki leads a conference agenda featuring debate between surrogates for the leading presidential candidates, the usual smorgasbord of environmental reporting panels and a close focus on the greening of Michigan's most famous product, the automobile.

But of the many distinguished speakers flying in to speak at the conference, Suzuki stands out as a true Renaissance man. To professionals who wrangle daily with scientists, activists and explanation of complex issues, Suzuki brings an extraordinary background in all three areas.

The host of Canadian Broadcasting Corp.'s popular television series, "The Nature of Things," he has won many awards in his 30 years of broadcast experience, rendering the complexities of scientific issues understandable and compelling to the public. His productions include the PBS series, "The Secret of Life;" an eight-part series: "A Planet for the Taking" which won an award from the United Nations; and Discovery Channel's "The Brain. He founded the long-running "Quirks and Quarks" for CBC Radio and presented two documentaries on environment: "From Naked Ape to Superspecies" and "It's a Matter of Survival."

Also among Suzuki's awards are a United Nations Environment Program medal and the Order of Canada. He has 15 honorary doctorates from universities in Canada, the United States and Australia. Suzuki has received many tributes for his work in support of Canada's First Nations people, and has been honored with five names and formal adoption by two tribes.

Suzuki, an internationally respected geneticist, has been a full professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver since 1969, and is with UBC's Sustainable Development Research Institute. He is also the founder of the David Suzuki Foundation, which uses a combination of scientific papers and public advocacy to seek better protection for native salmon runs along the west coast of Canada and the United States. His talk, "From Hotshot Geneticist to Science Popularizer to Eco-Activist," is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 20, at 7 p.m. Suzuki told SEJ on Sept. 9 that he will discuss the dilemma of how we deal with human inventiveness and consumptive demand while lacking the knowledge base to manage our impact.

"This problem was solved for me when I did a program on a battle over clearcut logging in the Queen Charlotte Islands and met a Haida who revealed a fundamentally different perspective," Suzuki said. "I realized that we have framed the entire environmental crisis in the wrong way. I will discuss this further in the talk."

The opening plenary session, to be held on Friday at 9 a.m., addresses the question: Is the greening of the auto industry real or hype? Industry critics will challenge automakers about talking up alternative fuel cars while racking up record profits selling sport utility vehicles. William Clay Ford Jr., chairman of the



**"Hotshot geneticist/eco-activist" David Suzuki to address SEJ**

board, Ford Motor Co., will spar with author Jane Holtz Kay (*Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America, and How We Can Take It Back*), Rocky Mountain Institute's founder Amory Lovins, and Firoz Rasul, CEO of Ballard Power Systems, where zero-emission proton exchange membrane (PEM) fuel cells are developed.

Saturday's plenary session, slotted for the lunch hour, will be a debate among presidential candidates environmental advisers. Confirmed so far are Katie McGinty, senior policy adviser for Vice President Al Gore, this year's Democratic candidate for president, and Christopher C. Demuth, president of the American Enterprise Institute, an adviser to the Republican presidential candidate, Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

This year concurrent panel sessions will again follow basic themes fitted to the environmental beat and to the region where the conference will take place. Concurrent sessions are scheduled for Friday and Saturday, Oct. 20-21, and include:

**The Car:** Reinventing the Car: Hybrids Hit the Road with Fuel Cells Waiting in the Wings; Transboundary Air Pollution: CAFE Standards, Recreational Vehicles and SUVs; The Smart Growth Debate; Electric Vehicles.



**The Computer:** GIS: How to Use Maps in E-Reporting; Getting information from the Internet; CD-ROM Demo Session.

**The Craft:** Entrepreneurism: Creating Your Own Environmental Media; Spinners, Fibbers and Pseudo Journalists: Tales from Public Relations' Dark Side; Award Winners; Online Multimedia Reporting.

**The Globe:** Global Warming's Regional Impacts; Species Without Borders; A Look Ahead to 2100.

**The Land:** Uncovering the Secrets of Nuclear Weapons Production; The Urban Frontier: How the New Pioneers Hope to Tame the City Environment; Genetically-modified Food and the Environment; Ballot Box Battles: Hunters vs. Animal Rights Groups; Walking the Talk: Sustainability Practices in Higher Education.

**The Nation:** Trade, Labor and the Environment; The World Wide Web of Life; Covering State Environmental Agencies; Philanthropy and Environment.

**The Water:** Non-point-source Pollution: Cradle to Grave; The Coming Water Wars; Water Diversions: Who Owns It? Who Wants It? What is the Price?; Toxics in the Great Lakes; Ballast Blues: Fresh Water Exotic Species.

Network lunches have become a vital component of SEJ's annual conferences. This year is no exception. In fact, organizers have gone a step further and planned a network breakfast.

The network meals function as an outlet for the many session ideas that couldn't be worked into the agenda but were too important to lose. Tables are assigned a topic—environmental issues, geographic areas, reporting tips and the like—and come complete with newsmaker, author or expert.

The International Wildlife Film Festival will make another

appearance this year on Friday, Oct. 20, at 8 p.m. Featured films include: *Hokkaido—Garden of the Gods* (Best of Festival, Best Narration, Soundmix, Photography, Use of Music, Best Long Television Program) offers an unusual perspective of Japan's wilderness seen through the eyes of a mystical race of people; *Shrinking Bears*, (Finalist, Merit Awards for Presentation of Ecosystem Relationships and Environmental Reporting) explores the disturbing fact of Hudson's Bay polar bears' falling body weight and declining birth rate; and *Spiders from Mars* (Best Use of Music, Best Short Television Program, Merit Awards for Innovative Approach, Good Communication to a Young Audience, Photography). After this film, you will never think about spiders in the same way again.

On Saturday, Oct. 21 at 11 a.m., World Resources Institute president Johnathan Lash will hold a press conference to release the final results of the Pilot Analysis on Global Ecosystems, a study that indicates that of the world's ecosystems, fresh water is most in danger of losing biodiversity. The report found 20 percent of the world's freshwater fish species have become extinct. U.S. figures show 37 percent of freshwater fish species, 67 percent of mussels, 51 percent of crayfish and 40 percent of amphibians are now extinct or endangered.

This year, for the first time, the full conference agenda will be posted on SEJ's newly updated Web site. (See related story, page 18.) Emerging details about the tours, panel sessions and all other events are now posted and will be updated as new information comes in. Confirmed speakers will be listed, as well as their biographies. Times and locations will be available sometime in September.

People interested in registering for SEJ's Tenth Annual Conference can download a registration form from <http://www.sej.org/confer/index.htm>.

In order to read the pdf file, you must have Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded for free from the URL listed above. Or contact SEJ at [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org) or (215) 884-8174 to ask for a registration form to be faxed or mailed. ❖

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## Regional event update

# Florida is hotbed of journalism events

SEJ members Perry Beeman and Cheryl Hogue led seminars on environmental reporting at the Native American Journalists Association's national conference in Fort Lauderdale June 13-17. For NAJA's sessions on environmental reporting as part of its national conference, and organizer Minnie Two Shoes contacted SEJ early in the year to arrange for SEJ members to lead the seminars.

The NAJA conference drew 330 registered participants in a group that grew to 500 with presenters, students and local guests. The opening Indigenous Environmental Journalism Seminar found NAJA members and SEJ's fearless presenters discussing the issues after riding through the Everglades via swamp buggy and air boat at Billy Swamp Safari. There were multiple sightings of alligators, wild pigs and ostriches. The ostriches, territorial as always, threatened to charge NAJA members trying to view a humongous alligator nearby.

Beeman, an SEJ board member and environmental reporter at *The Des Moines Register*, and Hogue, of the Washington, D.C.-based American Chemical Society, led two small-group sessions on story tips, resources and SEJ services. They were well-received and NAJA plans a similar session next year.

Another event, sponsored by the Poynter Institute and the University of South Florida, brought SEJ into its first collaboration with Poynter. The five-day conference in June drew 10 participants and provided an intensive look at water issues. SEJ board member Mark Schleifstein, reporter for the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, attended.

Event organizer Kristen Kusek, University of South Florida science writer, said that the program was such a success Poynter planned to repeat it annually, with the next conference scheduled for August 2001.

November will draw journalists to the sunny South once more for a conference co-sponsored by the *Pensacola News Journal*, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and SEJ. Scheduled for Nov. 12-14, the event will study the nation's water quality.

Speakers include:

**David Armstrong**, *Boston Globe*, who has recently worked on one project (among many) about polluting by the U.S. government in this country and abroad, and the failure of regulators and prosecutors to take action. His stories have won several awards, including the Polk Award and the Investigative Reporters and Editors Award. He is also a lecturer at Boston University, teaching a course in advanced computer research techniques for journalists.

**David Burnham**, co-founder and co-director of TRAC, Transactional Records Access Clearing House, an organization that collects and distributes data to the public, reporters, public interest groups, congressional committees and scholars in an effort to hold federal investigative and regulatory agencies accountable. In addition to journalism experience for *The New York Times*, Burnham has authored several books, including *A Law Unto Itself: Power, Politics and the IRS*, awarded Best



Journalists at NAJA's national conference

Investigative Book in 1990.

**Julie Hauserman**, *St. Petersburg Times*, who has been writing about Florida's environment for 14 years and has been named Journalist of the Year by the Florida Audubon Society, The Florida Wildlife Federation and the Sierra Club.

**Penny Loeb**, *U.S. News and World Report*, who received her master's degree from the University of Missouri School of Journalism and has been a reporter for 23 years. Loeb has been honored for her journalism with many awards, including the SPJ Public Service Award and the Scripps Howard Public Service Award. She is writing a new book, *And the Mountains Shall Be*, a narrative about environmental justice, legal action and coal mining, which has allowed her to study groundwater loss and contamination in greater depth.

**Craig Pittman**, *St. Petersburg Times*, who will present "I'd Rather be a Rat than a Bureaucrat: The State of Our Rivers." Pittman has been a reporter and nature lover for 20 years and covers statewide environmental issues, crime, politics and land development.

**Janet Raloff**, senior editor for *Science News*, who will explore pharmaceuticals in our water. Raloff is a science commentator on NPR's weekly show, "Living On Earth," and writes her own electronic column, "Food for Thought." She is author of *Environmental Hormones: Threats to Health and Reproduction*. Her work has appeared in more than four dozen publications.

**David Struhs**, secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, who headed the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and was named chief of staff to the Council on Environmental Quality in 1989 by President George Bush. He holds a master's degree in public administration from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and now works to implement the Florida DEP's goal of "More Protection, Less Process."

EPA Administrator Carol Browner and Senator Bob Graham, D-Fla., have been invited to speak.

For more information and a registration form, please visit <http://www.sej.org> or contact SEJ at (215) 884-8174 or [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org). ♦





# Groups tailor names to suit public

Just as some wildlife evolves an appearance that blends into its surroundings, powerful interest groups have evolved new names that help show them in the most favorable light.

In 1994, the National Agricultural Chemicals Association changed its name to the American Crop Protection Association.

"Presumably," writes Tom Meersman of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, NACA became ACPA "because having words such as 'chemical' or 'pesticide' was not perceived to be such a great idea any more."

Margaret Speich, senior director of communications for the crop protector group, says it changed its name "principally because our member companies were developing biotechnology products."

Well, maybe. But the trade group could have tried different approaches. How about the "Bug-Poisoners Association," with a logo of a beetle on its back? That would send a chill down the spine of Gregor Samsa, if he had one. Or the "Plant Destruction Group," with a photo of dandelions wilting in rows of plowed earth? Or maybe "Toxic Pest Control Alliance"?

No. Even U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay wouldn't try those. The kinder, gentler moniker works better for new-age consumers. Who would be opposed to protecting crops? The name evokes the image of a kindly watchman, shielding the poor crop from hailstorms or fencing out grazing animals.

The spin doesn't stop there. As the pest control industry group changed its name, it registered the images of cartoon characters—Terri Tomato, Benni Broccoli and Wendy Wheat—for use in educational and promotional materials. Think of the possibilities: Wendy Wheat tied to the railroad tracks by a gang of grasshoppers. Responding to her cries for help, the ACPA rides to her rescue. Back in the 1950s, such a campaign would have featured a gun-toting animated spray can gunning down bugs. Companies are more adept at spin today. These educational figures are developed for use in elementary

school classrooms. In them pests are controlled, not killed.

The ACPA's new cloak must have looked good to other industry groups. The Chemical Manufacturing Association ducked into a cocoon last June and emerged as the American Chemistry Council. The name evokes images of folks in white lab jackets, holding test tubes up to the light. It certainly beats images of big manufacturing plants with flaming smoke stacks and dark stains on the surrounding earth.

"The change, obviously, is to make the group look less industry-driven and more research/academic/scientific," writes Margie Kriz of *National Journal*.

Chemical engineers aren't the only ones who like the "protector" image. The leading association of timber companies in

## Grin & Bare It

Washington state, which generally fights for timber owners' right to cut trees with minimal interference, is called the Washington Forest Protection Association.

Enviros tweak their names, too. Environmental Defense Fund dropped the "Fund" last year, despite its genius for raising money. Apparently the fund sounded too money-grubbing and less public-spirited than defending the environment. So EDF became ED, and that's not short for Edward.

Our nominee for the worst renaming job goes to the Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund. Not only did it keep the "Fund," which seems a little outdated for a gang of lawyers, it shed a recognized brand name, Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, for a bewildering one. Besides, it sounds a little like EarthFirst!, the monkeywrenching fellows that set new standards for narrow base and inventive punctuation.

Some groups choose names that appear to mimic opponents. The National Wilderness Institute in Alexandria, Va., sounds vaguely like The Wilderness Society, the national group started by Aldo Leopold to protect wilderness from devel-

opment and resource exploitation. Instead, the institute is a libertarian, pro-use group affiliated with the Heritage Foundation and Cato Institute.

Just because you use environment or ecology in your name doesn't mean you're a tree-hugger. The Environmental Conservation Organization (ECO) was established by contractors to oppose wetlands protection. Concerned Alaskans for Resources and the Environment (CARE) wanted to open up the Tongass National Forest to clear-cutting. The Alliance for the Environment and Resources is a California pro-logging group. And the nuclear waste dump company Nuclear Engineering Inc. christened itself US Ecology.

Lobbying also is fertile ground for growing names. Some are fairly straightforward, such as the Cooler Heads Coalition, set up by the National Consumer Coalition, a group of business-funded non-profit advocacy groups, to argue that the globe may not be warming, and if it is, we shouldn't worry about it. The Greening Earth Society, the Western Fuels Association's group, argues fossil fuel burning and CO<sub>2</sub> are good, since denser carbon dioxide will boost plant growth and crop yields.

We'd like to see these groups be more aggressive. They might offer a prize for the greatest contributor to global CO<sub>2</sub>, named for Saddam Hussein, in honor of his torching of all that Iraqi oil in the Gulf War. They could run ads about future farming in the Yukon and beach vacations in Iceland and Greenland.



James Bruggers, reporter at the *Louisville Courier Journal*, sent in this news from George W. Bush's state: The *Houston Chronicle* reports that Harris County is considering a techno-fix for its bad air days: 30-foot towers that ionize pollution and fire it into the upper atmosphere. Environmental officials called it "a giant antihistamine." Some questioned if it would work; others asked what happens to the folks downwind. What nattering nabobs of negativism! ♦

# Nature's architect: An interview with William McDonough

By JIM SCHWAB

At the SEJ's annual conference, innovative Architect William McDonough will be leading a tour of Ford Motor Co.'s Rouge plant, which he designed. McDonough's path-breaking environmentally oriented designs have won him numerous awards, including Design of the Year from *Business Week*, Designer of the Year from *Interiors*, and accolades from *Time* as one of its Heroes for the Planet. A professor and former dean of the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, he is also the principal of William McDonough & Partners and co-founder of McDonough-Braungart Design Chemistry. He is also teaching at the Darden School of Business at the University of Virginia. And most recently, he has become the founding chair for the new China-U.S. Center for Sustainable Development. *SEJournal* interviewed McDonough to gain some insights into his work.

SEJ asked McDonough where he gets his ideas, what's the source of his creativity and how he came to his current way of analyzing design. His answers follow:

I was born in Tokyo in 1951. I grew up in Hong Kong before it became a pipeline for immigration from China. I saw what happened when you have six million people living on 40 square miles of land. People didn't have water every day. Old women would beg, using babies for sympathy, and then the babies would die. And I thought that was ordinary life.



William McDonough brings green vision to architecture

I spent summers in Puget Sound. My grandfather was a logger in the forest. (I have some ecological debts to repay.) He bought some old growth forest on Puget Sound and built a cabin. So I spent most of my early years in a British colony in a very strained setting and my summers amid abundance. My grandparents conserved and recycled—things like tin cans and paper.

When I was a teenager, my father became president of Seagram, and I lived in Westport, Conn. My father was a Depression child, and we had to earn our own way, but there were teenagers there with Porsches. And I noticed a difference in attitude toward life. At what point, I asked myself, did we stop being people with lives and become consumers with lifestyles? I saw and felt that the fundamental perception of our own self had shifted.

When I was in graduate school at Yale, I built the first solar-heated house in Ireland. It was a great learning experience—I didn't know Ireland didn't get enough sun to do that! In the early 1980s, when I started my own firm in New York, I was engaged by the Environmental Defense Fund to design a headquarters building. At the end of the interview, (EDF's executive director) Fred Krupp said, "If anyone gets sick from indoor air quality, we'll sue you." That was an eye-opener. I'm still looking into this issue: When you know something and do nothing about it, what's your liability? The EDF project became the first green building. Ever since then, we have been asking lots of questions of industry. Our clients' total business is now approaching a half-trillion dollars. And I keep asking the same questions: What's in your stuff?

Then in 1987, I was asked by members of the Jewish community to design a memorial at Auschwitz. Birkenau is right next door. The design of Birkenau is a giant killing machine. It forced me to think about design. If design is a statement of human intention as a verb, and design as a noun is a manifestation of that intent, then this was an indication of the worst of human intention. Human beings had designed a system to take humans out of a railroad car and into a crematorium, and engineers were doing calculations of how to optimize the combustion of human corpses. In the other direction, they were taken into slave labor.

As I stood there, I realized that you can't ask me as a designer to do this kind of work. I also have to say I oppose this, and at some point I have to say I fiercely oppose it. I started to think about the Industrial Revolution as a design assignment. With glues from carpets off-gassing; and toxic chemicals in building materials, I started to realize that I was designing gas chambers. I dedicated part of my work to do things that weren't just less bad but actually spectacular. I decided to move well beyond eco-efficiency. I realized that efficiency wasn't going to save us because there's no particular value to efficiency. The question is, am I doing the right thing? Doing the wrong thing more efficiently is more dangerous. An efficient Nazi is more dangerous than an inefficient Nazi.

This brings up a serious set of questions about intent. Did you intend to toxify the planet? If not, we need a new



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sort of design. Design can be pernicious by perpetuating the existing system.

In 1991, I was commissioned by the city of Hanover to design a set of sustainability principles for its World's Fair. This came from the same culture that had created Birkenau. Like an addict that hits bottom and comes back up, the Germans had gone to a very dark place and now wanted to signal their intention of prescribing the best in humanity.

I have been essentially proposing that, if design is intention and we see tragedies in the making like endocrine disruption and toxic contamination, and fail to do anything about it, we become complicit. If you say global warming is not part of my plan, it's part of your de facto plan. You have become essentially strategically tragic. Once you recognize our culture has become strategically tragic, you need to change the story.

There's great humanity in this because we don't know what to do but we can articulate a strategy. Design humility is very easy to remember. It took 5,000 years to put wheels

on our luggage, so how smart are we?

While working on the Hanover principles, I met Michael Braungart (a German chemist and environmental activist then involved with Greenpeace). We started McDonough-Braungart Design Chemistry. We started to reexamine the premises of the Industrial Revolution and design a new one, respecting relations between spirit and matter. One way was to eliminate the concept of waste. Waste equals food. That led us to look at the issue of metabolism. What are the metabolisms of the world? We decided things should be designed to go either safely back to the soil or back to industry. If possible, they should be nutrition.

It's actually sort of magical in that we're looking at the history of design. If LeCorbusier said a house is a machine for living, is a church a machine for praying? Humans are using machines for anthropocentric purposes with nature as the enemy. Living machines use nature. (For example, John Todd's use of plants to filter wastewater in naturally designed sewage treatment systems—JS). We're now trying to go beyond the living machine to use natural plants and animals as tools. When do humans become tools of nature? What would a bird want to see flying overhead? What's the most high-tech building you have ever

seen? For that matter, what is high tech? How many buildings produce oxygen? We put native grasses on the roof. Birds look down and say these are my people. We find that a very interesting strategy.

How do we build economic logic into a natural industrial system? I am in commerce. If I didn't make money for my clients, I wouldn't be in business. We understood the source of multipliers and economic value. Palm (the makers of Palm Pilot) called upon us to design a new headquarters, 1 1/2 million square feet in size. They say, "You create astonishing value." The Herman Miller building cost \$49 per square foot. Employee performance is up over 20 percent. People like to work in these settings. That represents \$60 million straight to the accounting ledgers. If you discount the materials, about another \$30 million, or almost \$100 million per year. These savings are paying for the entire building every six months. We win *Business Week's* design of the year and it's a green building.

The real place the budgets matter is not in energy and the cost of buildings. The CEO is worrying about recruitment, retention, and productivity. The next year (1998) we won an award again with the Gap headquarters building (in San Bruno, Calif.). They chose a grass roof instead of pink marble in front. It's an effective building, not an efficient building. Its only [design] competitor was a building with energy conservation but a minimum of windows and no daylight. We use the floors to move the heat. We use mass as an internal battery. We provide 100 percent fresh air to everybody—and lots of daylight.

This is more about intelligence than about bemoaning our limits. In our existing system, we perpetuate prosperity by seeing how few people are working. We produce things that require people to live in terror (of exposure to toxins). I have to try to stop this.

One of Jane Jacobs's more obscure books was *Systems of Survival*. It's weird but great. Its fundamental point contrasts the guardian and commerce as our two major institutional types. The guardian is the staid knights of the round table, protecting society. Commerce is who you're working with. The guardian reserves the right to be duplicitous. Commerce is quick, highly inventive and creative and honest. These two centers have to exist independently. If you introduce commerce into the guardian, you corrupt it. You can't let someone buy admission to the university, for example. If you put the guardian in commerce, you slow it down. Regulation is a sign of failure. It says, we'll tell you at what rate you can dispense death.

In 1993, I designed a fabric for Steelcase. We asked, What if it were so safe you could eat it? The existing fabrics have cotton mixed with PET. Cotton is a biological nutrient, but the toxic mixture can't go back to either the biological or industrial cycles. Again, less bad is not good, it's just less bad. What does good look like? To be 100 percent good, we have to re-

(Continued on page 21)

It took 5,000 years to put wheels on our luggage, so how smart are we?

# Doing job or safety threat?

## Reporter prosecuted for refusing to leave protest area

By ALISON LINDER

Reporter Brian Hansen was arrested July 6, 1999, while covering a protest on U. S. Forest Service land. He was charged with violating an emergency land closure, which carries a maximum punishment of six months in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

Awaiting trial more than a year later, he has become a symbol of growing tension between federal agencies and reporters. Hansen conceded he defied the order to leave the protest site on the closed land, but said he would not have defied the order had he been aware of alternatives that would have enabled him to observe the protest. Federal officials say Hansen is being treated the same as the others who were arrested. But Hansen claims that the feds are making an example of him to intimidate other reporters. And some journalism groups agree.

According to Christine Tatum, chair of the Legal Defense Fund for the Society of Professional Journalists, federal officials "are trying to control how and when the media can do their jobs, making the government harder to cover."

Hansen's legal ordeal stemmed from a protest against conversion of more than 800 acres to ski trails of the Vail Ski Resort in the White River National Forest in Colorado. Some activists believe the tract is important habitat for the endangered lynx, and should be left wild. Demonstrations by the Ancient Forest Rescue and other wildlife advocacy groups, including Colorado Wild, the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center and others, began on July 1, 1999 and lasted for five days.

After briefly allowing the protest to continue for the holiday weekend, Martha Ketelle, supervisor of the White River National Forest, signed an emergency closure order July 5 for the 40 acres around the heart of the protest. The order closed a portion of Mill Creek Road, the main access route running across the front face of Vail Mountain. Officials said the order was needed to preserve public safety. According to Ketelle, officers "needed access to construction areas and ongoing work areas on that road."

Jeff Dorschner, speaking for the U.S. Attorney's office in Denver, explained that "the issue of public safety is self evident." If an emergency happened within the forest, he said, rescue teams would have no way of reaching some areas due to the demonstrators' road blockage.

Protesters and reporters on the mountain found out about the order early in the morning of July 6, 1999, when several dozen Forest Service law enforcement officers, reportedly in riot-gear, stormed the blockade. Officer Jeff Dunfee, who was in charge of the operation, read the order to those present. It permitted authorities to expel everyone from the area until the road was cleared. Everyone there was given 15 minutes to vacate the area before arrests would start. Maps and copies of the closure order were available to anyone who requested one.

But Dunfee testified that he issued orders such as "Get off this mountain," and that he did not give detailed answers to questions asked by those present. "I was also trying to control the situation, (saying)... 'Just get out, get off, get away'...any of those other types of terminologies I could use to control the situation and let them know that they had no choice but to leave the closure area, that we were very determined to enforce that," Dunfee testified in court, according to the *Westword Daily*.

The scene was "a powder keg of a situation," Hansen recalled in a recent interview. "Activists were screaming, afraid of being tortured. There were 50 or so heavily armed officers." Hansen said he felt it was his duty not to leave such a "chaotic and hairy situation" unobserved. He said he knew that the protest site was not visible from the base of the mountain and because he thought that this was his only alternative, he remained at the site. Ironically, the border of the closure area was not at the bottom of the mountain but only a short distance from where Hansen was arrested. Several activists were able to remain and watch demonstrators' arrests without being arrested.

Hansen said he would have moved to that area had he known it was permitted. "The only place we were directed was down the mountain," he said. The government asserted that Hansen's First Amendment rights were not violated because he had the same rights to watch from outside the closure area as others. "There was certainly a location outside the boundaries where the arrests of the protesters were visible," said Dorschner. Prosecutors claim that had Hansen been more alert, he would have been able to find the area. "Others easily and quickly complied within the allotted 15 minutes," Dorschner said.

Two other reporters at the protest, Mark Kelly-Goss, a reporter for the *Vail Daily Trail*, and Mark Sulpe, a photographer



Reporter Hansen was asked to leave site of protest he was covering

for the *Colorado Daily* who was working with Hansen on the story, decided to comply with the orders. Kelly-Goss said that he was “forcefully backed down the mountain” by a deputy. His photographer was turned away from the bottom of the mountain, which was not even a part of the closure area. And though he was told a press officer would be at the bottom of the mountain to answer questions, the officer did not show up for more than an hour and a half, he said.

Kelly-Goss was not arrested, but said his ability to cover the story was handicapped. “I did not cover the actual event, no quotes from protesters, or law enforcement officials.” Kelly-Goss charged that the Forest Service made a deliberate attempt to keep news media away from the area. He said officers moved against him and Hansen even though they made it clear that they were members of the press and did not want to interfere. And like Hansen, Kelly-Goss said he was not told he could stand nearby. “The only thing I was aware of was that I had to go to the bottom of the mountain.”

Despite the confusion, Hansen does not blame Dunfee for the misunderstanding. He acknowledges that the situation was chaotic and it was Dunfee’s job to get it under control. But he does believe that there are “some ulterior motives in driving my prosecution,” Hansen commented to Michael Roberts of the *Westword Daily*: “They are spending tens of thousands of dollars prosecuting me, and you have to ask yourself why. Why are they coming after me so hard?”

To intimidate the media, answered Hansen’s former editor, Pam White of the *Colorado Daily*.

“It dawned on us that if they won, they would have a federal ruling that would allow them to strong-arm the press over protests on public land,” she told the *Westword’s* Roberts. “From their perspective, it would be nice to keep the press away so that they could handle things however they wanted, without ramifications. To me, that is what this is all about.”

Some reporters’-rights watchdogs agree. SPJ’s Christine Tatum oversees a fund to help journalists who claim their First Amendment rights have been breached. The society has provided \$1,000 towards Hansen’s defense.

“We shouldn’t be lulled into thinking that Brian’s case is too small to affect the way that journalists do their job,” said Tatum.

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“The extent to which the United States Department of Justice has taken the prosecution shows that they are trying to control how and when the media can do their jobs, making the government harder to cover.”

Tatum would like SPJ to work with the Forest Service to help design and implement policies to allow adequate media access to news events in closed areas. Six others are charged with the same misdemeanor as Hansen, but he feels that his case is different from theirs.

“The most fundamental thing is that I was not a protester, I was a journalist on assignment,” Hansen said. “Once all of the misunderstandings came to light, the charges should have been dropped.”

Lucy Dalglish, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, noted: “he was different from the others arrested because he was an observer trying to report an extremely newsworthy event. No one involved did not realize he was a reporter.”

Dorschner saw no difference between Hansen and the others arrested at that time. He made an analogy between Hansen’s violation and those of skiers who stray off trails into areas that are closed for public safety. In court, however, this case seems to be more complicated. Motion hearings took two days and touched upon issues such as freedom of the press, the right to assemble and the impartiality that Hansen had towards the cause.

And the U.S. Department of Justice is reviewing the case on a procedural issue. According to a federal rule, the U.S. Attorney General must be notified prior to the indictment of a member of the press who is arrested while covering a story. Hansen was notified that no such file existed for his case.

As this is written, U.S. Magistrate James Robb is still weighing motions to dismiss the charge, and Hansen is hoping for a dismissal.

“This has been so frustrating for me. They are prosecuting me on the flimsiest of legal grounds,” Hansen said. He would be relieved to end a case that has already cost over \$15,000 in legal fees, but he said he is not “trying to get off on a procedural technicality.” He believes that he would “prevail on the merits of the case.”

This case is not an isolated incident. According to the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, arrests of reporters seem to be rising.

“We now tell reporters who might find themselves in a precarious situation, to obey the cop or be prepared to face the consequences of an arrest,” explained Dalglish.

And in a recent publication her organization warns reporters that arrests increasingly lead to prosecution. It notes: “In the past, cops and prosecutors have been more likely to dismiss charges against members of the press because of the importance of the job they do. But nowadays police are drawing less and less distinction. This is of great concern because the ability of the media to cover these protests is being thwarted.”

*Alison Linder attends the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and is enrolled to receive a master’s degree in conservation biology. She interned at the SEJ office from June through August.*



# West Virginia duo mines coal stories for prizes

This summer *The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette* reporting duo of Paul Nyden and Ken Ward Jr. added to their impressive list of journalism honors, as Nyden won a Sigma Delta Chi Award and Ward received a Livingston Award, both for their coverage of coal issues.

While major regional award contests, including Best of the West, also honored multiple examples of environment coverage, broadcast reports about the environment failed to win a single award in the duPont-Columbia or Peabody awards, two of the three most prestigious broadcast competitions. The national news Emmy Awards, in which multiple environmental entries have been nominated, were to be announced in early September.

Nyden won the Society of Professional Journalists national SDX award for non-deadline reporting for his “sustained examination of the West Virginia Workers’ Compensation Fund. He uncovered evidence that the state allowed large corporations including coal companies to default on hundreds of millions of dollars in debt while they cracked down on small businesses.”

His colleague, Ward, won the national reporting honor in the Livingston competition, the nation’s top award for young journalists, for his coverage of coal mining methods that remove entire mountaintops. Judges said his stories “documented how the most efficient means of mining coal was causing havoc to streams and mountains, and provided factual data (later used in) a lawsuit that curtailed it.”

The Livingston Awards, administered by the University of Michigan, honors outstanding journalists under age 35. Ward, 32, has covered environment issues at the *Gazette* for six years, and has previously won the Meeman Award (twice) and the Stokes Award. A founding SEJ board member, Nyden has reported on coal and environment issues for 18 years. He has won, among other honors, the George Polk, Meeman (twice) and IRE awards.

Also in the national SDX competition, Ron Nordland of *Newsweek* picked up the Public Service Award for magazines for “The Next Chernobyls,” and the graphics team at *The (Portland) Oregonian* won the Informational Graphics honor for work on the oil spill by the grounded tanker, *New Carissa*.

In Canada’s National Newspaper Awards, that country’s equivalent of the Pulitzer Prizes, Amy Cameron of the *New Brunswick Telegraph*, was a runner-up in the local reporting category for her coverage of problems and government bungling regarding a private sewage lagoon in Waweig. Judges wrote that Cameron “constantly stayed a step or two ahead of the government in this excellent example of investigative reporting.”

In the Best of the West completion, one of the three largest and most prestigious regional competitions, Paul Rogers of the *San Jose Mercury News* won the environmental reporting category for “Cash Cows,” an examination of taxpayer-subsidized leasing of federal lands for cattle grazing. Tom Chorneau of the (Santa Rosa, Calif.) *Press-Democrat* won the Growth and Development category for an assessment of the successes and failures of a program that uses tax money to buy open space in Sonoma County.

No environmental reports picked up an award in the most recent Southern Journalism Awards or the Inland Press Association’s public service competition.

The following awards results were announced this summer or were not covered in the last issue of the *SEJournal*, which reported the results of the Pulitzer, Polk, Meeman, IRE and other major national journalism awards.

## **Sigma Delta Chi Awards for Excellence in Journalism**

Non-Deadline Reporting (Circulation under 100,000)—Paul J. Nyden, *Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette*. See above. Public Service, Magazines—Ron Nordland, *Newsweek*. See above. Informational Graphics—Graphics team, *The (Portland) Oregonian*. See above.

## **The Livingston Awards**

National Reporting—Ken Ward Jr., *Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette*. See above.

## **Canadian National Newspaper Awards**

Local Reporting, Runner-up—Amy Cameron, *New Brunswick Telegraph*. See above.

## **Best of the West**

### **Environmental Reporting**

First Place—Paul Rogers, *San Jose Mercury News*. See above. Second Place—James Long and Bryan Denison, *The Oregonian*, for “Crimes in the Names of the Environment,” an examination of alleged eco-terrorism. Third Place—Doug O’Harra, *Anchorage Daily News*, for “Exxon Valdez: Legacy of a Spill, which the contest judge said was the best of many newspapers’ 10-year retrospective pieces.

### **Growth and Development Reporting**

First Place—Tom Chorneau, *The Press Democrat*, Santa Rosa, Calif. See above. Second Place—Caitlin Rother, *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, for her examination of a \$100 million redevelopment project that is revitalizing a crime-plagued neighborhood. Third Place—Cyndee Fontana, Lesli A. Maxwell and Michael Doyle, *The Fresno Bee*, for a package on a plan by the world’s largest cotton company, J.G. Boswell Co., to increase the number of dairy cows in Kings County by 50 percent.

## **National Newspaper Association (U.S.)**

### **Best Coverage of Environmental News**

First Place—Gainesville Sun and reporter Ron Matus, for reports, photography and editorials on topics including genetic engineering, hazards of wood preservatives and water issues. Second Place—Pinedale (Wy.) Roundup and staffers Pat Urbigkt, Janet Montgomery and David Vaughn, for reports regarding lynx and mule deer research, the future course of the Colorado River and a pictorial on the release of trumpeter swans. Third Place—The Lake Forester, Metro Chicago, and reporter Sheryl DeVore, for a variety of articles.

## **Suburban Newspapers of America**

### **Best Environmental Coverage**

#### **Large Daily Newspapers**

First Place—The Daily Southtown, Metro Chicago, “Public Lands, Private Agendas.” Second Place—Recorder Community newspapers, Stirling, N.J., “Environment New Jersey. Third Place—Times Express, Monroeville, Penn., “Goin’ Green”

#### **Small Daily Newspapers**

First Place—Chandler (Ariz.)/Sun Lakes Independent, “Recycling Sewage.” Second Place—Livonia (Mich) Observer, “Rouge Cleanup” Third Place—No Winner

#### **Large Weekly Newspapers**

First Place—The East Hampton (N.Y.) Star, “Sammy’s Beach Evacuation Series.” Second Place—Montgomery (Md.) Gazette, “Drought’s Devastation.” Third Place—Vienna (Va.) Times, “Worming Their Way Around Town.”

#### **Small Weekly Newspapers**

First Place—Milford (Mich.) Times, “Deer Coverage.” Second Place—Las Colinas Business News, Irving, Texas, “Pining for Christmas Dollars. Third Place—Oxford (Mich.) Eccentric, “Disappearing Farms.”

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# Asbestos: the ban that wasn't

By **ANDREW SCHNEIDER**

At a seminar for environmental professionals last year in Michigan, 100 people were asked to raise their hands if they thought asbestos was banned. All but two hands went up.

Most people, including many environmental “experts,” believe that the mining, production, sale and use of asbestos in America have been banned.

Most people are wrong.

In fact, though the Environmental Protection Agency banned most asbestos uses in 1989, a federal court overturned the ban two years later in response to a lawsuit by the asbestos industry. The ban has not been renewed. My newspaper, *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, published a series of stories on asbestos in consumer products over the past year. We found the repercussions from asbestos use continue today and worsen.

Our stories grew out of another project about miners and their family members getting sick and dying in the remote town of Libby, Mont. We had heard what appeared to be unlikely stories from two Libby activists: hundreds of people with fatal diseases, mine owner W.R. Grace knowingly exposing its employees, and more. Yet I could find only one three-paragraph story in the files of several Montana newspapers.

It turned out that a lawyer 100 miles away had quietly filed dozens of lawsuits against Grace on behalf of employees. His expert medical witness had tallied 88 miners who died from exposure to asbestos. After interviewing Libby residents and contacting physicians in Spokane, Portland, Ore., Seattle, Salt Lake City, Boise and Denver, we wrote that at least 192 people from Libby had died of asbestos exposure. Another 375 had fatal asbestos-related diseases.

The culprits were tremolite and actinolite asbestos that contaminated vermiculite ore mined in Libby. Vermiculite, a popcorn-light, shiny substance, was used for decades as home insulation, for flame-proofing and as an expander in garden products. We published our first stories on Libby last November. An EPA emergency response team arrived there three days later.

To prove what Grace and government agencies knew and document what they did, or didn't do, we combed through about 18,000 pages of corporate documents and depositions and about 85 government reports and studies.

But the story didn't end there. In December, we published a story documenting that Grace shipped millions of tons of the contaminated vermiculite to some 200 manufacturing plants throughout the country, and that scores of people at several of these plants also died. Some of these plants have been leveled into parking lots or converted into other uses, but many, according to EPA, are still contaminated and present a continuing health risk. We worked with reporters from several newspapers and television operations who wanted to test their local sites that used the Grace vermiculite. Several ordered transmission electron microscope (TEM) examinations of dust collected from the old sites. Journalists found high levels of asbestos in six states.

The logical next step was to determine whether asbestos

still contaminates vermiculite products sold today. The *PI* tested several brands of lawn products and commercial vermiculite and found asbestos in some of them. Preliminary EPA tests confirmed the *PI* findings.

How about other products? *PI* reporter Carol Smith and I knew that talc was rumored to contain asbestos and that crayons used talc as an expander. We purchased eight brands of crayons and tested them. Analysis of three brands—Crayola, Prang and Rose Art—by two government-certified laboratories repeatedly showed the crayons contained asbestos.

The story went national, to Crayola's dismay. The industry-funded Creative Arts Materials Institute, which hands out government-authorized “non-toxic” labels for crayons and other art products, insisted that there was no asbestos in the products. However, the group in May admitted that it never tested for the fibers.

We knew the talc came from the Vanderbilt mines in upstate New York. We documented that Vanderbilt miners had been sickened, that a radiologist who diagnosed them was fired and blacklisted, and that two NIOSH scientists worked with Vanderbilt to get an unauthorized study done that would discredit earlier NIOSH findings that the talc was hazardous.

Two weeks later, the Consumer Product Safety Commission reported that its tests on the talc found “trace” amounts of the same asbestos we found but “large amounts of a transitional fiber” that it stopped short of calling asbestos. The commission's experts said the “transitional” fibers had the same shape, size and composition as asbestos, but weren't regulated by the government as asbestos. Nevertheless, they asked crayon manufacturers to remove talc from their products.

Was it asbestos? Government definitions muddled the picture. Asbestos fibers usually can be seen only under the most powerful electron microscope. Analysts hired by the *PI* located the fibers in various consumer products and confirmed that they had the identical shape, size, chemical composition and toxicity of asbestos that has sickened or killed millions of people.

Government experts shrugged and said our lab specialists were correct about the potential hazard, but added, “It's not one of the six official asbestos fibers that the government is allowed to regulate.”

Industry groups for decades have successfully fought all government efforts to add additional types of asbestos to the regulations. The industry presents enormous obstacles to those government investigators and regulators who believe that asbestos is killing yet another generation of Americans.

Editor's Note: *The Billings Gazette* reported in July that W.R. Grace had repurchased the site of its now-closed mine at Libby and denied the EPA access to the site without an escort.

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*Andrew Schneider, (206) 448-8218, is senior national correspondent for The Seattle Post-Intelligencer.*



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# Improved Web site goes online

By RUSSELL CLEMINGS

It took exactly one year for SEJ's top priority for 2000—nominated in July 1999 by members who attended the Montana leadership summit and endorsed by the board in October—to become a reality.

On July 1, SEJ unveiled its new home page on the World Wide Web. The address is the same as before—<http://www.sej.org>—but the design is new, the content has been revamped, and most startling of all, the search engine actually works.

That's not all. Soon—perhaps by the time this issue of *SEJournal* lands in your mailbox—we will be taking the wraps off an all-new, password-protected, members-only Web site at <http://members.sej.org>. In addition to all of the content available on the public site, the members-only site will also have complete searchable archives of all SEJ listservs, a continually updated and searchable membership directory, and important organization documents such as SEJ's bylaws; membership, election and financial guidelines; and summaries of board meetings.

The redesigned and new sites culminate many months of work by SEJ staff and a Web page task force consisting of SEJ members Bruce Ritchie, David Hammond, Brian Lavendel, Peter Thomson, Richard

Manning, Amy Gahran, Peter Lord, David Poulson, Paul Rogers and Scott Miller, most of whom attended the Montana retreat.

The crisp new design was developed for SEJ by Andrew and Angelo DeVigal of DeVigal Design, two of the most talented Web designers around. Much of the content was assembled by SEJ's staff, led by Chris Rigel, associate director for programs and operations.

A University of Missouri graduate student, Kris Birks, signed onto the effort early this year and, among other tasks, significantly beefed up the existing database of Internet subject links. We got her through a cooperative agreement with the Missouri-based organization, Investigative Reporters and Editors, which hosts our two Web sites and whose executive director, Brant Houston, proposed the arrangement.

Even my next-door neighbor, Jonathan Cook, a computer pro-

grammer, got involved, helping with the tricky Lotus Notes coding needed to secure the members-only site and build the membership directory.

SEJ executive director Beth Parke plans to hire soon a new programs manager whose responsibilities will include keeping the content fresh on both sites, especially on the opening pages. And in coming months, we hope to add more features, including online registration for SEJ national and regional conferences, a searchable directory of national conference attendees, and a revamped SEJ store where you can buy a variety of SEJ-related merchandise.

Here's a brief guide to what's on the new sites:

- "About SEJ" includes a basic introduction to our organization and its leaders, with a list of funders and our three most recent organization tax returns, which are public records by law.

- "How to Join" outlines criteria for SEJ membership and includes a downloadable membership application. In time we hope to include an online application with digital signature capabilities. This section appears only on the public site.

- "Conferences" has details of upcoming SEJ national and regional conferences, including registration forms to download and information about past national conferences.

- "Publications" includes *SEJournal* back issues, *TipSheet* archives, and SEJ's online environmental events calendar, maintained by Janet Raloff of *Science News*. On the members site, we will post each new issue of *SEJournal* as soon as it goes to the printer.

- "Careers" includes answers to one of the most frequently asked questions we get from Web site visitors: How do I become an environmental journalist? This section appears only on the public site.

- "Resources: includes the Internet links database, the gallery of links to outstanding environmental journalism, and, on the members site, directories of fellowships, environmental journalism awards and job listings. (On the public site, those three appear in the "Careers" section.)

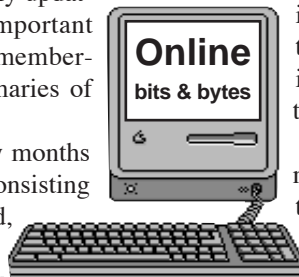
- "Contact SEJ" includes a list of staff members and their responsibilities, with contact information, plus instructions on how to rent SEJ's mailing list or use the *sej-mail* listserv.

- "Directory," which appears only on the members site, includes the searchable membership directory, plus a page where you can change your own directory information or Web site password.

- "Listservs," also limited to the members site, is where you will find complete archives of all SEJ listservs.

All pages on both sites also include links to a powerful new search engine that encompasses not just the static content of our traditional Web pages but also the dynamic, database-driven pages such as the listserv archives and the online calendar. Also included on each page is a link to a site map to aid your navigation.

To use the members-only site, you'll need a user name and password, which will be mailed to you by the SEJ office when the site is ready. You can change your initial password by going



Soon we will take the wraps off an all-new, password-protected, members-only Web site with searchable archives of listservs, member directory and organization documents.



to the "Directory" section of <http://members.sej.org>; to change your user name, please contact the SEJ office, [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org). Please don't share your user name and password with others; the site's security depends on it.

Like any such complex sites, these new Web pages undoubtedly have some typos and bugs, and we're fixing them as we find

them. In the meantime, please send your comments, criticisms, suggestions and bug discoveries to [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org).

*Russ Clemings is computer-assisted reporting specialist at the Fresno Bee and SEJ board member.*

**File Edit View Go Bookmarks Communicator Help** Sun 10:53 AM

**Netscape: Society of Environmental Journalists**

Location: <http://www.sej.org/>

**Society of Environmental Journalists** The source for journalists reporting on the environment


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**An organization of journalists, for journalists**

With more than 1,000 members, SEJ is the world's largest organization of journalists who cover the environment. [Membership](#) is open to journalists, educators and students. Non-members may attend SEJ's [conferences](#), subscribe to the quarterly [SEJ Journal](#) or [contact SEJ members](#) via our mailing list or our e-mail service. SEJ is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental journalism. You can support SEJ by making a [tax-deductible contribution](#) to our "Frontiers on the Environment Beat" online campaign.

**Donate to Our Campaign**



**News briefs from TipSheet**


From Sept. 11 to 15, the first nationwide National Park Service conference held since 1991 is expected to draw 1,300 NPS managers and staff, as well as representatives of companies, organizations, and institutions that work closely with NPS. [Updated information](#) will be available throughout the conference. See [TipSheet](#) for more.

**SEJ outreach programs**


Are you looking for ways to improve environmental coverage in your newsroom? SEJ can help, with our speaker's bureau, mentor program and publications such as [TipSheet](#) and our [environmental events calendar](#). Contact the [SEJ office](#) for more details.

**LATEST NEWS:**

**SURVEY:** The International Federation of Environmental Journalists invites you to help with a [survey](#) of education, training and information needs of journalists and other media professionals.



**CONFERENCE:** Register now for [SEJ's Tenth Annual Conference](#), Oct. 19-22, 2000, in East Lansing, Mich. Speakers include Ford chairman William Clay Ford Jr., author Bill McKibben, energy expert Amory Lovins, and Canadian scientist David Suzuki. [Draft program](#).



**MEMBER NEWS:** Brush up on your grammar, punctuation and style with [The Journalist's Primer](#), an interactive CD co-authored by SEJ member Mark Neuzil and David Landry, professors at The University of St. Thomas. Released by the Minnesota Newspaper Foundation, the CD offers reviews of journalistic writing rules as well as self exams and quizzes for practice.

**FEATURED LINK:** Ever wonder how to find out how many corporate boards somebody sits on? [Edgar Online](#) lets you search SEC filings by name.

Last updated September 3, 2000

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# Dioxins in humans: Body burden battle is new chemical scrap

By SARA THURIN ROLLIN

A recent draft report from the Environmental Protection Agency says the U.S. population's average body burden of dioxins and dioxin-like chemicals is "at or near" levels that may cause illness. That assessment could lead to demands for tighter control of commercial emissions of dioxin-like chemicals. But already it is under attack from scientists who believe the EPA may have exaggerated the amount of the chemicals in an average American, or the hazard it presents.

Dioxins are unwanted byproducts of some industrial processes. The EPA says the general U.S. population gets its body burden from ingesting dioxins and similar compounds in fatty foods. The amount of these chemicals in the body is crucial to determining the risk that additional exposure may cause illness. Laboratory animal tests have shown that the most powerful form of dioxins is among the most potent cancer-causing compounds ever studied. Minuscule amounts of these chemicals have been shown to harm laboratory animal development and reproductive systems.

But the impact of dioxins on human health has been the subject of heated debate. Some scientists say lab animal tests are poor predictors of human hazards, and have exaggerated the risks. And while the EPA has been reassessing human health risks from these chemicals for a decade, it has so far succeeded only in generating new controversy. The latest quarrel stems from portions of the EPA's 3,000-page draft dioxin health risk reassessment that were released in June. Following critiques by scientists, the reassessment is expected to be reviewed and issued as a final agency scientific document.

State and federal regulatory agencies are expected to rely on the reassessment when deciding whether to impose new or tougher restrictions on dioxin emitters—on trash incinerators and bleached-paper pulp mills, for instance. At the heart of the new regulatory decisions will be estimates of body burdens. The EPA says the average American carries dioxins and similar chemicals near levels that have led to illnesses in laboratory animal tests. If that estimate prevails, it will boost pressure on state and federal regulators to ratchet down controls on dioxin emissions.

But some scientists strongly disagree. In the first of two scientific critiques of EPA's draft report July 25-26, some scientists challenged the EPA's approaches to calculating body burdens, measuring them in humans, and using them to generate risk estimates.

Dioxins are persistent and accumulate in fat of humans and animals. If you know the amount of fat in the blood, and how much of the body is fat, "you can estimate how much dioxin is in a person," said Linda Birnbaum, director of EPA's Experimental Toxicology Laboratory in North Carolina.

Birnbaum said her agency calculated body burden as the mass per total body weight. EPA also uses a toxic equivalency factor (TEF) calculation to expand its dioxins body burden estimates to include several dozen dioxin-like chemicals, with each assigned a different weight based on its cancer potency. This was

done to enable scientists to calculate the total impact of dioxins and other chemicals that are expected to cause similar biological effects.

The result, said Birnbaum, is a number that expresses the cumulative potency-weighted concentration of dioxins and similar chemicals in the body. It can be compared to the concentration of the same chemicals in laboratory animals.

The EPA could consider the concentration of dioxins in the body over time as measured by the more complicated "area-under-the-curve" process, Birnbaum said. But the agency concluded that would not lend itself to comparing dioxins' effects in various animal species. Since dioxins have a long half-life, the agency chose instead to rely on the average steady-state body burden. Birnbaum said that made the most sense for understanding some health effects and comparing lab animals and humans.

Brent Kerger, principal scientist and director of Health Science Resource Integration Inc. in Tallahassee, Fla., dis-

agreed. "The way EPA is using body burden is a little bit different than the existing scientific literature," Kerger said after attending the July meeting. "We don't know if EPA's approach will hold up under scientific scrutiny."

Kerger said that in the past, body burden has normally been described as the total mass—not divided by weight. Pharmaceutical companies facing a similar situation in drug tests develop use physiology-based pharmacokinetic modeling, which relies on the area-under-the-curve-type analysis, to identify important doses in humans, he said.

"What I was harping about at the meeting is that we don't really know whether that [the EPA's] type of estimate can be properly scaled up from laboratory animal studies to humans using a body burden," Kerger said. "Its never been done."

James Wilson, senior fellow at Resources for the Future in Washington, D.C., raised several other concerns about the existing test methods used to detect dioxins in humans.

First, the few laboratories that do this analysis have never conducted a study to identify "non-random, systematic errors" that may be introduced into their analyses, he said, adding this is standard practice.

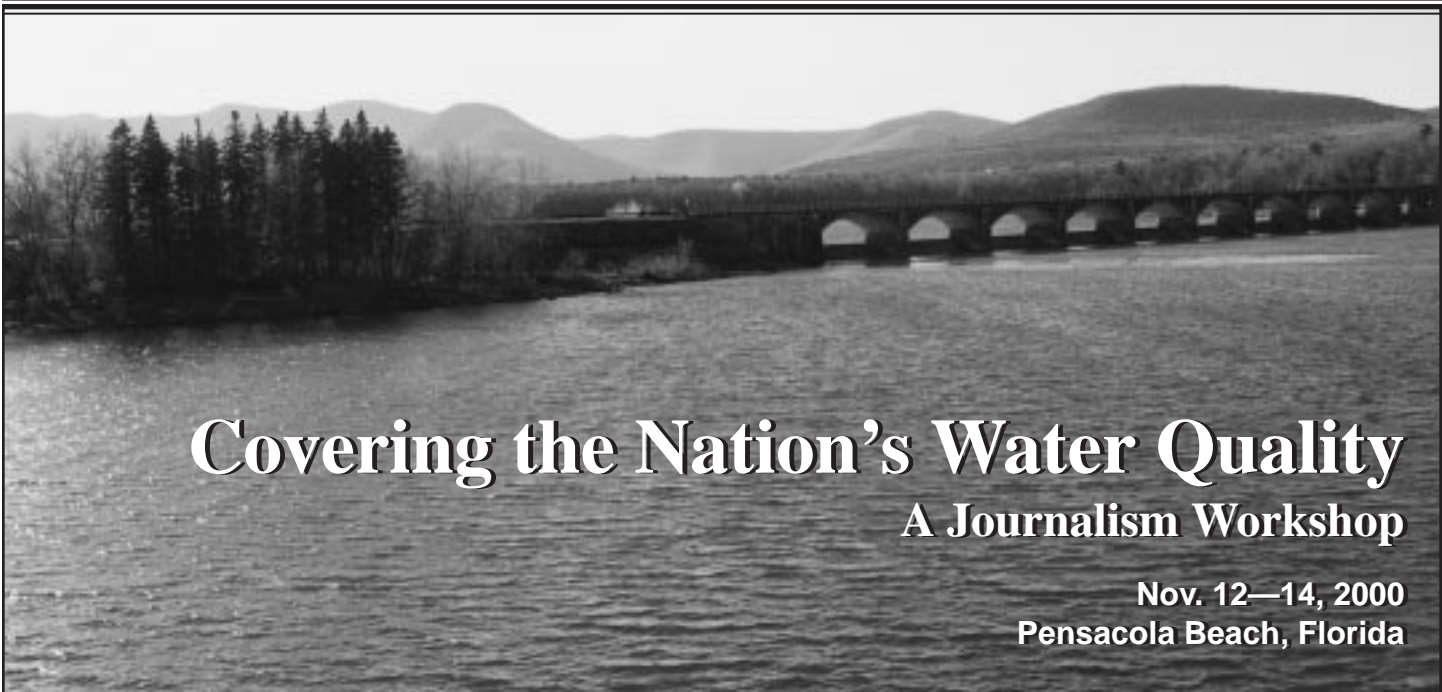
Second, only one company makes the most potent dioxin as a laboratory reference standard, and the purity of that substance is not known, he said.

Finally, EPA's plans to extend the findings to dioxin-related compounds using TEFs can lead to the exaggeration of risks, he said.

The bottom line, Wilson contended, is that current testing technology is most reliable for studying trends in dioxin concentrations, not for generating absolute numbers as the EPA is doing in its most recent draft document.



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



# Covering the Nation's Water Quality

## A Journalism Workshop

Nov. 12—14, 2000  
Pensacola Beach, Florida

The conference hotel is **Hampton Inn on Pensacola Beach**, located at Two Via DeLuna, directly on the Gulf of Mexico, about 15 miles from the Pensacola Airport. A taxi from the airport is about \$20. If driving from Interstate 10, take exit 4 South (Interstate 110). Follow signs to Pensacola Beach. Look for the Hampton Inn on the right.

*Please make your reservation soon by calling (850) 932-6800. Rooms are limited, and reservations must be made by **Oct. 12** to get the SNPA group rate. Rooms with an inland view are \$79. Gulf view rooms are \$99. After October 13, these rates will not be available.*

**Return your registration form to:** SNPA Foundation, P.O. Box 28875, Atlanta, GA 30358  
or fax with credit card info to: **(404) 252-9635**

**For registration and logistics information, contact:** Edward Van Horn, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, (404) 256-0444

**For program information, contact:** Michael Ryan, Pensacola News Journal, (850) 435-8512

**Other questions? Contact:** Chris Rigel, Society of Environmental Journalists, (215) 884-8177

### Registration Form

Name		Title	Nickname (for name tag)
Employer		Publication	
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Early registration discount of **\$195 must be received by Oct. 12.**  
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# PR drive clears a path for logging

By MIKE DUNNE

## SECRETS AND LIES

By Nicky Hager and Bob Burton

Common Courage Press, 254 pp., 1999.

The subject of *Secrets and Lies*—public relations companies and their tactics—will be familiar to reporters who have covered environmental controversies.

Ordinarily, one rarely gets more than a glimpse of what is really going on behind the scenes in a PR campaign. This book provides a broad view from inside a campaign to build support for a state-owned logging company, Timberlands West Coast, to cut native forests in New Zealand.

Writers Nicky Hager of New Zealand and Bob Burton of Australia received copies of the minutes of weekly teleconference calls between Timberland officials and its multinational public relations firm, Shandwick, Ltd.

The papers outline the selection of officials to be lobbied, the creation of local support groups to counter “greenies,” and other aspects of the company’s logging plan’s promotion drive.

The authors say their book provides “an insider’s view of the dirty deeds of a gigantic transnational propaganda firm.” Hager and Burton contend that the public relations business is designed to circumvent democracy, influence politicians and snatch decision-making away from the general public. They also say what they uncovered is a common occurrence. Their opening chapter is called “Exposing PR Tactics Across the World and On Your Street.”

The first controversy covered by the book is the company’s attempts to deal with tree-sitting protesters. The company initially threatened legal action against the group sponsoring the protest and arrested protesters for trespassing. While a tree-sitting platform was not occupied by what the company called “aliens,” a helicopter carrying a log smashed into it. One protestor was below at the time. After she fled, a crew felled the tree.

When a member of Parliament reminded the company that civil aviation rules require that helicopter harvesting of lumber should not occur if someone might be hurt, she too received a lawsuit threat.

The battle moves into dueling letters to the editors. The firm arranged for people to write letters, often drawing up the drafts for their signatures. The authors say the public relations firm had to hire extra help so it could promptly reply to any published criticism.

The company and its public relations firm even spent money and time removing anti-logging graffiti from around the capital of Wellington and painting over posters put up by one of the primary anti-logging groups, Native Forest Action. Internal documents show the public relations consultants were pleased that the anti-graffiti campaign was “discreet and effective” and “there is no obvious company involvement.” But the memo goes on to bemoan that the activists “are persistent” and the removal program was getting too costly.

The book follows the company’s “greenwashing” efforts, its campaign to influence the media and its cultivation of allies among influential people. It even documents which officials in the government, particularly in the office of State Owned Enterprises that was overseeing Timberlands, cooperated with the company.

For example, the authors cite internal Shandwick memos that report conversations with the private secretary to the Minister of State Owned Enterprises. The secretary provided a Shandwick executive with information about confidential cabinet discussions and which members of Parliament needed lobbying. The State Owned Enterprises minister later became prime minister and the relationship continued, although the authors admit they did not know if the minister approved of the relationship.

The allegations in the book appear to be well documented in the book’s 18 pages of footnotes.

The book ends with “A Brief Guide to Leaking,” which encourages insiders to leak information similar to the Timberland Papers. The authors also include a projection of the “crisis management plan” Timberlands and Shandwick would employ when the book is released. Like Dorothy and Toto peeking behind the curtains to find the real Wizard of Oz pulling levers, *Secrets and Lies* shows readers a rare view of public relations wizardry that is often hidden from the public.

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*Mike Dunne writes about environmental issues for the Baton Rouge Advocate.*

These and other books are available for purchase on SEJ’s Web site.

<http://www.sej.org>

If you want to review a book, or know of a book SEJ should consider for review, please contact BookShelf editor Mark Neuzil, University of St. Thomas Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication, Mail #4249, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, Minn. or e-mail [mrneuzil@stthomas.edu](mailto:mrneuzil@stthomas.edu).

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# Battles for the American rainforests

## TONGASS: PULP POLITICS AND THE FIGHT FOR THE ALASKA RAIN FOREST

By Kathie Durbin

Oregon State University Press, 328 pp., 1999.

## LAST STANDS: A JOURNEY THROUGH NORTH AMERICA'S VANISHING ANCIENT RAINFORESTS

By Larry Pynn

Oregon State University Press, 224 pp., 2000.

That blithest of environmentalists and cheeriest of politicians, Ronald Reagan, didn't think much of the redwoods of California, which he dismissed by saying, "A tree is a tree. How many more do you want to look at?" For some, there is a sameness, a plainness, a familiarity, about trees. They do repeat themselves.

For others, like writers Kathie Durbin of Portland, Ore., and Larry Pynn of Tsawwassen, British Columbia, there are tales to be told by those who venture into the woods. Durbin and Pynn are able to find plenty to write about trees, in this case the temperate rainforest on the west coast of North America.

Durbin, a reporter for *The Columbian* in Washington state, leads the reader through the rats' maze of pulp politics and environmental intrigue in the rainforest of the Alaska panhandle, that big strip of coast gouged out of British Columbia.

Pynn, for his part, forests in a wider and more adventurous way. A reporter for the Vancouver, British Columbia *Sun*, he rambles with ingenuity through the rainforest from Alaska to California. With Pynn, the places of unharvested lumber come alive. There's no better description of him and his lively mind than his self-portrayal as, "a biographer of the wilderness."

Durbin's book, as the title announces, is set in a political arena. The saga starts in the 1950s, when two large pulp companies win 50-year logging contracts from the U.S. Forest Service to buy timber for the price of matchsticks in Alaska's Tongass National Forest. At 17 million acres, Tongass is the largest national forest in the United States and the largest block of temperate rainforest left in the world. The pulp companies conspire to eliminate the small, independent loggers and monopolize the region's timber industry. Meanwhile, creating the conditions for hardship later, towns are enticed to grow in a way that makes them dependent on logging the land aggressively.

Durbin traces environmental groups' battle against the pulp companies and the U.S. Forest Service through the Reagan presidency. The one-tree-is-the-same-as-the-next president chooses, as head of the U.S. Forest Service, the vice president and legal

counsel of the parent corporation of one of the monopolizing pulp companies in Alaska.

Along the way Durbin weaves in the personal stories of people and communities. For example, Tenakee Springs, an island town of a 86 people in 1970, bans motor vehicles and fights to keep itself unconnected by road to the contamination of logging and other outside influences. Still, the Forest Service proposes building a road to Tenakee Springs and seems likely to get it, until the town and its allies convince Congress to quash it.

The end of the saga comes in the late 1990s, when environmental groups win a reduction of logging and legislation to protect the forest. This coincides with the closure of the pulp mills. Workers are dumped with as little thought as the toxic waste that once spewed from the mills. Durbin describes the last contingent of Boy Scouts scurrying through the doomed mill in Ketchikan to get their pulp-and-paper merit badges before the mill is gone.

Pynn wanders more freely through the rainforest. In 12 chapters of wild diversity he plunges into Ronald Reagan's trees in California's logged and "wounded" expansion to Redwood National Park, explores the intricacies of edible fungi in Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon, rides through history on an old logging tugboat, the Nitinat Chief, to the scene of a logging protest on King Island in British Columbia and tests his wilderness credentials by spending "seven days solo" in British Columbia's Granby Wilderness. In all, Pynn enjoys being in the rainforest and shares his joy.

Pynn's liveliness as a biographer of trees comes from somebody who has literally gone inside. When Pynn was a boy his father made a playhouse for him from the stump of a western red cedar and fastened a door on it. Now this insider writes about trees with what he calls "reasoned passion."

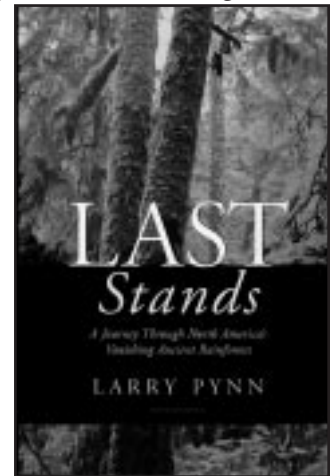
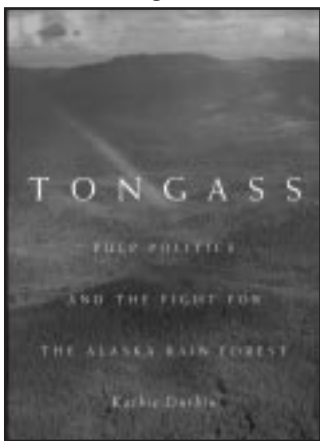
Durbin and Pynn cross paths in Hoonah, a town of about a thousand souls on Chichagof Island where the natives formed a corporation to log their land. The result is depressing. Durbin hears a Tlingit native in Hoonah observe that, as the result of logging by the native corporation, "all the eagles are out on the breakwater because there are so few trees left on the hill." Hoonah is also the place, in the last chapter in Durbin's book, where the relentless journalist allows herself a rare personal comment, reflecting on the resilience of the wild land.

The more contemplative Pynn deftly portrays the chairman of the local native logging corporation leaning, "like an old-growth spruce swaying in the wind." It makes you wonder what kind of tree somebody of Reagan's mind would be.

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*Shawn Thompson is assistant professor of journalism at the University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops, British Columbia*

### Books by Members



## SEPTEMBER

22-25: **Changing Landscapes of Rural America:** Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyo. The symposium seeks to explore the implications of changing demographics and economics on land use and cover—and how they affect ecosystems.

**Contact:** Dan Brown, School of Natural Resources & Environment, 430 E. University, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., 48109-1115.

(734) 763-5803. Fax: 734-936-2195.

E-mail: danbrown@umich.edu.

URL: <http://www.umich.edu/~danbrown/>.

23-26: **Children's Health and the Environment:** Colorado Springs. This meeting, the annual International Neurotoxicology conference, will feature sessions on methylmercury, lead, PCBs, endocrine disrupters, and pesticides. Topics will focus not only on exposure, but finding biomarkers, evaluating risks from new epidemiology, and looking for synergism between toxic exposures.

**Contact:** Joan Cranmer, Dept. of Pediatrics, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, 1120 Marshal St., Room 304, Little Rock, Ark., 72202. (501) 320-2986. Fax: (501) 320-4978.

E-mail: cranmerjoanm@exchange.uams.edu.

URL: <http://www.neurotoxicology.com>.

25-Oct. 10: **Cellular Mechanism of Beneficial and Harmful Effects of Electromagnetic Fields:** Yerevan, Armenia. Sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this meeting will focus on the cellular targets for EMF radiation, metabolic pathways that are affected, effects on different target organ systems, and potential for therapeutic applications.

**Contact:** LSIHES Administrative Office, Hasratian St. 7, Yerevan, 375014, Armenia.

(3742) 281772. Fax: (3742) 288427.

E-mail: biophys@ipia.sci.am.

URL: <http://www.sci.am/~biophys/biomed/seminars.htm>.

26-27: **Chemsources 2000: Clean Technology for Specialty Chemicals:** Manchester, England. Sponsored by the Royal Society of Chemistry, this conference will look at ways to produce industrial chemicals in ways that pollute less.

**Contact:** Ruth Lane, Royal Society of Chemistry, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0BN, England.

(44) 928-788071. Fax: (44) 20-7437-8883

E-mail: secretariat@lane2.freemove.co.uk.

27-30: **The Future Starts Here...COMPOST!:** Edmonton, Alberta. Sponsored by the Composting Council of Canada and Olds College Composting Technology Centre, this meeting will feature technology discussions and case studies.

**Contact:** Susan Antler, Composting Council of Canada, 16 Northumberland St., Toronto, ON M6H 1P7.

(416) 535-0240. Fax: (416) 536-9892

E-mail: ccc@compost.org.

URL: <http://www.compost.org/Conf2000papers.htm>.

## OCTOBER

1-5: **Submerged Lands Management Conference:** Newport, R.I. Focusing on marine and freshwater environments, this conference will feature presentations on the disposal of dredged materials, "free-and-common fisheries and competition," harbor management, and habitat management.

URL: <http://www.narrabay.com/CONF/subland.html>.

3-5: **Advances in Terrestrial Ecosystem Carbon Inventory, Measurements, and Monitoring:** Raleigh, N.C. This conference plans to investigate available data in several categories: carbon stocks stored in above-ground biomass, those in soils and root stocks, accounting for or verifying changes in carbon stocks, and estimating carbon stored temporarily in products (such as lumber or paper) and the rate at which it may be liberated during use or landfill disposal.

**Contact:** Steven McNulty, USDA Forest Service, Southern Global Change Program, 920 Main Campus Dr., Venture Center II, Raleigh, N.C. 27606.

(919) 515-9489. Fax: (919) 513-2978

E-mail: steve\_mcnulty@ncsu.edu.

URL: <http://www.sgccp.ncsu.edu>.

4-5: **National Ground Water Association's Eastern Focus Conference:** Newburgh, N.Y. Co-sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency and Cornell University, this meeting will focus on four major environmental issues: water supplies, groundwater pollution, cleanup technologies and MTBE treatments.

**Contact:** Julie Shaw, National Ground Water Association, 601 Dempsey Rd., Westerville, Ohio, 43081.

(800) 551-7379 ext. 554. Fax: (614) 898-7786.

E-mail: jshaw@ngwa.org.

URL: <http://www.ngwa.org>.

5: **Flood Warning and Management: Seeking the questions for the new millennium:** London, England. This session will probe what's known about flood risks to the environment, techniques to reduce the costs of protection, flood forecasting technology and case histories.

**Contact:** Erica Hammond, Terence Dalton Ltd., 47 Water St. Lavenham, Suffolk CO10 9RN.

(44) 1787-248097. Fax: (44) 1787-248267.

E-mail: erica@lavenhamgroup.co.uk

Oct. 5-7: **The Natural Step Fifth Annual Conference on Sustainability:** Atlanta, Ga. The conference, focusing on issues related to sustainability, provides a forum to exchange ideas on practical applications. This year's sessions will examine how to meet human needs on a global scale.

**Contact:** Nicole Whiting, P.O. Box 29372, San Francisco, Calif. 94129.

(415) 561-3344. Fax: (415) 561-3345

E-mail: workshop@naturalstep.org.

URL: <http://www.naturalstep.org>.

9-11: **International Symposium on Animal, Agricultural,**



**and Food Processing Waste:** Des Moines, Iowa. Sponsored by at least 17 professional societies and at least 3 USDA agencies, this conference will focus on how livestock diets might be altered to cut wastes and odors, how wetlands or other technologies might be employed to facilitate waste treatment and odor control, finding recoverable by-products from meat-processing wastes, and the possible role of composting of livestock wastes.

**Contact:** Brenda West, American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 2950 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, Mich. 49085-9659. (616) 429-0300. Fax: (616) 429-3852. E-mail: west@asae.org.. URL: <http://asae.org/meetings/trio00/>.

**19-22: Society of Environmental Journalists 10th National Conference:** East Lansing, Mich. Topics include the Great Lakes, trans-U.S./Canada border issues, and the auto industry as well as craft-honing sessions for environmental journalists. (See details on page 4 and at SEJ's Web site.

**Contact:** SEJ, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118 (215) 884-8174. Fax: (215) 884-8175 E-mail: [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org). URL: <http://www.sej.org>

**12-14: Covering the Nation's Water Quality:** Pensacola Beach, Fla. co-sponsored by the *Pensacola News Journal*, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and SEJ. The conference will study water issues affecting the U.S. such as pharmaceuticals in water, U.S. government as a polluter, the state of our rivers, groundwater loss and other topics.

**Contact:** for registration and logistics information, contact: Edward Van Horn, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association. (404) 256-0444.

For program information, contact: Michael Ryan, *Pensacola News Journal*. (850) 435-8512.

Chris Rigel, Society of Environmental Journalists. (215) 836-9970. URL: <http://www.sej.org> or <http://www.snpa.org>

Please visit SEJ's interactive calendar at

<http://www.sej.org>

where you are invited to post information about events of interest to environmental reporters.

## Nature's architect...from page 9

imagine the world. Cotton is an ecological disaster. PET is associated with allergic reactions; it was never designed to be next to human skin. What if we made an organic nutrient product? Wouldn't it be great if the trimmings can be mulched for the local garden club? The filter for design must be no cancer, no birth defects, no mutations . . . How do you love all the children and toxify their mother's milk?

We sought partners to help us design a safe fabric. But we had to look at the ingredients. Sixty chemical companies said no and didn't want to work with us. Finally, the president of Ciba let us in. Out of 7,500 chemicals we examined, we were left

with 38 that met our criteria. The result was a huge success. When Swiss inspectors came to Steelcase to test the water, they thought their equipment was broken because they didn't measure any contamination. Two rooms that had been used to store flammable materials now provide a breakout room for staff. The company president stood on a table to talk to his employees and said, "You can take off your gloves and masks." They didn't need them anymore.

What's exciting about this sort of design is that the companies we are working with love this stuff.

How do we retrain and educate people in this type of design? It's very hard to bring your agenda to a school. It's easier simply to inspire the next generation with great work. Clark Binkey, when he was dean of forestry at the University of British Columbia in 1985, said that there's a professional cadre between 40 and 60 years old, for whom the word ecology did not exist in their education 20 years earlier. They learned about sustainable yield and stumpage, but they were not educated in this context of ecological concerns. We know that continuing education is typically wanting, so this cadre remains untrained in this sense.

But we're designing new products left and right, focusing on local context and integrating with natural energy flows. Hopefully, this process will be able to train thousands of designers and educate thousands of corporations, using those communication systems to promulgate the new attack throughout the whole system. It's an interesting design strategy that looks at evolution, at a chaotic, self-organizing system that responds to the environment.

*Jim Schwab is a senior research associate for the American Planning Association and the co-editor of APA's Zoning News.*

## Living Laboratories

### Some Recent Work of McDonough's Firms:

- **Oberlin College**, Lewis Center for Environmental Studies, Oberlin, Ohio
- **Nike European Headquarters**, Hilversum, The Netherlands
- **Woods Hole Research Center**, Woods Hole, Mass.
- **Johnson International**, new headquarters building, Racine, Wis.
- **Ford Motor Company**, River Rouge complex revitalization, Dearborn, Mich.
- **The Gap**, corporate headquarters, San Bruno, Calif.
- **Coffee Creek Center**, Chesterton, Ind.
- **Herman Miller, SQA Facility**, Holland, Mich.

## High Country News..(from page 1)

wrote about sprawl in Tucson, Ariz., describing efforts to slow the city's creep into the fragile Sonoran Desert. Edwin Dobb, an editor for *Harper's*, wrote last year about the exploitation of underground copper miners who shaped the gritty character of Butte, Mont. Freelancer Florence Williams described the feisty people living in the West's trailer parks—one of every six Westerners lives in a trailer, she discovered, and the lifestyle is different from what city dwellers or Easterners might imagine. And this spring, *HCN* publisher Ed Marston wrote an essay suggesting that the future of public lands has been decided primarily by the economy and environmentalists. His essay introduced pieces by eight respected Westerners with diverse views on the region's future.

Such coverage reflects the newspaper's motto and aspiration, "A Paper for People who Care about the West."

"For what we are, I think we are the best," said Paul Larmer, *HCN's* senior editor. "We giving people news from around the region on the environment and communities. You read an issue of the paper and you really get a sense of the region. Everything we do is not unique, but the fact (that) we give it all together is unique."

*HCN* displays a conservation bent that some people call unacceptable bias. Prominent people in industries such as ranching, mining and logging, for example, have dismissed the paper as a liberal rag that consistently emphasizes habitat protection over economics.

"My personal opinion is they (*HCN's* editors) already have an agenda and they don't want to hear anything that doesn't fit with their preconceived ideas," said Dennis Lynch, a professor of forest sciences at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Lynch contends the paper misrepresented his research in a story about Western forestry. He and a colleague had been working on a project in southwestern Colorado's San Juan National Forest, trying to restore the ecosystem without losing money.

"The forest has seven times more trees than it had back then (two centuries ago)," Lynch said. His idea was to reintroduce fire and conduct selective logging and thinning to reduce the forest's vulnerability to catastrophic wildfires without federal money. Loggers took some of the wood to a corporate mill, but processed small-diameter trees locally, producing post and poles and pine excelsior, material used in packing and for erosion blankets.

"It's not big money. The logger in this case made less than 1 percent of total revenues," Lynch said. *HCN's* coverage was disappointing, he said. "But the sense I got was that they thought big government ought to be the key to all this."

Lynch considers himself an environmentalist and says he was talking about conservation well before it was hip. "I really feel there's a need for a forum like *HCN*," he said. "I just don't like being spun."

Larmer concedes that the paper is not bound by the same rigid objectivity and impartiality that guide most newspapers. "We try to give everybody a voice in the paper," he says, "but when it comes down to it, we support the environment and healthy communities," he said.

### Regional environmental news resources

Regional environmental news comes in a lot of different wrappers. Those looking for information about the state of the planet often need look no farther than their backyard, where a variety of independent, alternative papers and Web sites keep an eye on the natural assets of their region, state or community. For some, the environment is their *raison d'être*; for others it's just part of a smorgasbord of reporting about politics, business and culture. Here is a sampling.

- **Adirondack Explorer:** New York's Adirondack Park is one of the great national treasures, and this monthly shares those gems, with articles about outdoor recreation, sights to see and features about park residents and the place's rich flora and fauna. It also carries conservation-minded editorials and book reviews. <http://www.adirondackexplorer.org>.

- **Adirondack History Journal**, which carries news on the state of the park as well as listings of historical events, interesting people and environmental groups. <http://www.mas terpieces.com>

- **Bay Weekly:** "The Chesapeake's Independent Newspaper." This free tabloid covers life along the western shore of the nation's largest estuary, with a focus on sailing and sprawl. Regular features include "Earth Journal," an outdoors column and "Dock of the Bay," a collection of environmental news from around Maryland and the rest of the world. <http://www.bayweekly.com>.

- **Cascadia Times:** Founded in 1995 by two former environmental reporters for *The Oregonian*, Paul Koberstein and Kathie Durbin, this publication casts a spotlight on the Pacific Northwest, where conflicts rage over endangered species, forests, mining—you name it. Its muckraking has targeted river pollution caused by mining, hazardous urban air pollution and the harm done to wild salmon populations by fish farms in Puget Sound. <http://www.times.org>

- **Great Lakes Radio Consortium:** A news service "committed to revealing the relationship between the natural world and the everyday lives of people in the Great Lakes region," this Ann Arbor, Mich.-based outfit reaches more than 30 million listeners through 140 stations in 10 states. Dale Willman, an award-winning editor from National Public Radio, took over as managing editor earlier this year. <http://www.glr.org>

- **Grist:** "A beacon in the smog," this Seattle-based magazine bills itself. Put out by the Earth Day Network headed by the organizers of that annual event, Gaylord Nelson and Denis Hayes. Recent issue featured reporting on fuel cells and the federal government's roadless initiative. <http://www.grist magazine.com>

- **Headwatersnews:** Based at the University of Montana, this Web site offers links to newspaper stories on environmental issues in the Rocky Mountain region, broadly defined. <http://www.headwatersnews.org>.

(Continued on next page)

Most veteran *HCN* readers say the newspaper is far less slanted than it once was. "It seems like they're trying to separate the editorial perspective from the news stories more than they used to," said The Wilderness Society's Pam Eaton, who has been reading *HCN* for nearly a decade, first from Washington, D.C., and now from Denver.

When *HCN* was started in 1970 by rancher Tom Bell in Lander, Wyo., the paper's content was unabashedly pro-environment. Marston, a physicist from New Jersey who took over in 1983, later wrote a tribute to Bell, describing him as "an idealist, a deeply religious man, and a rural person through and through."

"In tones reminiscent of an Old Testament prophet, he preached his gospel: evil, selfish, blind men—ranchers, miners, loggers, politicians, bureaucrats—were destroying the natural world, the world Bell most cared about," Marston wrote.

In *HCN*'s early years, the paper drained Bell's resources and teetered on the edge of collapse. At one point, the rancher published what he assumed was *HCN*'s final issue, telling his readers to expect no more. Recounts senior editor Larmer: "One day people got their last issue saying 'We're going under.' The next day, little checks started emerging."

Larmer said that's just one of *HCN*'s miracle stories. "It's happened several times since. When things got really tough, readers said, 'hey, we want this to continue.'"

After Bell left the paper in 1974, a series of mostly Eastern, pro-environment editors and writers carried *HCN* for nine more years in Lander. "They lacked his sense of the land, of rural economies, and of the Western rural society," Marston wrote. "They also lacked his rural, religious fundamentalism—his sense of evil. With the departure of Bell, the paper stopped thundering and has not thundered since."

Though he may not thunder, Marston rumbles. "I find Ed quite astute politically and remarkably insightful," Allen said. "Invariably, he seems to be ahead of the curve in figuring out how these things are going to take shape and play out."

In 1983, the Marstons relocated *HCN* in Paonia, a town of about 1,800 on Colorado's mostly rural Western Slope. People there grow peaches and work in coal mines and on ranches.

This summer, the couple was traveling for several weeks, and could not be reached to comment for this article. "They're trying to escape from humanity for a month, and it's working," said senior editor Larmer, who was unable to reach the couple on newspaper business.

To Larmer, the Marstons' temporary absence is a sign of new stability at *HCN*. "We've got a solid enough staff that Ed and Betsy felt they could leave for a month. We have a marketing guy now—that's a position we would never have had even two years ago." Also in the last few years, the organization started a radio program with a full-time producer, a syndicated column service and hired a web editor. Unlike early editors of the paper, Larmer lives off more than his passion for journalism and stunning Colorado Scenery; *HCN* salaries are livable now, he said.

Still, the paper is far from lucrative. Revenues exceeded costs by a slim \$12,500 in 1998, according to the 1999 Annual Report to Subscribers. Almost half the paper's revenue that year

(Continued on page 24)

• **Maine Times:** Billing itself as "Maine's statewide alternative newsweekly," its mid-July issue carried news reports on controversies over jet-ski use and handicap access to wilderness areas. One of the natural disasters it reported recently was a fire that destroyed the paper's offices. Despite that, and a recent change in editors, it endures, editorializing on saving salmon and historic preservation, among other things. <http://www.maintimes.com>

• **Maine Environmental News:** Founded by William Sugg, conservation biologist and former editor of *The Green Disk*, an enviro encyclopedia, this is a branch of Sugg's Maine Environmental Policy Institute, Hollowell, Maine. The site offers links to conservation-related stories in several Maine newspapers, as well as to national publications. <http://www.meeipi.org>.

• **New Times, Inc.** publishes alternative newsweeklies in 11 metro areas from Cleveland to Los Angeles. Two that stand out for environmental reporting, in addition to their coverage of arts, entertainment and politics, are in Miami and Phoenix. A recent feature in the *Miami New Times* examined how Florida failed to protect its valuable citrus industry from a canker epidemic. <http://www.miaminewtimes.com>

• **Rachel's Environmental & Health Weekly:** This publication of Peter Montague's Environmental Research Foundation has been reporting since 1980 about the impacts of toxic substances on human health and the environment. Its newsletter, named for Rachel Carson, comes out 42 times a year. <http://www.rachel.org>

• **San Diego Earth Times:** A monthly on-line "reader" published since 1993 under editor Carolyn Chase, it covers everything from air quality to diet and gardening, energy and environmental business issues with an emphasis on local ecology. Its June issue looks at California's man-made lakes and federal efforts to protect precious desert wildlife habitat. <http://www.sdearthtimes.com>

• **Tidepool:** An on-line news service published by Ecotrust, a nonprofit group promoting conservation of coastal temperate rain forests in North America. Updated daily, salmon and sprawl were the lead features when checked out in mid-summer. <http://www.tidepool.org>.

### National news services focused on environmental news:

• **Environmental News Network:** Begun in 1993 as a monthly print publication, this news service quickly leapt onto the Internet, where it offers e-news, live chats, daily feature stories, forums for debate, audio, video and more. "We are not an activist publication, but instead try to present information from all sides so our users can make their own decisions." <http://www.enn.com>

• **Environmental News Service:** The backyard for this independent on-line daily is the whole planet. Established in 1990 by Editor-in-Chief Sunny Lewis and Managing Editor Jim Crabtree, it covers everything from legislation to lawsuits and protests around the world, from Burma to Washington and back. <http://www.ens.lycos.com>

—Tim Wheeler, Baltimore Sun



came from subscriptions, another fourth from reader contributions to a tax-exempt research fund, and about 17 percent from grants from foundations such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Back-issue and T-shirt sales and a small amount of advertising made up the rest.

Despite its puny finances, *HCN* wields hefty influence over public policy, politics and media. Paul Rogers, the environment reporter for the San Jose (Calif.) *Mercury News*, said reporters who cover the West for national and regional publications have been lifting story ideas from *HCN* for years. "If you want to telegraph what's going to be in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, pick up a copy of *HCN*," Rogers said. "Twenty thousand is the first ground, but it gets to 20 million people."

Gretchen Nicholoff, *HCN's* circulation manager, estimates that hundreds of journalists and dozens of lawmakers are regular readers. "The *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and then the regional papers...And I can safely say that half of Colorado's congressional delegation, Republicans as well as Democrats, subscribe."

The Wilderness Society's Eaton said the newspaper has become an important resource for activists too. "Whether or not you agree with its perspective, it has a tendency to focus attention on issues, to bring them to light and bring additional focus," she said. "Journalists look at it and get story ideas, and activists take lessons from what other people are doing."

The *Mercury News's* Rogers complained that the news media in the United States are dominated by East Coast organizations, few of which have more than a handful of reporters between the Pacific and the Mississippi River. "The decisions that shape enviro issues and what most Americans learn about enviro issues come from a few dozen editors in New York City, Washington and Atlanta," he said.

Though the West's importance is often overlooked, he said, *HCN* helps fill that void. "The West is the fastest growing part of the country," Rogers notes. It has fascinating cultural clashes, and the West is "what Americans like to think about when they think about freedom," he said. "Those stories, the stories of those people and



**HCN editor Betsy Marston**

places, are important to America. Unless they're told well and told with good information and compassion, America is a poorer country."

*HCN* depends on freelancers and interns to report and write most of those stories. The pay is poor, between 10 and 30 cents a word—rarely more—but finding interns and writers hasn't been a problem. Larmer estimated he's got several hundred writers' and photographers' names in his contributor files. Interns rotate through the news-paper two at a time for periods of four months.

One of those interns was Tim Westby, a personable reporter now writing for the *Park Record* in Park City, Utah. Westby considers his *HCN* experience invaluable. He wrote no cover stories (only one intern has ever done that and she's now an editor at *HCN*), instead spending his time in pursuit of the paper's second-tier stories, called Western Roundups. "And I wrote lots

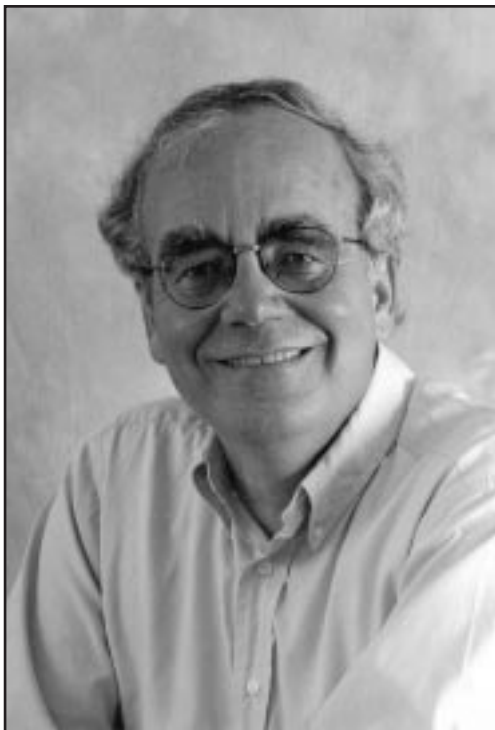
and lots of briefs," Westby said.

His favorite *HCN* story was a Roundup about coal bed methane extraction from the Powder River basin in northeastern Wyoming. "I focused on the amount of water they had to pump to get at the gas," Westby said. "I don't remember the numbers but it was an insane amount of underground water that had to be pumped to get to the gas. You had this place that is very, very dry that was soon going to have more water than anyone knew what do to with. They had some ideas, though. I heard people talk about alligator farms, cranberry bogs." Later, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a page one feature on the subject.

For Westby, the *HCN* experience carried great weight. He interviewed last year at the *Salt Lake Tribune*. He didn't get a job but he came close. Given the limits of his other newsroom experience, he said, "I would not have gotten through the door without *HCN*. And the editor I have now made it clear that she was hiring me at least in part because of my experience at *HCN*."

But the internship has also left him with high expectations for journalism that can be hard to meet at small, community newspapers.

"This may sound a little corny, but I believe in the mission of *HCN* more so than the newspaper I work at now," Westby said. "They're basically telling the history of the West and the New West as it unfolds."



**HCN publisher Ed Marston**

IJNR's Allen agreed. "It's a "So what?" paper and I admire that. It's a paper that concentrates on significance, which I think is the highest of the news values."

That's also why Tony Davis freelances for *HCN*. Davis, who writes about growth and the city for the *Arizona Daily Star* in Tucson, said freelancing for *HCN* has been his second career. "I've been writing for them for almost 12 years, while working for four papers in three states," he said. "I think a lot of papers follow them," Davis said. "Things like water reform, dams, they were writing about them well before most newspapers. Grazing—they were the first publication in the county to write well about grazing."

Davis finds writing for *HCN* more rewarding than daily journalism, because he gets to spend more time thinking about his *HCN* stories and his *HCN* editors expect depth. "More so

than other newspapers, they're willing to spend time on the substance of issues, they're not trying to appeal to a mass audience. They don't dumb it down," Davis said.

A bit of wistfulness seeps into his voice talking about the paper's past. "I guess it's become more professional," Davis said. "The writing quality is better, smoother, less rough. Overall, it's less partisan. But the writing back then was probably spunkier than it is now. They've gotten a little bit more thoughtful, and less provocative."

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*Katy Human is the science and environment reporter for the Daily Camera newspaper in Boulder, Colo. She begins the Ted Scripps Fellowship in Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado this fall.*

## Green dotcom...(from page 1)

information and product evaluation.

"There are a whole lot of environmental journalists out there, working at daily papers and TV news departments whose editors don't understand the importance of environmental reporting," Rickenbaker said. "I want to set up a wildlife refuge for those people."

Verde planned to offer the following:

- News, lifestyle features, an archive of tips for green living and links to a network of activist non-profits.
- A real time, interactive streaming video answer desk that would tell users how to clean their homes, kill aphids, or get their towels blindingly white without unduly injuring the planet.
- An online community meeting place for environmentally concerned netizens.
- An independent laboratory that would evaluate the environmental and consumer safety of commercial products.
- The premier green e-commerce site, offering users alternative energy, organic, or less-toxic products for everyday living.

After a few months, as Verde developed an archive of environmental information, we'd rerun, or "re-purpose," that information for paying customers ranging from CNN to Martha Stewart, generating income while "branding" our green turf with Verde's four-leafed logo.

We were told an irreverent but non-combative tone was to be the key. Focus group members had described the usual run of online environmental non-profits as reliable and trustworthy, but too "extreme" or judgmental for the typical consumer. In order to stake out a unique online territory, Verde would become "your friend that knows a lot about the environment, but who never, ever lectures you about it," said an early promotional PowerPoint slide show shown to potential investors. We were to be "light green [mainstream] rather than dark green [radical]," one point noted, though "we reserve[d] the right to look at something [a news item, a trend, a particularly polluting product] and say 'this sucks.'"

I set up Verde's newsroom under the loose supervision of John McManus, another CNN alumnus, surfer and former Alaska salmon fisherman. We hit the ground at a sprint—I think I interviewed three prospective hires my first day on the job. Our daunting goal was to build a fully functional environmental Web site from scratch in about two months so it could launch before Earth Day. We made that deadline. Verde hired eminently competent people with wide ranging skills, and those people did it proud. I've yet to hear of another Web site as well crafted that was developed on as short a schedule.

At the outset, cash seemed the least of our problems. A partnership with Real Goods, "the eco-store," would market everything from non-toxic snail and slug guard to compact fluorescent light bulbs. E-commerce and a few carefully screened providers of banner ads would supplement the ongoing infusions of venture capital. Peek Garlington, Verde's founder, is media mogul Ted Turner's son-in-law, and it was broadly hinted that Turner himself was one of the financial backers.

It seemed to me that Verde stood as good a chance as any new publishing concern to make money, once a critical mass of content had been developed. As is the case when developing more traditional print and broadcast media outlets, Verde would have spewed red ink for months, if not years. But the niche Verde was trying to fill looked real and potentially profitable. Given enough time to find publishing-savvy investors, Verde could have survived, maybe prospered.

But Verde's financing was thin. Contrary to the impression that Verde was backed by Ted Turner's deep pockets, staffers heard that Turner had made only a token (for Turner) \$20,000 investment in his son-in-law's company. Other Turner family members kicked in a few shekels. But Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, Doug Morriss of Morriss Holdings, and a handful of venture capital firms provided the bulk of the startup cash, about \$5 million.

With a burn rate between \$2 million and \$2.5 million a





**Kelly Rickenbaker**

month from October 1999 until June 2000, Verde's demise was pretty much inevitable when the "second round" of financing proved illusory.

In retrospect, Verde's executives must have seen problems in early February, when they imposed a freeze on hiring "non-essential" staff.

In the first half of March, Verde's CEO, Simon Turkalj, formerly with Intel's venture investment arm, left for reasons that were never fully

explained to the staff. Rumors that circulated in-house centered mostly on failure to raise investment money, though personality conflicts between Turkalj and Garlington were mentioned as well.

Though the editorial department largely ignored the hiring freeze for six weeks, its growth stopped weeks before launch. The site had to be completed by about one-third of the planned staff. Supplies dwindled without being reordered. Attrition started among the vice presidents; one left the week of the launch party, which was a particularly subdued affair. Increasingly, junior staffers fielded complaints from vendors about unpaid balances and the failure of Verde's executive staff to return their calls.

If only we hadn't spent all our money three times over.

Our executives assumed they could get more when they needed it. They were wrong. As they spent lavishly on custom software, dotcom stocks plummeted in April and venture capital dried up. The combination quickly proved fatal.

In the end, Rickenbaker gave us fair warning that we were running into a financial wall. On June 15 we joined APBnews.com and a double-digit percentage of Salon's employees on the junk-heap of the post-new economy.

Verde filed for bankruptcy a week after closing its doors. Its debt burden was three times its starting assets: \$15 million. Verde's creditors appeared to be out about \$10 million. Where did the money go?

Operating expenses were high. Verde paid its staff and freelancers quite well. Silicon Valley Web hosting service Global Center charged Verde a base rate of \$137,000 each month for Web space and bandwidth. Rent wasn't cheap for nearly half the sixteenth floor at 225 Bush Street in the old Chevron Building in the heart of San Francisco's Financial District, where dotcommerce has driven rents up to stratospheric levels. There was the nearby corporate apartment and plane fare for various executives' weekly transcontinental commutes. There was a \$300,000 trip to Mount Everest for Verde's Travel and Outdoor editor David Bolling to join part of a mountain cleanup expedition, perhaps our most defensible large expense. There were free Altoids and beef jerky and digital video cameras and post-its and a company rafting trip on the South Fork of the American River.

But all these paled beside the cost of our proprietary Content Management System, which became the albatross

around Verde's neck.

Rather than buy readily available and inexpensive off-the-shelf software, such as Vignette, to manage editorial workflow and publish content on the Web, Verde's executive team decided to hire the Scient Corporation, a Web-development firm, to write a new system for Verde.com. This Content Management System (CMS) would allow us to re-purpose our text, audio and video content for other media outlets ranging from TV and radio to print magazines to corporate intranets. It would allow us to create customized home pages for Verde users, based on preferences the user would set. It would allow us to format the site for big screens, laptops, WebTV and PDAs.

In theory.

The reality was markedly different. Some Verde staffers called it a simple case of bad design. Others blamed Verde, for demanding one wild-eyed feature after another in the CMS without making sure the system remained manageable. Whatever the cause, the CMS proved to be a spectacularly inefficient way of getting words onto the Web. Putting one new page of already-edited content onto the Verde site with the CMS could require a hundred distinct steps, and that's if it didn't crash.

The user interface was inconsistent, counterintuitive, and sometimes seemed designed to require the maximum number of mouse clicks possible. For quite some time the CMS limited us to publishing three new stories a day, when our editorial staff could have handled a dozen or so. And each of those pages was limited to one postage-stamp-sized photo, a serious flaw for an environmental Web site.

Scient, by far Verde's biggest creditor, billed the Web site more than \$6 million for the CMS and related expenses according to knowledgeable sources inside Verde. Verde's bankruptcy filing was a big enough hit for Scient that brokerage firms lowered its stock rating, which caused some less-than-charitable glee among former Verde staff members.

This is, now, all water under the bridge, though an iceberg through the ship's hull might be a better analogy for the CMS. Verde continues to sail the Web, a ghost ship with no crew. Rickenbaker and a few executives remain on board, but they declined to respond to my calls for comments.

Verde's collapse is a damn shame. The Tejon Ranch, the last privately owned wildland between LA and Bakersfield, is being subdivided: the two fastest-growing regions on the West Coast are about to merge. Major airports threaten two national parks. A burgeoning network of cellular phone transmission towers is killing migratory birds and raptors. Invasive exotics turn out to pose even more of a threat to the biosphere than we thought a year ago. And people of concern around the world are developing creative and effective ways to respond to these environmental threats.

I regret the untimely demise of Verde Media because we had \$5 million and the energy and skills of some of the best talent around and we didn't spend enough of those on breaking stories such as these. A few other Web sites are trying to fill that void. But we may never have a chance like that again.

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*Chris Clarke is a freelance writer based in the San Francisco Bay area.*



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# Society of Environmental Journalists

## 10th National Conference

October 19-22



SeaWiFS Project, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, and ORBITIMAGE

### *Exploring the Great Lakes Region*

SEJ invites you to participate in its 10th National Conference to meet with colleagues and tackle the tough issues facing environmental journalists today. The conference will bring together scientists, award-winning journalists, policymakers, automakers and many others who will share their knowledge and debate issues. We'll look at threats to the world's freshwater and its wildlife, the impact of cars on the environment, the U.S. presidential election, trans-border issues affecting the United States and Canada, the debate about genetically modified crops, and much more.

**Confirmed speakers include:** **David Suzuki**, scientist and Canadian broadcast celebrity  
**Katy McGinty**, sr. policy adviser for Vice President Al Gore  
**Christopher DeMuth**, adviser to Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush  
**William Clay Ford, Jr.**, chairman of the board, Ford Motor Co.  
**Jane Holtz Kay**, author, *Asphalt Nation: How the Automobile Took Over America, and How We can Take it Back*  
**Amory Lovins**, CEO of Rocky Mountain Institute  
**Firoz Razul**, CEO of Ballard Power Systems  
**William McDonough**, environmental architect  
**Bill McKibben**, author of *The End of Nature* and *Maybe One: A Case for Smaller Families*

**Tours include:** Lake Huron Sailing Adventure  
Michigan Motorcar Tour  
Dow Chemical plant in Midland, Mich.  
Bird Watching and Wildlife Refuge Management  
Michigan State University's National Food Safety and Toxicology Center  
*For more information please visit*

<http://www.sej.org>

or contact the SEJ office at (215) 884-8174 or [sej@sej.org](mailto:sej@sej.org)

## A state-by-state round-up of environmental news stories

To submit stories, contact your state's correspondent or Beat editor Chris Rigel at [rigel@voicenet.com](mailto:rigel@voicenet.com) or (215) 836-9970.

- Alabama**—Des Keller, *Progressive Farmer*, (205) 877-6406
- Alaska**—Elizabeth Manning, *Anchorage Daily News*, (907) 257-4323, fax: (907) 258-2157
- Arizona**—Patti Epler, *Phoenix New Times*, (602) 229-8451
- Arkansas**—Robert McAfee, *Thinking Like A Mountain Institute*, (501) 638-7151
- California:**
- Northern California**—Mark Grossi, *Fresno Bee*, (209) 441-6316
- San Francisco Bay Area**—Jane Kay, *San Francisco Examiner*, (415) 777-8704
- Southern California**—Marni McEntee, *Los Angeles Daily News*, (805) 641-0542
- Colorado**—Todd Hartman, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, (719) 636-0285
- Connecticut**—Peter Lord, *Providence Journal*, (401) 277-8036
- Delaware**—Tim Wheeler, *The (Baltimore) Sun*, (301) 332-6564
- District of Columbia**—Cheryl Hogue, *Chemical & Engineering News*, (202) 872-4551
- Florida**—Deborah Hoag, (904) 721-3497
- Georgia**
- North**—Debbie Gilbert, *The (Gainesville) Times*, (770) 532-1234 ext. 254
- South**—Christopher Schwarzen, *The Macon Telegraph*, (912) 744-4213
- Hawaii**—Pat Tummons, *Environment Hawaii*, (808) 934-0115
- Idaho**—Rocky Barker, *Idaho Statesman*, (208) 377-6484
- Illinois**—Jonathon Ahl, *WCBU 89.9*, (309) 677-2761
- Indiana**—See Ohio
- Iowa**—Perry Beeman, *Des Moines Register*, (515) 284-8538
- Kansas**—Mike Mansur, *Kansas City Star*, (816) 234-4433
- Kentucky**—Jim Bruggers, *Louisville Courier Journal*
- Louisiana**—Mike Dunne, *Baton Rouge Advocate*, (504) 383-0301
- Maine**—Susan Chisolm, *Maine Public Radio*, (207) 874-6570
- Maryland**—See Delaware
- Massachusetts**—David Liscio, *Daily Evening Item*, (781) 593-7700
- Michigan**—Jeremy Pearce, *Detroit News*, (313) 223-4825
- Minnesota**—Tom Meersman, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, (612) 673-4414
- Mississippi**—Patrick Peterson, *WXXV-TV Fox 25*, (228) 832-2525
- Missouri**—Bill Allen, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, (314) 340-8127
- Montana**—Todd Wilkinson, freelance, (406) 587-4876
- Nebraska**—Julie Anderson, *Omaha World-Herald*, (402) 444-1000 ext. 1223
- New Hampshire**—Bob Emro, *Foster's Sunday Citizen*, (603) 742-4455 ext. 5395
- New Jersey**—Bruno Tedeschi, *The Record*, (609) 292-5159
- New Mexico**—See Arizona
- New York**—Erik Nelson, *Long Island Voice*, (516) 744-5161
- Nevada**—Mary Manning, *Las Vegas Sun*, (702) 259-4065
- North Carolina**—James Eli Shiffer, *The News & Observer*, (919) 836-5701
- North Dakota**—See Minnesota
- Ohio**—Andrew Conte, *Cincinnati Post*, (513) 352-2714
- Oklahoma**—vacant
- Oregon**—Orna Izakson, (541) 726-1578
- Pennsylvania**
- West**—John Bartlett, *Erie Daily Times*, (814) 437-6397
- East**—Chris Rigel, SEJ, (215) 884-8177
- Puerto Rico/Caribbean Islands**—Vacant
- Rhode Island**—See Connecticut
- South Carolina**—Bob Montgomery, *The Greenville News*, (864) 298-4295
- South Dakota**—See Minnesota
- Tennessee**—See North Georgia
- Texas :**
- North Texas**—Neil Strassman, *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, (817) 390-7657
- Central and West Texas**—Robert Bryce, *The Austin Chronicle*, (512) 454-5766
- East and Coastal Texas**—Bill Dawson, *The Houston Chronicle*, (713) 220-7171
- Utah**—Brent Israelsen, *Salt Lake Tribune*, (801) 237-2045
- Vermont**—Nancy Bazilchuk, *The Burlington Free Press*, (802) 660-1873
- Virginia**—Jeff South, *Virginia Commonwealth*

University, (804) 827-0253

**Washington**, —Michelle Nijuis, *High Country News*, (303) 527-4898

**West Virginia**—Ken Ward, *Charleston Gazette*, (304) 348-1702

**Wisconsin**—Chuck Quirnbach, *Wisconsin Public Radio*, (414) 271-8686 or (608) 263-7985

**Wyoming**—See Washington

**Canada**—Shawn Thompson, *University College of the Cariboo*, (250) 371-5516

### ARIZONA

► **Public access** to national forest land continues to be up for debate in Arizona. In a June 5 article in the *Arizona Daily Star*, environmental reporter Maureen O'Connell writes about a new controversy involving access to canyons in the Coronado National Forest. Arizona state officials, who have expanded road access into some areas, are frequently at odds with environmentalists and federal land managers who are trying to keep many areas roadless. Contact O'Connell at [occonnell@azstar-net.com](mailto:occonnell@azstar-net.com) or (520) 573-4195.

► **Fire recovery:** In a June 25 article, Judd Slivka, *Arizona Republic*, took another look at the "Dude" fire that took the lives of six firefighters and scorched 24,000 acres in 1990. Slivka traveled to the old burn area with National Forest Service biologists and others to chronicle how the area has recovered. The timing may have been appropriate in coinciding with the recent fires that raged throughout much of the South this spring. Can the biological evidence of the past potentially predict the future of these areas? Contact Slivka at (602) 444-8097 or [judd.slivka@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:judd.slivka@arizonarepublic.com).

► **Desert harvest:** The harvest of plant life for seemingly obscure products like brooms and brushes is occurring at a pace that is harming wildlife habitat and making it harder for Native American basket weavers to find material for their crafts. A May 24 story in the *Arizona Daily Star* by Ignacio Ibarra looks at the

harvest of beargrass in the southern Arizona-northern Mexico region and the foraging by bands of Mexican "palmilleros" across the border and into Arizona. Contact Ibarra at (520) 573-4200 or [ibarra@aztarnet.com](mailto:ibarra@aztarnet.com)

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► **Superfund cleanups slowed by political deals:** A secret deal unearthed by *Inside EPA* associate editor Nicholas Mahrt may stop Congressional action this year to reform the federal superfund law. In May, Mahrt reported that Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss) promised to block any bill with partial reform of the superfund law, including popular bipartisan legislation designed to spur redevelopment of abandoned industrial properties known as brownfields. Lott made the written pledge in late 1999 to Sen. Michael Crapo (R-Id.), who wants comprehensive overhaul of superfund, in exchange for Crapo's support of legislation to exempt scrap dealers from superfund cleanup liability. The scrap dealer exemption, sought by Lott, is now law. *The Washington Post's* Susan Schmidt followed with a story July 1. Mahrt may be reached at (703) 416-8536. Contact Schmidt at [schmidts@washpost.com](mailto:schmidts@washpost.com).

## FLORIDA

► **End of tail pipe emissions tests:** Craig Pittman, *St. Petersburg Times*, described a new law passed in Florida that will end tail pipe emissions tests without EPA approval. Florida's emissions tests checked to see if cars put out excess amounts of carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons, also known as volatile organic compounds or VOCs—\$10 tests necessary for license plate renewal. Because air pollutants have decreased since activation of these tests in 1991, the Florida government dropped the requirement. EPA has delayed approval of this plan, due in part to protest by Florida's citizens who feel that the test will help curb healthcare spending through cleaner air. The *St. Petersburg Times* story ran on June 15. Pittman can

be contacted at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

► **ESA:** State officials are reconsidering a six-year-old statute that made bear hunting illegal in order to protect the Florida black bear, a contender for the endangered species list. The reevaluation of this law comes from a supposed boom in the black bear population that has led to bears being hit by cars and to property damage. Environmentalists counter this claim, saying humans are encroaching on the bear's natural habitat, not the other way around. State officials have concluded that it is too soon to revoke the anti-hunting law and have decided to wait for the results of tests monitoring the bear population by state biologists. The June 18 story ran in *The St. Petersburg Times*. Contact Craig Pittman at (727) 893-8530 or [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com)

► **Plan to create ecological reserve:** The Dry Tortugas, the seven islands 70 miles from the Florida Keys, are a popular national park, shown by evidence of overfishing and heavy damage by visitors and boat anchors. Federal and state agencies are considering closing 151-square-nautical miles around the Dry Tortugas to all fishing, declaring those areas an ecological reserve. Access by any boat would be limited to those carrying government permits. Billy Causey, superintendent of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, hopes to implement the plan by the end of this year. The June 15 story by Craig Pittman ran in the *St. Petersburg Times*. Pittman can be contacted at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

► **Sprawl:** Jacksonville could lose thousands of dollars from the state in a dispute over a proposed subdivision on its westside that state officials say is urban sprawl. The city council approved the development, which required a land-use change from agricultural to rural residential. The approval came despite strong opposition from both the Florida Department of Community Affairs and City Hall's own land-use experts in the planning department. Karen Rivedal, *Florida Times-Union* staff writer, reported this story May 19. Contact her at

(904) 359-4280.

► **Turtle watch under way:** Sea turtle nesting period is from May through November. In 1999, more than 500 nests were recorded between Duval, Nassau and St. Johns Counties. The Jacksonville Beach City Council passed a new ordinance requiring property owners to keep lights doused or shielded within 300 feet of nests at night. Nassau county passed restrictive beach lighting ordinances in 1989, and St. Johns County prohibits beach driving at night and will start enforcing an existing beach lighting rule. Contact Dana Treen, *Times-Union* staff writer, at (904) 359-4280 about this May 14 story.

► **Chemical phase-out:** On May 19, the *Times-Union* reported that a 3M chemical that Jacksonville environmentalists say indirectly killed or injured more than 1,000 pelicans will be phased out by the company after international tests showed low levels of it in people and the environment. Contact either staff writer Dan Scanlan or Derek Kinner, at (904) 359-4280.

► **Bush axes Cedar Swamp purchase:** On May 31, the *Times-Union* reported that Governor Jeb Bush vetoed money for the proposed purchase of Cedar Swamp in Jacksonville and a long list of other projects before signing a \$50.9 billion budget for the coming year. His veto list has not changed much from the previous year, showing that legislators have not yet found a way to obtain approval for their local projects. Bush reflected sentiment that his goal was not to spend heavily on liberal projects. The \$25 million veto was a blow to Jacksonville Mayor John Delaney, who had hoped to buy 1,500 acres of the property to protect it from development. Contact Randolph Pendleton, staff writer, at (904) 359-4280.

► **Manatee protection plan approved:** After a decade of input from city officials, boaters and environmentalists, the state approved a plan May 24 aimed at protecting endangered manatees in Jacksonville area waterways. The plan



includes requiring boaters to travel at slow speeds within 500 feet of shore and 200 feet of docks. Other restrictions were also mandated for other parts of the St. Johns River. For information on this story, contact Jim Saunders, *Times-Union* staff writer, at (904) 359-4280.

► **Logging companies protest proposed EPA runoff rules:** On May 29, the *Times-Union* reported that a proposal to regulate the logging industry will clean up streams in Georgia and Florida and penalize polluters. If implemented, new rules may require loggers to apply for permits if they are working along or near streams that are deemed overloaded with pollutants. Contact Terry Dickson, staff writer, at (904) 359-4280.

► **Cement plant issued permit:** In June, 1999, Gov. Jeb Bush and Florida environmental chief David Struhs canoed down the aquarium-clear Ichetucknee River, called it spectacular and abruptly denied a permit for a cement plant nearby. A year later, after bruising legal and public relations battles, the state quietly issued the permit. Struhs had been on the job just four months when he denied the permit, saying that Suwannee American's poor environmental record didn't give the DEP "reasonable assurance" that it would not pollute. The company sued. Struhs denied more than a dozen other permits across the state that the company needed to run its road-building business, an act that brought Anderson Columbia to the negotiating table. After closed-door dealing, Struhs emerged last fall and reversed himself, stunning environmentalists. This *St. Petersburg Times* story ran on June 2. Contact Julie Hauserman at (904) 224-7263.

► **Dam removal:** According to a June 17 story in the *St. Petersburg Times*, Gov. Jeb Bush announced that he will tear down the controversial dam at Rodman Reservoir and restore the Ocklawaha River. Bush is not the first governor to call for tearing down the dam, originally named Rodman just like the reservoir. Gov. Lawton Chiles repeatedly pushed to rip it out, but the Democrat failed to persuade powerful

North Florida lawmakers to appropriate any money for the work. Instead they sided with dam supporters, who say the reservoir is a wonderful place to fish for bass and thus important to the Central Florida economy. Contact Craig Pittman, at [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com) or (727) 893-8530.

► **Sprawl:** The Osceola Parkway, the most expensive turnpike in Florida at \$1.25 per car, was supposed to pay for itself. But five years after the Osceola opened it has attracted such meager traffic that taxpayers must subsidize it. County officials say that the \$150-million road could wind up costing more than \$1-billion. The Osceola's woes are not the result of an isolated error. Over the past decade the same San Francisco-based consulting firm, URS Greiner Woodward Clyde, has produced erroneous traffic projections for three other toll roads and a toll bridge that have plowed into undeveloped Florida, planting the seeds of urban sprawl. In some cases the roads drew only half the cars that URS promised. URS officials concede they "were basically guessing" on all those projects. The *St. Petersburg Times* story ran on July 16. For more information, contact Craig Pittman at (727) 893-8530 or [craig@sptimes.com](mailto:craig@sptimes.com).

### GEORGIA

► **Drought:** With Georgia now suffering through the third year of the worst drought in state history, *The Times* of Gainesville is running daily "Drought Watch" coverage. Some areas of the state have a cumulative rainfall deficit of 45 inches and stream flows are down to 10 percent of normal. Gov. Roy Barnes has declared the entire state a disaster area, and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division has imposed outdoor watering restrictions on all 159 counties. In the June 18 issue of *The Times*, Debbie Gilbert looked at the plight of people who get their water from private wells. Because the groundwater cannot recharge, shallow-bored wells and even some wells drilled hundreds of feet into the bedrock are drying up. Most well owners will have to wait years before municipal water lines can be built out to their homes. In a fol-

low-up story on June 28, Gilbert looked at a community that has threatened to secede from Hall County and be annexed into an adjacent county if they can't get water service. Contact Gilbert at (770) 532-1234, ext. 254.

► **Lake Lanier to receive more wastewater:** The Georgia Environmental Protection Division wants to allow 92 million gallons per day of treated wastewater to be discharged into Lake Lanier, the state's largest lake. This would be a six-fold increase over what is currently permitted. The EPD, which considers phosphorus an indicator for all other types of pollution, says the additional discharges won't hurt the lake because tighter restrictions on phosphorus will keep pollution at its current level, even as the wastewater volume increases. Lake residents are skeptical, and have threatened to sue the EPD. Debbie Gilbert reported this story in *The Times* June 16th. She can be reached at (770) 532-1234, ext. 254.

### KENTUCKY

► **Fish kill:** It was a classic Kentucky story—a bourbon spill into a river. As bourbon poured into the Kentucky River, flames rose, as did wisecracks about happy or tipsy fish. Initially, it appeared that the environmental damage would be minimal. But three days later, fish started dying by the hundreds of thousands. The alcohol reacted chemically with microorganisms to create a plume of oxygen-depleted water 4 to 5 miles long that moved down the river at about 5 miles a day, sucking life out of the water. In the end, it turned out to be one of the worst Kentucky fish kills in memory. Andy Mead and Bill Estep of the Lexington *Herald Leader* covered the story, as did a team of reporters from the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville. Contact Andy Mead at (859) 231-3319, (800) 950-6397 or [amead@herald-leader.com](mailto:amead@herald-leader.com) or James Bruggers at (502) 582-4645 or [bruggers@courier-journal.com](mailto:bruggers@courier-journal.com)

► **Toxic waste:** "Cold War Poison: The Paducah Legacy" is a three-part series by *Courier Journal* Paducah

reporter James Carroll and DC-based reporter James Malone that started Sunday, June 25. After months of investigation, the reporters found that, if laid end to end, the more than 37,000 cylinders of spent uranium being stored outdoors would span 70 miles—about the distance between Louisville and Lexington. Neither the U.S. Department of Energy nor the three companies that have run the plant were able to contain the poisons of that Cold War work. Sloppy safety practices, concealed health concerns and decades of ignorance, expediency and poor oversight have left workers, nearby wildlife and the land itself damaged by chemical and radioactive toxins. Workers have inhaled the radioactive dust, chemicals have seeped into the ground water, and debris dumped off the site has created pockets of radiation. The silent devastation is being seen in creatures ranging from insects to bobcats—an ominous warning to the humans who share the same soil, water and air. The series can be found at [http://www.courier-journal.com/cjextra/uranium/legacyd1\\_pad.html](http://www.courier-journal.com/cjextra/uranium/legacyd1_pad.html). Contact Carroll at (703) 276-5423 or Malone at (270) 443-1802.

### LOUISIANA

► **Environmental justice:** The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* published a four-part series on environmental justice tracing how history, geography and the legacy of racism have placed factories, dumps and freeways near poor and minority communities around the country. Over the last decade, these disparities have sparked a surge of local activism, a sometimes clumsy federal response and furious opposition. The series, published May 21-24, explores issues of public health, environmental policy, economic development and the law. It can be found at <http://www.nola.com/speced/unwelcome>. Reporter John McQuaid can be reached at [john.mcquaid@pressroom.com](mailto:john.mcquaid@pressroom.com) or (202) 383-7889.

► **Pharmaceuticals in water:** Researchers at Tulane University have found traces of pharmaceutical drugs in the Mississippi River, Lake Ponchartrain and tap water on campus. With concen-

trations found to be in parts per trillion, one Canadian researcher says these levels can affect the growth of fish and other aquatic life. According to Christian Daughton, chief of the environmental chemistry branch of the EPA's National Exposure Research Laboratory in Las Vegas, the concept of pharmaceutical pollution is a growing area of concern. Part of the concern is the possibility that antibiotic residues might help create resistant bacteria. Part of the story was developed from SEJ's *TipSheet* and was published July 8 in *The Baton Rouge Advocate*. Contact author Mike Dunne at [mdunne@theadvocate.com](mailto:mdunne@theadvocate.com) or (225) 388-0301.

### MAINE

► **Recycling:** Interest in recycling may be on the decline in other parts of the country, but in Maine a new pay-per-bag trash fee system and curbside pickup in more than 80 communities are making it attractive. In a May 14th story, the *Portland Press Herald* reported that Maine's recycling rate for 1999 edged closer to the state's goal of recycling half the 1.7 million tons of waste Maine residents and businesses produce each year. Statewide regulations are also steering people toward recycling. These include a bottle bill that allows people to redeem beverage bottles and cans, a ban on new commercial landfills and a newly passed law that requires products containing mercury to be recycled. But 90 smaller communities still recycle less than 20 percent of their waste. State officials say more should be done to boost that number. Contact Dieter Bradbury, *Portland Press Herald*, at (207) 791-6332 or [dbradbury@pressherald.com](mailto:dbradbury@pressherald.com).

► **Midwest polluting Maine's air:** In July, The National Academy of Sciences released a report on the dangers of mercury that gave Maine additional ammunition in its ongoing fight against midwestern power plants over clean air. Susan Young of the *Bangor Daily News* reported that the 10-member panel of scientists concluded that guidelines used by the EPA to establish maximum exposure levels to mercury are "scientifically justifi-

able" for the protection of public health. In the report, the academy endorsed a decision by the EPA to adopt more stringent rules to curtail mercury emissions into the air. Through lawsuits and appeals to Congress, Maine and other northeast states have tried to pressure the Midwest to clean up coal-fired power plants that emit 40 tons of mercury into the air annually—much of it drifting eastward. Contact Susan Young at (207) 990-8030.

► **Nitrogen-oxide** from one of Maine's biggest air polluters jumped 45 percent between 1998 and 1999 and 257 percent over the past three years according to statistics provided by the EPA. Nitrogen oxide is a colorless, odorless gas and a key ingredient of smog. Paul Carrier of the *Portland Press Herald* reported in July that environmentalists and the owner of the Wyman Station power plant in Yarmouth are at odds over the reasons for the increase and how to curb pollution at the aging, oil-fired power plant. The state's largest environmental group, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, is hoping the new statistics on emissions levels will persuade the Board of Environmental Protection to impose tough pollution controls at the plant. The plant's owners say they cannot afford to meet the proposed standards unless they're allowed to combine smokestack controls with the trading of pollution credits. Contact Paul Carrier at [pccarrier@pressherald.com](mailto:pccarrier@pressherald.com) or (207) 622-7511.

### MARYLAND

**Bay restoration:** Governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, with the mayor of D.C. and EPA Administrator Carol Browner, pledged June 28 to restore 46,000 acres of Chesapeake Bay underwater grasses within five years, increase oysters 10-fold and cleanse the water enough to remove the bay and its tidal tributaries from EPA's list of "impaired waters." Chesapeake 2000, an update of the 1987 bay restoration agreement, was signed after overcoming resistance from Virginia Gov. James Gilmore to anti-sprawl language. It calls for preserving 20 percent of the watershed from development and reducing "harmful sprawl"

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# The Beat

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by 30 percent. (See related story, Penna., "Sprawl," page 33.) Contact *Sun* reporter Joel McCord at (410) 332-6465 or joel.mccord@baltsun.com.

► **Artificial dunes for Delaware:**

The Delaware coast is now losing three to four feet of beach a year. Delaware has enlisted the Army Corps of Engineers to build \$22 million artificial dunes and sandy beach along a two-mile stretch of South Bethany Beach. It is just one of six federal beach-rebuilding projects planned for the Delaware coast from Rehoboth Beach to Fenwick Island, expected to cost at least \$32 million. Environmentalists and a beach-erosion expert say it's a waste of taxpayers' money to fight a losing battle against nature, and the massive sand-pumping may hurt sea life. This story was published on July 3 in the *Baltimore Sun*. Contact Heather Dewar at (410) 332-6100, or heather.dewar@baltsun.com.

## MASSACHUSETTS

► **Water-conserving washing machines:** The environmental benefits of front-loading washing machines, as compared to the more popular top-loaders in the United States, are the focus of a *Boston Globe* story published on July 6. Adopted in May, new standards now require washing machines to be 35 percent more efficient within seven years. Because the front-loading machines require less water, less energy is needed to heat them. Contact Beth Daley, (617) 929-3000.

► **Sprawl:** Massachusetts lawmakers unveiled a plan in July that allows communities to rein in urban sprawl and preserve open spaces that are vanishing amid the nation's economic boom. The House and Senate created a Community Preservation Act designed to protect the state's riverbanks, farmlands, open fields and other green spaces. The Environmental League of Massachusetts estimates that the state loses 50 acres of open space every week. The proposed law allows communities to raise their property taxes by up to 3 percent to create preservation funds. This story ran in

the *Boston Globe* on July 14. Contact Michael Crowley at (617) 929-3000.

► **Protesters rally against Salem smokestack:** More than 2,500 opponents of a coal- and gas-fired electricity generation plant in Salem signed petitions in July against any expansion of a facility that has been described as one of the "Filthy Five" in New England. The Salem Harbor Station, owned by PG&E Generating, has been the target of numerous protests during the past six months. The latest opposition stemmed from reports that the facility plans to increase its coal-burning operations. The *Daily Evening Item* published this story on July 13. Contact Chris Goodwin at (781) 593-7700.

► **Massachusetts eases waterfront rules for developers:** Massachusetts environmental officials announced in June a set of new rules for waterfront development. The revisions to Chapter 91 were heralded as a boon to developers. Environmental Affairs Secretary Robert Durand said the new regulations would streamline the approval process, increase the opportunity for public input and shorten the regulatory review of waterfront projects by 60 percent. Contact Doug Pizzi, state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, (617) 626-1118; or Andrea Schrader, state Department of Environmental Protection, (617) 292-5502.

## NEW YORK

► **Saltwater fish behavior:** Henry Fountain of *The New York Times* reported on the first solid evidence that a population of fish may retain many of its original offspring. Two separate studies by scientists at James Cook University in Australia and The University of California Santa Barbara both confirmed that greater percentages of larvae than previously expected return to their original population instead of moving out to the open sea. The findings may change the management of ocean fish stocks and developing marine reserves, because it shows that spawning areas may now contribute to populating themselves in addi-

tion to (or rather than) areas further away. See the story at <http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/wildlife-index.html>

► **New bird species discovered:** *New York Times* reporter Jon Luoma reported about the discovery of a new bird species in western Colorado and eastern Utah. The Gunnison sage grouse was long thought to be the same species as the related Northern sage grouse but the two differ in appearance, behavior, mating and DNA. Studies of Dr. Jessica Young, a biologist at Colorado's Western State College and the American Ornithological Union, have helped define the species. Find the story at [www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/wildlife-index.html](http://www.nytimes.com/library/national/science/wildlife-index.html)

## OHIO

► **Racoons impact duck populations:** A July 1 story in *The News Herald* placed the success of duck nests in trapped areas at 44 percent over a five-year period, while untrapped areas yielded only 14 percent for the same time span. The cuprits, racoons, break into nests and eat the eggs. A related story delved into the history of Ohio racoons, raised in the 30s and 40s to stock the state so hunters could cash in on pelts. A third story described the rising racoon population and difficulties associated in controlling the trend. Contact Jeffery Frischkorn, *The News-Herald*, at (440) 951-0000 or [outdoors@news-herald.com](mailto:outdoors@news-herald.com).

## OREGON

► **Clinton's recent logging promise examined:** Last October, President Clinton stood on a mountaintop in Virginia and said he would protect the nation's remaining 43 million acres of roadless forests, nearly a quarter of all U.S. Forest Service lands. But a story in the June 18 edition of *The Register-Guard* looked at the details of the president's plan and found that it falls far short of his original promise: logging, mining and grazing will still be allowed.



Reporter Lance Robertson visited one roadless area near Eugene, Ore., where the U.S. Forest Service plans to log up to 30 million board feet of timber. Contact Robertson at lrobertson@guardnet.com or (541) 338-2373.

### Logging in endangered species habitat:

The government's decision a decade ago to protect the Northern spotted owl under the Endangered Species Act was a catalyst for major logging cutbacks in the Pacific Northwest. But a federal judge's ruling earlier this year could clear the way for stepped-up logging of spotted owl habitat and, more importantly, severely limit the government's enforcement of the Endangered Species Act on private land. In the April 2 edition of *The Register-Guard*, reporter Lance Robertson explains the impacts of the court case and what scientists have learned about the owls since their listing 10 years ago. Contact Robertson at (541) 338-2373 or lrobertson@guardnet.com.

► **Training area for the Air National Guard?** Oregon Public Broadcasting radio reporter Kristian Foden-Vencil reported on June 12 that the Air National Guard plans to do an environmental assessment on its proposal to turn a 100-mile swath of Oregon's coastline into a new training area for pilots. If approved by the Federal Aviation Administration, the Guard would fly at 5,000 feet and test burning magnesium flares and chaff made of aluminum-coated glass fibers. Military studies show no adverse effects from flares and chaff. Critics remain skeptical, given the source of the studies, and say no studies exist on the effects of the glass chaff on human lungs. For more information, contact the reporter at (503) 293-1977 or Kristian\_Foden-Vencil@opb.org.

► **Sprawl:** Marketplace Radio's Business and Environment Bureau Chief Christy George reported on sprawl issues, looking first at the New Urbanism movement, which started in 1980. The market is hot for environmental aesthetics of high-density housing, live/work brownstones, walk-to-shopping and old-fashioned architecture, but some wonder if

it's also a green variation on gated communities, with the richest refugees fleeing the city for the same old reasons.

The second piece considered urban growth boundaries, adopted by dozens of cities nationwide, as a method for controlling sprawl. Oregon in 1979 became the first state to draw lines beyond which cities would not grow, but Oregonians are now rebelling because the boundary is a moving target.

George's third piece focused on a groundbreaking 1999 tax deal with Intel Corporation, Oregon's biggest taxpayer and private employer, whose 14,000-plus employees are mostly clustered in Washington County near Portland. Intel agreed to pay \$1,000 for each new manufacturing worker it hires after the first thousand. The company is about to start paying that "growth impact fee" to help the county offset the cost of new infrastructure—\$30,000 to \$50,000 for every new home. By linking the company's taxes to the impact its employees have on the environment, Intel escaped paying extremely high taxes based on millions of dollars worth of high-tech equipment headed for early obsolescence. The deal has some officials considering a new taxation method for a high-tech economy. The reports aired on June 26 and 28. Contact George at (503) 293-4001 or Christy\_George@opb.org.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Sprawl:** Sandy Bauers of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on an initiative agreed to by Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia to reduce the rate of urban sprawl in the region by 30 percent in the next 12 years. (See related story, Md. "Bay restoration," page 31.) The initiative also sets out to protect 1.6 million acres of open space in the watershed and restore 25,000 acres of wetlands. This initiative will protect the health of the Chesapeake Bay by preserving open space and farmland rather than reducing development. For more information contact Bauers at (215) 854-2000 ext 7635.

► **Green energy:** *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Lee Drutman reported on the

first municipality to use 100 percent "green" power, the Borough of Langhorne, Pa. The 1996 state deregulation of electricity and the recent startup of several green energy providers made it possible to use companies that provide energy from renewable sources such as sunlight and wind. For more information contact Drutman at (215) 702-7805 or ldrutman@phillynews.com.

### ► Stickleback delays roadwork:

The discovery of the stickleback fish in a tidal creek in Tinicum will result in a six-month delay and will add \$500,000 to the cost of the 1.5-mile Hog Island Road extension. Common elsewhere, the stickleback is listed as endangered in Pennsylvania. The last and only reports of stickleback fish sightings were in 1997 and 1969. This sighting will delay a project that will create new jobs at a United Postal Service Terminal and open 250 acres of land for commercial development. Contact *Inquirer* reporter Dan Hardy, (215) 854-2000 ext 8120.

## TENNESSEE

► **TVA emissions pollution:** The Tennessee Valley Authority's 11 coal-fired power plants are under attack for being one of the nation's biggest contributors to four major environmental problems: acid rain, smog, mercury contamination and global warming—not to mention obscuring visibility in the Smoky Mountains. TVA has already spent \$2.5 billion to reduce emissions and is beginning an \$800 million program to cut nitrogen-oxide pollution. But now the EPA has proposed new restrictions that could cost another \$2 billion. Also, EPA accuses TVA of making illegal renovations to its aging coal plants. Tom Charlier wrote a lengthy story about the controversy in the April 22 edition of *The Commercial Appeal*. The Memphis newspaper packaged the story with two photos, a map and two charts. You can reach Charlier at (901) 529-2572.

► **Tennessee River water loss:** The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is a man-made channel linking two rivers on

the north and south borders of Tennessee. It was intended as a transportation corridor for commercial barges, but 40 percent of its traffic is recreational boating. This has become a concern because every time the lock is opened, water spills out of the Tennessee River, totaling 70 billion gallons a year. For this reason, and because Atlanta has proposed buying water from the Tennessee River, the General Assembly has passed an Inter-Basin Water Transfer Act to regulate future diversions from the state's major river basins. Tom Charlier covered this story in the June 19 *Commercial Appeal*. Contact him at (901) 529-2572.

► **Sludge use:** Four communities near Nashville have passed resolutions to keep sludge-composting operations out of their backyards. They're worried that because the work is done by private contractors, there is no government oversight of how these biosolids are processed. Some of the companies Nashville has contracted with were cited in the past for water-pollution violations. The EPA says reuse can be a safe and effective way of dealing with sludge, but only if done properly—and in many cases, it isn't. Anne Paine reported this story in *The Tennessean* on April 27. Her number is (615) 259-8071.

### VIRGINIA

► **BDEs found in rivers:** Scientists have found high levels of toxic chemicals called BDEs—brominated diphenyl ethers—in fish in two rivers in Southside Virginia, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported April 13. Health officials feel the BDEs (chemicals used in furniture making) may cause cancer and liver problems. High levels of the chemicals were found during the past year in fish caught in the Dan and Hyco rivers near South Boston. State officials have formed a task force to investigate the potential health risks and to look for the source of the pollution. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► **Pacific parasite kills bay oysters:** Biologists have solved a 40-year-

old mystery about a parasite that has killed millions of oysters in the lower Chesapeake Bay and ravaged a once-mighty industry in Virginia, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported July 10. Researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science say the microscopic killer, known as MSX, arrived accidentally in Pacific oysters during the 1930s and '40s, when scientists and merchants were experimenting with such foreign bivalves along the Atlantic coast. For reasons still unknown, MSX does not harm Pacific oysters, but it can quickly kill Bay oysters. For more information, contact Harper at (800) 446-2004, ext. 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com.

► **Flood control:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to channel parts of the Roanoke River, hoping to alleviate flooding in the city of Roanoke and other parts of the Roanoke Valley. Roanoke has suffered more flood damage than any mid-Atlantic city except Virginia Beach, federal officials say. Skeptics say the project will damage the river's environment and will do little to protect the city. They feel the real solution is to limit development in the flood plain. For more information about this July 10 story, contact Ron Nixon of *The Roanoke Times* at (540) 981-3347 or ronn@roanoke.com.

► **Public land use:** A group of business people and golf enthusiasts wants to create a trail of golf courses across Virginia, with some in state parks, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported June 4. Environmentalists oppose the plan, saying golf courses would destroy or pollute wildlife habitat. In a June 10 follow-up, Springston reported that the project has obtained private land for five golf courses but still hopes to use six public parks. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► **Virginia government pollution violations:** Government agencies are among the biggest polluters in Virginia, Ledyard King and Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported July 3. Government violations account for 31

percent of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's enforcement caseload. Case records show that dozens of federal, state and local government agencies have been cited for breaching Virginia's environmental laws in the 1990s. Some violations have dragged on for more than a decade, in part because state regulators have been reluctant or unable to force cleanups. For information, contact Harper at (800) 446-2004, ext. 2340, or sharper@pilotonline.com.

### WASHINGTON

► **Pesticide controversy:** The U.S. Forest Service is using ground-up caterpillars and another biological insecticides to target an infestation of tussock moths on national forests in the Pacific Northwest. Forest officials say nine national forests in Oregon and Washington are vulnerable within the next two years. On June 15, the agency began spraying the Wallowa-Whitman and the Umatilla National Forests despite a lawsuit filed on June 2 by environmental groups. In their suit, the seven conservation groups argued that the spray, TM-BioControl, has unknown effects on wildlife and humans. Beth Wohlberg reported on this story in the July 3 edition of *High Country News*. For more information, contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or editor@hcn.org, or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org/>.

► **Hanford clean-up manager resigns:** Mike Lawrence, manager of the most contentious cleanup effort on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, resigned in April, saying he couldn't continue as a "figurehead and mouthpiece" for a project so far out of his control. Ken Olsen reported on this story in the June 5 edition of *High Country News*. Contact HCN at (970) 527-4898 or editor@hcn.org, or find the story at [http://www.hcn.org](http://www.hcn.org/).

► **Green power:** Mayor Paul Schell and the Seattle city council made an unprecedented pledge: to meet Seattle's future electricity needs without increasing net greenhouse gas emissions. As a first step, the city's municipally-owned

utility, Seattle City Light, sold its interest in a coal-fired power plant. To compensate for this power, it will use geothermal, solar and landfill gas facilities to meet future electric demands. Ken Olsen reported the story in the June 5 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

► **Cougar hunting:** In response to pressure from suburban and rural districts and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, the state legislature passed a law allowing the public to hunt cougars with dogs. Boyd Hartwig reported on this story in the May 22 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

► **Salmon restoration:** The federal agency charged with recovering endangered salmon won't recommend dismantling dams—at least for now. Will Stelle, regional director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, said recently that his agency wants to table the breaching debate for five to 10 years while it tries to boost salmon returns through other measures, such as improving habitat and reducing harvest. Eric Barker reported on this story in the May 22 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

► **Development:** Nestled in a narrow valley at the remote north end of Lake Chelan, Wash., is a tiny town that can be reached only by boat, float plane or a hike over the North Cascade mountains. For nearly seven years, a developer threatened to boom Stehekin's size by almost 15 percent. Many of Stehekin's 100 residents worried that the planned condominium development would be too big and intrusive. In February, the National Park Service and the Conservation Fund (a national land preservation group) completed a \$1 million deal to buy the land, preventing the construction of condos within the town's 459 acres. Robyn Morrison reported on this story in the April 24 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970)

527-4898 or [robyn@hcn.org](mailto:robyn@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

► **Salmon restoration:** Protecting threatened salmon in the Northwest has become everybody's business, with Washington's farmers the newest group to enter the fray. In the next 18 months, they must make sure their standards are compatible with habitat conservation guidelines published by federal agencies overseeing salmon recovery. If farmers are not in compliance with the Endangered Species and Clean Water acts at that time, they may be subject to citizen lawsuits. Catherine Lutz reported on this story in the April 24 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

► **Killer whales at risk:** In only five years, a population of killer whales that frequents Puget Sound in Washington state has declined from 98 to 81 animals. Experts speculate that the cause of the decline may be toxic chemicals accumulated in their blubber and/or a reduced food supply. An important prey species, Puget Sound chinook salmon, were declared "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act in March of last year. Against this backdrop, reporter Christopher Dunagan of *The Sun* in Bremerton examined a growing controversy over whale-watching, a major commercial enterprise in Northern Puget Sound and Southern British Columbia. Researchers say they can't prove that stress from whale-watching has contributed to the population decline. But experts quoted in the two-part series, July 2-3, say the risk to whales is too great to ignore. The series can be found at <http://www.thesunlink.com/packages/researchwwwthesunlink.com/packages/research>, or contact Christopher Dunagan, [cdunagan@thesunlink.com](mailto:cdunagan@thesunlink.com) or (360) 792-9207.

## WISCONSIN

► **Gas prices:** High prices for reformulated gasoline in southeastern Wisconsin dominated environmental news for much of late spring/early sum-

mer. A story by Ken Lamke examines Republican claims that they had pushed the EPA to consider major changes in the reformulated gas requirement. However, high-ranking officials at the EPA informed reporters there was no such deal. Contact Ken Lamke at the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, (414)-227-2040.

► **High-capacity wells to be drilled:** Despite fierce local opposition, a subsidiary of the Perrier corporation is pushing ahead with plans to drill two high-capacity wells in Adams County. In July, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ruled that a detailed environmental impact statement is not needed for the plan. Contact the DNR's Franc Fennessy at (608) 266-2121.

## WYOMING

► **Public land access:** A Casper, Wyo., forum on "public access to public lands" earlier this year drew about 600 angry outdoors enthusiasts. Complaints were raised about how access to public land had been cut off because a new landowner no longer allowed members of the public to cross his land, and how a land swap in the works promised to deny access. But a new and vocal minority weighed in with a different gripe—decreasing access to federal public lands for motorized recreation. Katharine Collins reported on this story in the April 24 edition of *High Country News*. Contact *HCN* at (970) 527-4898 or [editor@hcn.org](mailto:editor@hcn.org), or find the story at <http://www.hcn.org>.

## CANADA

► **E. Coli contamination in municipal water** has been linked to six deaths and 1,459 cases of sickness. As a result of the infection, reported as the worst waterborne E. coli outbreak in Canada, provincial police launched a criminal investigation, the provincial government announced a public inquiry and a \$1-billion Canadian class-action lawsuit was started against the town alleging negligence in failing to notify residents of the danger. This particular



tragedy was spurred when cattle manure was washed in to the town's wells by rain. A chlorinator on one well wasn't working. In the throes of the disaster, public officials were criticized for ignoring the warnings of the hazard from E. coli in farm areas and for changing the process of monitoring drinking water. Several articles, published in the *Toronto Star* have dealt with different aspects of this story. Richard Brennan can be reached at rbrenna@thestar.ca or (416) 325-9893. Andrew Nikiforuk can be reached at nikifor@telusplanet.net or (403) 270-2995. John Ivison can be reached at jivison@nationalpost.com or (416) 383-2471. Don Crosby can be reached at (519) 369-2850.

► **Hog company denied permit:**

This July, a small farming community in southern Alberta denied approval to the Taiwan Sugar Corporation to build a \$41 million Canadian hog factory. The municipal planning commission of the County of Forty Mile didn't agree that there was room for a 150,000-hog operation in an area of cattle and grain farming with a population of 3,230. The hog facility would produce manure every year equivalent to a city of 240,000 people. The Taiwan company was searching for greener pastures after facing animal disease and environmental restrictions at home. Freelance writer Andrew Nikiforuk reported this in his July 12 story in *The Globe and Mail*. Contact

Nikiforuk at nikifor@telusplanet.net or (403) 270-2995.

► **Environmental bomber:**

Nikiforuk is working on a book about convicted oil patch bomber Wiebo Ludwig and the gas war in northwestern Alberta. Ludwig, a former Christian Reformed minister in Alberta's Peace River district, claimed the oil and gas industry was poisoning the environment. In April, he was given 28 months in prison for mischief and possession of explosives. Nikiforuk can be reached at nikifor@telusplanet.net or (403) 270-2995.

► **Importing U.S. waste:**

Ontario's toxic-waste imports from the U.S. shot up 138 per cent to 288,000 tons between 1994 and 1998. The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy, which released a report on the situation, blamed weak environmental laws in Ontario, according to reporter Susan Bourette's July 11 story in *The Globe and Mail*. Waste from the U.S. doubled in the four-year period ending in 1998, the last year for which figures are available. In 1998, 12 percent of the hazardous waste in Ontario came from the U.S. as chemicals used in cleaning industrial equipment and as waste from steel mills. Ontario became a dumping ground for U.S. pollutants in the early 1990s when environmental laws in the U.S. were tightened. A

spokesperson for Environment Minister Dan Newman said Newman would like to take steps in the near future to mitigate this problem. The environment group expects the ministry to produce regulations to match the U.S. Susan Bourette can be reached at 416-585-5397 or sbourette@globeandmail.ca.

► **Smuggled:**

A Canadian was fined \$50,000 and sentenced to three months in prison in July for smuggling hundreds of tropical birds, including endangered tropical finches, into Canada. The conviction of Michael Flikkeman of Fenwick, Ontario, came after an investigation by Environment Canada and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service involving 5,000 birds listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The finches were captured in Africa, shipped to Europe, and brought into Canada through Toronto's Pearson Airport. The Flikkeman also avoided quarantine of the birds, violating health regulations made to prevent the spread of tropical diseases. Flikkeman's wife, Johanne, faces charges in Canada as soon as she is released in December from the six-month sentence she's serving in a U.S. jail on similar charges. The story was reported by Susan Bourette in the July 8 *Globe and Mail*, and in a similar story by reporter Denise Lodde in the *National Post*. Contact Susan Bourette at sbourette@globeandmail.ca or (416) 585-5397.

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