



SEJ Journal

Winter 2010-11, Vol. 20 No. 4

Twain's truths echo today

GOP wave alters enviro debate

Lessons from "cap-and-trade" coverage

Disaster recovery in flux

A quarterly publication of the

Society of Environmental Journalists

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**"If people don't know,
they don't care. If they
don't care, they don't act."**

- E. O. WILSON, in a letter of support to SEJ



SEJ ournal

Winter 2010-11, Vol. 20 No. 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS



page 16

features

page 22

Truth in the Rough: The 100-year embargo lifts on Twain's autobiography, revealing much advice and inspiration on nature, writing and journalism
By Francesca Lyman

page 5

Inside Story: After rough start, radio story on green architecture turns into award winner
By Bill Dawson

page 16

columns



COVER PHOTO:

Published 100 years after his death in 1910, Mark Twain's autobiography details his life and thoughts on nature, writing and much more. It's topping the bestseller lists. See featured story on p. 5. Photo by Underwood & Underwood, Library of Congress

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President's Report: SEJ finds new ways to help journalists pursue their stories
By Carolyn Whetzel

page 4

E-Biz Reporting: The election's GOP wave will alter D.C. debate, but new opportunities likely for e-journalists
By Bud Ward

page 10

The Beat: Media's coverage of cap-and-trade may forecast future climate politics
By Bill Dawson

page 12

Media on the Move: New website ventures and social media initiatives win awards
By Judy Fahys

page 18

SEJ News:
SEJ launches new Diversity Task Force to promote discussion, diversity
By Ayana Meade
Answer the call: Give \$20 for the 20th anniversary
By Tim Wheeler

page 19

Science Survey: Tiny bits of silver, used as bacteria-eaters, emerge as new health concern
By Rae Tyson

page 20

Reporter's Toolbox: Disaster: Response is not recovery is not response
By Jim Schwab

page 22

Book Shelf Book Reviews

page 24



SEJ finds new ways to help journalists pursue their stories

By CAROLYN WHETZEL

A co-worker talked me into joining SEJ in 1994, at the same time she convinced me to tag along with her to the Provo, Utah, conference. Like many other SEJ members, it was the conference experience that hooked me.

Here it is 16 years later, and I'm still passionate about SEJ and privileged to be serving as SEJ president.

Over the last two decades, SEJ has not wavered from its commitment to help journalists navigate the complexities of environmental issues.

SEJ's reach, however, has grown beyond the conferences. It now offers mentoring opportunities, annual reporting awards and electronic notification tools like the *TipSheet*, *WatchDog TipSheet*, list-serves. Tons of resources, including past issues of the *SEJournal* and *The Daily Glob*, which keeps members current on news involving the Gulf oil spill, are found on SEJ's website.

SEJ is always looking for new opportunities to connect journalists with the resources needed for environmental reporting projects, build a stronger network of educated environmental journalists, and stimulate and improve coverage of critical environmental issues.

By the time this edition of the *SEJournal* lands in your mailbox SEJ will have distributed a second round of grants through its Fund for Environmental Journalism.

Launched earlier this year with \$10,000 in earned income and another \$5,000 in directed donations, the program offers modest grants to partially underwrite environmental reporting projects and entrepreneurial ventures. Grant money can be used for project-relevant travel, training, research, database analysis, consults, and other direct expenses.

Reporting projects funded in the inaugural round focused on a range of environmental topics including: climate change and forestry in Panama, water and agriculture in Wisconsin, invasive fish, and climate change and water pollution. SEJ also awarded grants to help two independent journalists develop websites.

SEJ distributed 11 grants totaling nearly \$8,000 in the first round, reserving the remaining \$7,000 for the second wave of grants. (A list of the journalists and projects winning the first grants is at: <http://www.sej.org/fej-grantees-Sep2010>).

The Fund for Environmental Journalism is one way SEJ is furthering its mission "to strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues." In this era of diminishing newsroom resources and jobs, even small grants, like these, can help bring projects, and some entrepreneurial ventures, to fruition.

SEJ is exploring funding sources for the program for 2011 and beyond.

Financial policies the board of directors approved in 2009 also can aid independent journalists who are pursuing large grants for environmental journalism projects. Because SEJ is a 501(c)(3)

charity, it can act as "fiscal sponsor" for journalists who receive grants from a third party.

The policies open the door for journalists, who are not 501(c)(3) organizations, to pursue funding for their reporting projects from grant makers who can only fund public charities, not individuals.

SEJ would administer such grants for a fee that would range from five percent to 16 percent, depending on the level of work and time involved.

The policies require a legally binding "fiscal sponsorship" agreement. Proposed projects must be well-developed and led by a qualified individual, advance SEJ's journalistic mission, and involve minimal risk to SEJ. All projects are subject to approval of the SEJ executive director and board of directors.

Finally, the SEJ board wants to acknowledge the remarkable service of Chris Rigel as a dedicated, hard-working full-time employee at Philadelphia-area headquarters since January of 1993. Chris has served in so many capacities for SEJ, most recently as director of programs and operations. In January, she is moving to Louisville, Kentucky and transitioning to a consulting role with SEJ. We're grateful that Chris wants to continue helping SEJ with the awards program, membership and election data systems, the annual conference and more. But you won't find her at headquarters. Thanks Chris, for all you've done for SEJ and for sticking with us.



PHOTO BY JIM BRUGGERS

Chris Rigel will be moving to Louisville, Kentucky and transitioning to a consulting role with SEJ.

Carolyn Whetzel, SEJ board president, covers environment issues in California for BNA Inc.

Truth in the rough

The 100-year embargo lifts on Twain's autobiography, revealing much advice and inspiration on nature, writing and journalism

By FRANCESCA LYMAN

— “I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before.”
-Huckleberry Finn

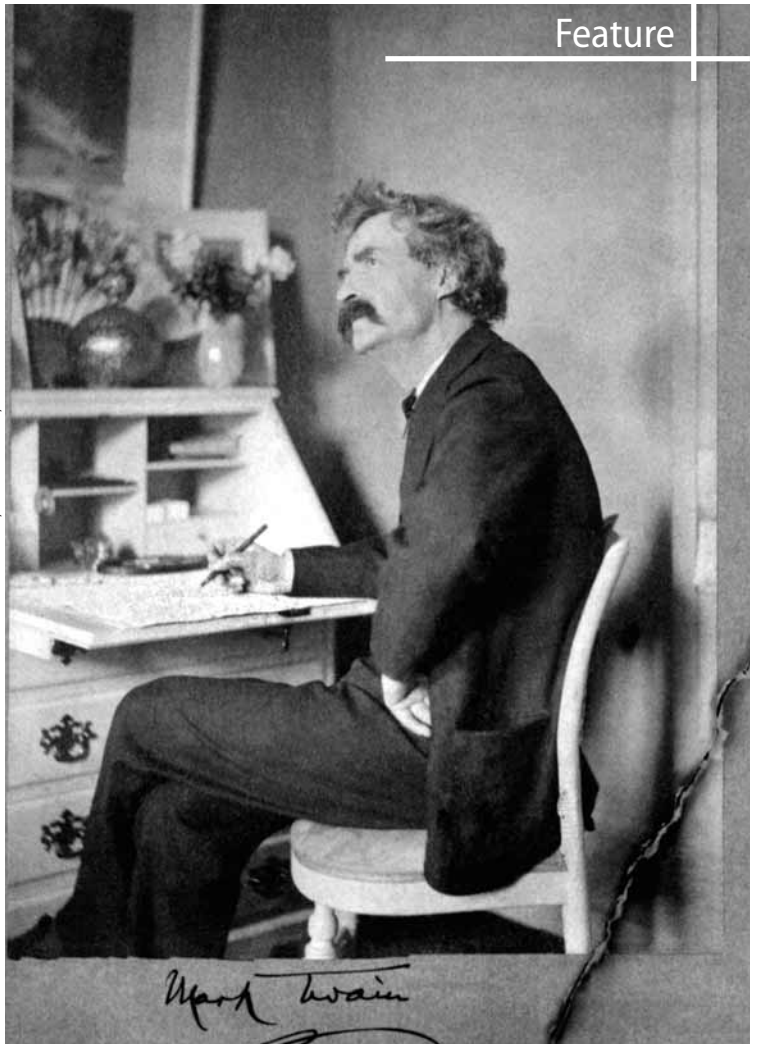
Last summer, I watched my impetuous nephew and niece from Atlanta, Nico and Margo, aged 12 and 9, ‘light out for the territory,’ as they ventured forth into the Pacific Northwest’s North Cascades mountains, exploring its timbering and mining towns; pitching tents and going camping; swimming out into the middle of a glacier lake; and floating their own rafts made out of driftwood.

Their first Westward journey recalled the rambunctious tall tales of Samuel L. Clemens and his unruly comic alter-ego Mark Twain. With one last hour before having to pack for their flight back to *sivilization*, and their first week of school, the young adventurers pleaded for one last ramble in “the enchanting forest.” They said the woods looked like it was from the age of “dinosaurs, with ferns everywhere,” filled with wasps’ nests so huge they’d “only seen them in cartoons before.” And it sure brought to mind another of Twain’s boisterous witticisms: “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

To even make reference to the immortal Huck calls for some nerve, and, I’ll admit, that wasn’t on the minds of my young charges (even if they would probably have been keenly interested to learn that Clemens left school at the age of little more than 12). Their first journey West came in what’s been dubbed the “Year of Mark Twain.” 2010 was the 175th anniversary of his birth, as well as being aligned with the 125th anniversary of the publication of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

This year marks another milestone, too: The fulfillment of the classic author’s dying wish to have his complete and

PHOTO COURTESY MARK TWAIN HOUSE AND MUSEUM, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT



Mark Twain writing *Tom Sawyer* in his study. After a career in journalism that took him to the West, Mark Twain married and moved to New York State, where he wrote the novels *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, and kept copious journals.

uncensored *Autobiography* published 100 years after he died. The first time a writer ever imposed such an embargo, Twain suppressed it so that he could speak freely “with his whole frank mind.” The long-anticipated *Autobiography of Mark Twain* — or at least the first of its three volumes — offers another chance to reflect on his importance as a writer, humorist, public speaker, essayist, journalist and philosopher — perhaps why the book has jumped to the top of best-seller lists already.

“When you catch an adjective, kill it. No, I don’t mean utterly, but kill most of them — then the rest will be valuable..” - Letter to D. W. Bowser, 20 March 1880

Not so surprisingly, the book also reveals Twain to be a voice relevant to environmental writers. A hefty, 737-page tome, filled with letters, snippets of news, notes, essays, journal entries and fragments, and affectionate family portraits, this four-pound volume weighs in too heavy to fit in a backpack. And, unlike the well-worn copy of *Walden* that is the bible of many

continued on page 7



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

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

Send story ideas, articles, news briefs, tips and letters to the editor Mike Mansur, Kansas City Star, 1729 Grant Ave., Kansas City, Mo. 64108, mansur.michael@gmail.com

To submit books for review, contact Elizabeth Bluemink at ebluemink@gmail.com

For inquiries regarding the SEJ, please contact the SEJ office, PO Box 2492, Jenkintown, PA 19046; Ph: (215) 884-8174; Fax: (215) 884-8175; E-mail sej@sej.org

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environmental writers, it could tip a river raft.

Much of the material in it has been published before, but never as Twain wished it, in all its digressive, “convoluted glory,” as reviewer Tim Adams of the *The Guardian* observes. “The thing uppermost in a person’s mind is the thing to talk about or write about,” writes Twain, whose memoirs read like the 19th century equivalent of a blog. Meandering in fits and false starts, the book is packed with heaps of new material, including biting charges against specific people and politicians that Twain found too potentially hurtful to be published during his lifetime and some prophetic social criticism.

As our families ventured forth on camping trips into the North Cascades, I couldn’t wait to revisit this favorite author, plunging back into *Roughing It*, *Innocents Abroad*, and Samuel Clemens’ adventures in journalism in the far West of California and Nevada, where he first adopted his pen name of Mark Twain. The name has its origins in the call of the riverboat leadsman, whose line sank to a depth “marked” as safe in “two” fathoms of water, assuring that the water wasn’t too shallow and thus safe to navigate. It was a paradoxical epithet for someone whose life often sailed rough seas.

The man who would be called America’s “Homer” (by Ralph Waldo Emerson), a literary wellspring of “all American writing” (by Ernest Hemingway), our country’s “Voltaire” (by George Bernard Shaw), and our country’s best-known humorous writer, first gained notoriety as a journalist. Having spent at least 20 years as a reporter, and as a writer of nonfiction and satirical sketches, he started earning a living as an apprentice printer as early as age 13.

Without any formal education, he had to compensate with a scrappy, self-taught knowledge, learning typesetting, printing, riverboat piloting, and new trades like silver prospecting, which he would fail at but later report on in newspaper articles and travelogues such as *Roughing It*.

In the course of reporting for newspapers across the West, he experimented with a variety of comic personas in satiric sketches and swashbuckling frontier tales. However, his fame really didn’t come until several years after the publication of his newspaper story, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” republished as a book in 1867, when he was 32 years old, and *The Innocents Abroad*, his irreverent take on the glories of European culture, published two years later.

Given Twain’s roots, it is perhaps unsurprising that Twain stood up for the common person, and the powerless, while

The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter — it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.

- Letter to George Bainton, 10/15/1888

lamponing the moneyed and powerful. While he grew up in a slave-owning family, he became a staunch abolitionist over time; he also grew to support women’s rights, civil rights, anti-imperialism, and what was then the beginnings of an animal rights’ movement, anti-vivisectionism. Twain wrote: “Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it.”

And it is the dark, angry social critic side of Twain that emerges most strongly in this new volume. Twain gives full vent to his then unpopular anti-imperialistic political views, expressing

anger over the U.S. military intervention in the Philippines, referring at one point to American soldiers as “uniformed assassins” for their role in waging war on innocent civilians, the so-called Moro Crater Massacre.

His “War Prayer,” condemning this incident, was first published in 1923, and recently resurrected by opponents of the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in these new memoirs, he is more sharply critical of President Theodore Roosevelt, charging that “He knew perfectly well that to pen 600 helpless and weaponless savages in a hole like rats in a trap and massacre them in detail during a stretch of a day and a half from a safe position on the heights above was no brilliant feat of arms. He knew perfectly well that our uniformed assassins had not upheld the honor of the American flag.”

Elsewhere, he also takes stabs at moneyed interests and oil billionaires, such as John D. Rockefeller and his son,

whose “Bible classes” provoked ridicule at the time. “Satan”, he writes, “twaddling sentimental sillinesses to a Sunday-school, could be no burlesque upon [him].” Twain uses the word “grotesque” to characterize him; one wonders what he’d say about some of our prominent talk show hosts today who use the media as a pulpit to preach a gospel of free-market capitalism mixed with Divine Right?

Twain was a maverick for his time and, even a hundred years later, still seems new and fresh. Robert Hirst, the book’s general editor and curator of the Mark Twain project, calls him America’s “first blogger.” That’s not so surprising because as a riverboat pilot he began keeping a journal, alongside his ship’s log, which is, after all, what a *weblog* is an imitation of.

For his autobiography, he dictated to a stenographer during the last three years of his life, in an almost stream-of-consciousness fashion that captured the impression of the moment rather than any standard chronological order. “I hit upon the right



PHOTO COURTESY MARK TWAIN PROJECT, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

In his later years, Mark Twain devoted himself to his autobiography, which he wanted withheld from publication until a century after his death.

“Only presidents, editors and people with tapeworm have the right to use the editorial ‘we’.”

- Mark Twain

way to do an Autobiography, start it at no particular time in your life; wander at your free will all over your life; talk only about the thing which interests you for the moment; drop it the moment its interest threatens to pale, and turn your talk upon the new and more interesting thing that has intruded itself into your mind meantime.”

Some call his 100-year embargo a case of egoism that would insure his immortality; even his choice of pen name and authorial image has a strangely modern sensibility that may have been a form of ‘branding’ before there even was such a thing. Already, his autobiography is on many best-seller lists; Twain even has his own *Facebook* page.

“It is just like man’s vanity and impertinence to call an animal dumb because it is dumb to his dull perceptions.” - Mark Twain

I don’t want to say this too loud, because Twain might be listening from the grave and snap peevishly at me, but I think Mark Twain may even have actually been a close, if not closet, compatriot of us eco-writers. If Twain were alive today, would he be writing about the global impacts of American consumerism, and its effects on the environment? Such quotes give a hint: “Civilization is a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities.”

Given his role as a leader in the Anti-imperialist League, it’s likely he would have been a critic of globalization; that view certainly informed his culinary tastes, according to Andrew Behrs. Author of the book *Twain’s Feast*, Behrs paints him as one of the original *locavores*, a champion of regional flavors and fresh, wild, locally cultivated recipes. “Whether wild or domestic, the dishes were based less on recipes than on the quality of the ingredients,” writes Behrs. “At its heart, Twain’s feast was about the connection between food and place, the way that the things that sustain us depend upon places we remember and love. That lesson remains as vital as ever.”

The author of the line “Denial ain’t just a river in Egypt” devoted his life to exposing the hypocrisy of a nation dedicated to freedom but based on slavery; how would he write about the rampant denialism surrounding global warming, today? What would be his views on population, given such statements as these? “Often it does seem a pity that Noah and his party did not miss the boat.”

Before devoting himself to the craft of writing as a reporter, he’d spent hours observing nature and the landscape. As a Mississippi River riverboat pilot, he’d memorized the bends, rivulets, currents and depths of the waterway for the 1,200-plus miles between St. Louis, Mo., and New Orleans. According to Ron Powers, author of *Dangerous Water*, a biography of Clemens as a boy (and himself a native of Twain’s hometown), the author’s formative imagination was shaped by that meandering river, its floodplains, its unexpected tributaries, its cave systems and the whole surrounding terrain of

“In the real world, the right thing never happens in the right place and the right time. It is the job of journalists and historians to make it appear that it has.” - Mark Twain

Hannibal, Mo., beyond whose town limits “lay hillside forests of oak and walnut and sycamore, open fields awash in dandelion and columbine and wild ginger.”

According to Dayton Duncan, a co-writer with documentary film director Ken Burns of a PBS series on the life of Twain, “Twain’s lesson for environmental journalists is to be acute observers, and equally sharp writers.” No one, says Duncan, could describe a coyote running the way he did in *Roughing It*. “If you’ve ever seen a coyote on the move, you understand how good Twain was at seeing it, remembering it, and then putting it into words,” Duncan says.

Twain’s *coyote* “dropped his ears, set up his tail, and left for San Francisco at a speed which can only be described as a flash and a vanish! Long after he was out of sight we could hear him whiz.”

Twain has inspired countless writers and artists. The creator of the famous *Wile E. Coyote* of the ‘Roadrunner’ cartoon credits his character as originating with Twain’s description of his *coyote*, “a long, slim, sick and sorry-looking skeleton with a gray wolf-skin stretched over it, a tolerably bushy tail that forever sags

“To get the right word in the right place is a rare achievement.”

- Letter to Emeline Beach, 10 Feb 1868

down with a despairing expression of forsakenness and misery, a furtive and evil eye, and a long, sharp face, with slightly lifted lip and exposed teeth. He has a general slinking expression all over.” The animal, he concludes, is “a living, breathing allegory of Want. He is *always* hungry.”

Another of Duncan’s favorites is Twain’s description of sagebrush, from his days spent in Nevada, in *Roughing It*: “Sagebrush is a very fair fuel, but as a vegetable it is a distinguished failure. Nothing can abide the taste of it but the jackass and his illegitimate child the mule.” In another place, he says that “when crushed,” it “emits an odor that isn’t exactly magnolia and equally isn’t exactly polecat — but it is a sort of compromise between the two.”

Without a doubt, Twain’s main tool as a writer was humor, but he also relied on hard fact and clear description. What makes him distinctive, too, is his attention to detail, adherence to fact, and reliance on his own understanding of reality rather than any second-hand knowledge. He fiercely insisted on the highest standards not just for himself but for anyone proclaiming to be a writer: “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.”

Scholars today regard him in some ways as the first major professional writer, as a literary entrepreneur who shrewdly marketed his image and his literary wares, adopting new technologies like the type-writer (and even creating some successful media products, like a self-adhering scrapbook). But what inspired him to write was a sense of deep conviction and obligation to the public, to portray life honestly ... even caustically. For those reasons, we reporters and writers can look

to Twain for inspiration and good advice to this day, perhaps even more now than ever before.

In 1900, late in his life, he wrote in the draft of a letter to an unnamed editor, "Plain clarity is better than ornate obscurity." As much as any important novelist or figure in American literature, Twain was profoundly a journalist, and saw journalists as vital to a democratic society. "Truth is tough," he wrote. "It will not break, like a bubble, at a touch; nay, you may kick it about all day, like a football, and it will be round and full at evening."

Francesca Lyman is a journalist and author of The Greenhouse Trap, with World Resources Institute, and Inside the Dzanga Sangha Rain Forest. Mark Twain has always held a mystique for her, she confesses, not just as a functionally recovering English major but for personal reasons: Her father, Thomas W. Lyman, canoed with a pal down the full length of the Mississippi River, after his service in the Navy, and brought the family to live for a time not far from the great river, outside the tiny town of Makanda, Illinois. She can be reached at chicha19@comcast.net.

SOURCES:
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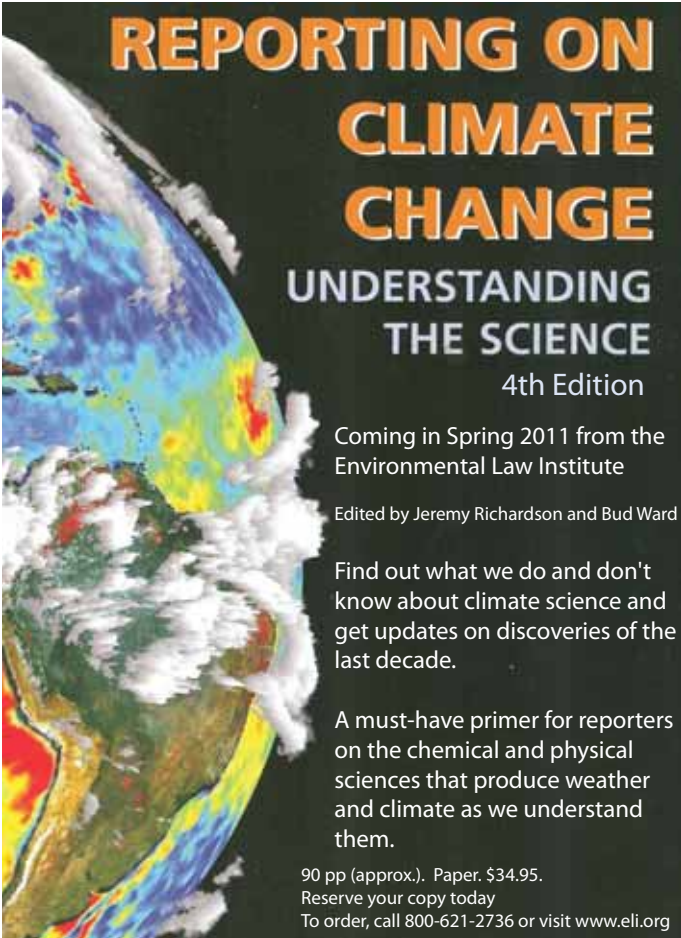
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Here it is free! <http://tinyurl.com/36t9u7n>

PBS, Mark Twain documentary <http://www.pbs.org/marktwain/>

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The election's GOP wave will alter D.C. debate, but new opportunities likely for e-journalists

By BUD WARD

Journalists tracking federal actions — and inaction — on climate change policy will have plenty to report on in coming months. It all begins with just how the Republican Party's historic congressional and state-house election victories play out over the next two years, if not beyond.

And, of course, there are the unknowns arising from the emergence in Washington of the tea party interests.

For certain, there will be a far different frame on the climate change debate in the nation's capital — far different than what appeared to be the obvious direction just two years ago.

With a Republican-controlled House, expect the focus to shift from what to do about climate change to its underlying science. Expect the details of cap and trade versus carbon taxes and the give-and-take negotiations that characterized last year's House and Senate maneuvering over compromises (off-shore drilling or not? support for nuclear power or not?) to fall away like pumpkin decorations in December.

In the newly Republican House, where the GOP majority is nearly a post-World War II high, the early focus has been on the new chair of the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee, led these past two years by liberal California Democrat Henry Waxman, a highly regarded politician and legislator and long a leader on climate and other environmental issues. It virtually goes without saying that moving from Waxman to *any* elected Republican is bound to have a major impact on prospects for climate legislation.

Most dramatic would be the ascension of Texas Republican and climate skeptic Joe Barton, who opened post-election season trying to convince the House GOP leadership to waive its own rules limiting committee chairmanship terms (the Democrats have no such rule). Among several Republican legislators clamoring for the post, the odds-on favorite to succeed Waxman was Fred Upton of Michigan. While generally more moderate than Barton on climate issues, Upton shows no sign of being a friend of those seeking action on greenhouse gases, even if he does attract some barbs from his party's most conservative wing.

Another House committee likely to warrant close watching is Oversight and Government Reform, where California Republican Darrell Issa probably will become chairman. He's wavered on whether he might step up scrutiny of what the Democratic leadership had pretty much considered to be "settled science" on climate change. How far Issa goes in unearthing what he sees as lingering controversies surrounding the "climategate" hacked-emails remains something of an unknown. But prominent climate scientists who have led much of the groundbreaking research on

climate change causes and effects say they expect difficult hearings, perhaps involving subpoenas.

Reporters had expected that the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming would also be a House lightning rod for reporters to watch. It has been chaired over the past two years by liberal Massachusetts Democrat Edward J. Markey. Initial post-election punditry had more or less assumed the Republican House leadership might just as well eliminate the potentially nettlesome (under Markey) committee. Sure enough, in early December, Rep. John Boehner, in line to be the new speaker in Congress, did just that, telling reporters that "the global warming committee doesn't need to be a separate committee."

In November, a House Science and Technology subcommittee on energy and environment — chaired by now-retired Democrat Brian Baird of Washington, one of the few members with a strong science background, focused on the impacts of human-caused climate change, including an emphasis on troubling national security implications. The hearings, with most witnesses generally sympathetic to the predominant IPCC view of climate science and open to confronting the thorny issue, appeared from the outset to be an attempt by outgoing Democrats to "educate" considerably less supportive incoming members.

The first clue of new directions in the GOP-led House of Representatives may come from close scrutiny of witness lists. The pendulum between climate "believers" and climate "contrarians" — terminology virtually all involved with the climate issue appreciate as being overly generalized and barely adequate — is certain to shift toward the more skeptical side.

Expect upcoming hearings in the new Congress to focus on whether warming is happening at all. Is it human caused? Natural? The sun? Aren't there some benefits from a warming world? Do we really know? And what, precisely what, can we do about it if it's happening in any event?

In the lame-duck hiatus between the November 2 elections and the seating of the new House and Senate, it was not surprising to see the chairs-in-waiting kept their powder somewhat dry and their options open. All the same, the early rumblings send a pretty clear signal of big changes ahead.

For environmental journalists, the coming months are likely to present some new and ever-more-challenging, yet stimulating, reporting opportunities. A new type of climate change "journalism" — with reporters being urged to "engage" more with the issue — may be starting to peek over the horizon. And it may pose mind-bending riddles for reporters loyal to the historic tradition of journalists as observers and not as participants. But, at the same

time new opportunities may open to journalists sorely in need of some new path.

With all hopes for major federal legislative activity dashed, many experts on all sides of the climate change debate expect gridlock, even with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined to move forward, over GOP opposition, with regulatory efforts to regulate greenhouse gases. As a result, the importance of climate change communication initiatives may grow. Surely these new communications efforts, in order to be serious, will need to include tried-and-true journalists.

Organizations ranging from the National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Foundation* to the “learned societies” such as the American Geophysical Union and the American Association for the Advancement of Science are focusing more on the communications aspects of their science work. Activist organizations also have their oars in this water in their expanding efforts to involve and “engage” media in their climate communications campaigns.

A particularly intriguing example may be one championed by Matthew C. Nisbet, who spends much of his time in this new nexus of journalism and communication as an academic at American University. Nisbet recently penned a “post-partisan plan” for engaging the public on climate change issues.

Nisbet said he knows full well of the inevitable “new challenges to climate science” from Tea Party and like-minded politicians. He knows, too, of recent data pointing to “further disengagement and inattention” on the part of the public when it comes to climate change.

Drawing from a white paper he was commissioned to write for the National Academies, Nisbet recently outlined “a detailed and achievable blueprint for how to create ...new communications opportunities for Americans.” After pointing to several of what he sees as “promising climate policy proposals” (like everything in the climate field, others are certain to find them far less promising), Nisbet allowed that “the challenge for these ideas and others is to gain substantive media and policy attention amidst the pending hyper-partisan noise. For advocates and journalists, the perceived ‘war’ between the left and the right on climate change will be a distracting yet very easy story to tell, one that is likely to be self-serving by rallying the base, selling copy, and avoiding complexity.”

Where will that lead? Nisbet leaves little doubt of his own concerns — “Perhaps the greatest damage from the pending hyper-partisan debate will be to civic engagement and public

participation on the issue.”

His vision is that media interests might join — yes join — with expert institutions such as national scientific societies, and with government agencies, universities, foundations, business, and affiliated professional groups. Join not to defend climate change science or even to increase climate literacy, Nisbet writes ... but rather to “promote relevant areas of knowledge beyond just technical understanding of climate science” to include issues such as costs and benefits of various climate management proposals and of options to mitigate its impacts and to adapt.

Nisbet’s proposal sees all this emerging from a “new communications infrastructure and participatory culture” ... coupled with a serious way to communicate to the public and to communicate to policy makers an accurate representation of public opinion on the issues, something he says they now lack. He outlines a strategy focused not at the national level, but rather at the state and regional levels “where there is the greatest need and demand.”

There’s more to the ideas Nisbet lays out in his “Eye on 2012: A Post-Partisan Plan to Engage the Public on Climate

Change,” much of it relevant to the business of journalism on the wide-ranging climate change issues. See the website: <http://bigthink.com/ideas/24793>, where there are also important links for those journalists and journalism educators thirsting for more on the subject.

Nisbet’s are not the only provocative original ideas contributing to the mosaic of what may eventually emerge in the brave new world of environmental journalism and “mainstream” journalism. But for those current reporters wanting to help shape the field’s future, and not merely be bystanders, he offers fertile food for thought.

Try taking some big bites. My bet is that you’ll like it, and that you’ll come back for seconds. Is it too much to hope for that that could even lead to both a healthier climate ...and to a better journalism?

Bud Ward, a founding SEJ board member, is an independent journalism educator and former editor of Environment Writer. He edits The Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media.

**Disclosure: As the editor of the online Yale Forum on Climate Change & The Media (<http://climatemediaforum.yale.edu>), the author of this article is himself a participant in an NSF-funded effort to help broadcast meteorologists better understand and communicate on climate change issues, and he has conducted a number of NSF-funded workshops over the years for leading climatologists and journalists.*



PHOTO: © DOMINIC CAMPBELL VIA FLICKR

With the much heralded arrival of the victorious 112th Congress to the nation’s Capitol in mid-winter, journalists can expect the climate change debate in both halls of the legislature to take on a whole new shape.

Media's coverage of "cap-and-trade" may forecast future climate politics

By BILL DAWSON

The climate issue figured prominently in numerous House and Senate races this past fall, with much of the debate centering on the House-passed climate-energy bill – also called Waxman-Markey and the American Clean Energy and Security Act, but perhaps best known for its emission-reducing mechanism, “cap-and-trade.”

The bill narrowly won House approval in the summer of 2009, and NPR reported in April that “cap-and-trade” had by then become “a toxic brand,” thanks to the conservatives’ successful effort to tar it as “cap and tax.” Efforts in the Senate to pass any sort of climate bill — with or without a cap-and-trade provision — were subsequently abandoned.

One theme of the campaign news coverage about climate involved Republicans’ widespread criticism of the cap-and-trade bill (and often of mainstream climate science), especially in races against vulnerable incumbents who voted for it in the House.

House GOP leaders, sensing a major victory in the making, in September issued a policy outline called “A Pledge to America,” which included promises on the climate issue. *The Hill’s* energy and environmental blogger **Ben German** reported:

“The reference to energy policy is brief, noting only that, ‘We will fight to increase access to domestic energy sources and oppose attempts to impose a national ‘cap-and-trade’ energy tax.’”

“But with the GOP expected to make major gains in the mid-term elections, it underscores the tough climb that any climate change bills would face in the next Congress regardless of which party holds the gavel.”

Also in September, *The Guardian’s* **Suzanne Goldenberg** reported on a survey by a liberal think tank:

“All but one of the 48 Republican hopefuls for the Senate mid-term elections in November deny the existence of climate change or oppose action on global warming, according to a report released today.”

“The strong Republican front against established science includes entrenched Senate leaders as well as the new wave of radical conservatives endorsed by the Tea Party activists, says a report by the Centre for American Progress.”

Evan Lehmann of *ClimateWire* reported in late October on Tea Party adherents who viewed climate science as “a scam” and quoted one who said the House bill was part of an attack on capitalism: “If you break the back of the people ... when cap-and-trade comes along, it’s not exactly stealing.”

Writing in the *National Journal* in early October, **Ronald Brownstein** noted that hardening of GOP opposition to the House cap-and-trade bill in 2009 was the start of a larger pattern, in which “Republicans in this country are coalescing around a uniquely dismissive position on climate change. The GOP is stampeding toward an absolutist rejection of climate science that appears

unmatched among major political parties around the globe, even conservative ones.”

In August, **Jane Mayer** of *The New Yorker* had an article that drew much attention and comment, in which she presented a detailed account of one major source of financial support for the spread of such ideas — funding from the libertarian brothers David and Charles Koch of Koch Industries, a Kansas-based oil company. One passage about an advocacy group they launched:

“Americans for Prosperity has held at least eighty events targeting cap-and-trade legislation, which is aimed at making industries pay for the air pollution that they create. Speakers for the group claimed, with exaggeration, that even back-yard barbecues and kitchen stoves would be taxed.”



Reporting on individual races

Inevitably, the cap-and-trade issue played a bigger role in some races, such as a New Mexico race involving an incumbent Democratic House member, than in others.

Tim Korte of the *Associated Press* profiled the race in late October, leading with the climate issue:

“The southeastern New Mexico oil patch is the setting for Harry Teague’s rags-to-riches biography, a tale of his rise from high school dropout and working-class rig hand to successful business owner and U.S. congressman.”

“But against that scenario, Teague’s vote to support President Barack Obama’s energy plan has become an issue in his campaign for a second House term.”

Elizabeth McGowan, reporting for *SolveClimate News* on Nov. 1, noted that Florida’s Republican Senate candidate, Marco Rubio, had become “a climate change denier and darling of the Tea Party Movement,” but that appeared to be “a strategic flip-flop.”

Previously, she wrote, Rubio, as speaker of the state House of Representatives, had championed “comprehensive climate legislation that rivaled California’s landmark Assembly Bill 32,” which is establishing a state cap-and-trade system for greenhouse gases.

Reporting in late October on “three tight House races” in generally pro-environment Washington state, **Amanda Peterka** of *Greenwire* noted that in one of the contests, the incumbent Republican, Dave Reichert, was “one of just eight House Republicans who voted for the 2009 cap-and-trade bill” and had won the endorsement of the League of Conservation Voters Action Fund.

Peterka added an anecdotal detail suggesting that even such a GOP candidate was attempting to put some distance between himself and the cap-and-trade measure:

“But an audio recording made at a Republican gathering in May raised some eyebrows when Reichert said that in order to win in the 8th District, ‘you have got to pick your battles ... There are certain moves, chess pieces, strategies you have to employ.’”

“He went on to imply that his pro-environment votes were just part of that strategy and that ‘I’ve taken [environmentalists] out of the game in this district. They’re out.’”

Both the Republican and Democratic candidates in coal-dependent West Virginia’s Senate race, meanwhile, were nothing but upfront about their distaste for the cap-and-trade bill.

Nicole Allan, a staff editor for *TheAtlantic.com*, did some truth-in-advertising work in a piece posted in late September about an ad for Republican John Raese that sought to paint Democrat Joe Manchin with the cap-and-trade brush:

“The ad singles out a bill Manchin signed in 2009 that mandates a certain percentage of the state’s energy come from renewable sources. A narrator claims that the law cuts coal usage and that ‘it’s Obama’s cap-and-trade bill, West Virginia style.’ ...

“It just so happens, though, that Manchin did not sign a cap-and-trade law. The bill from 2009, called the Alternative and Renewable Energy Portfolio Act, does not cap emissions. It’s essentially a renewable portfolio standard, not dissimilar from the ones that exist in 33 other states (as of 2009) — except that it’s a lot more lenient toward the coal industry Raese claims Manchin is gutting.”

One of Manchin’s ads on the same issue drew a good amount of media attention, because it showed him firing a bullet from a rifle into a target labeled “cap-and-trade Bill.” As the headline on an item in the *New York Times*’ “Green” blog noted, however, Manchin was “Taking Aim, Literally, at a Dead Climate Bill.”

Times reporter **John Collins Rudolf** elaborated:

“Given that cap-and-trade legislation died months ago in the Senate, some proponents of cap-and-trade see this as a low blow. ...

“Mr. Manchin’s Republican opponent, however, has been running ads implying that the governor is anti-coal, supports cap-and-trade and would ‘rubber-stamp’ President Obama’s agenda.

“In fact, Mr. Manchin has been a consistently outspoken opponent to his party’s carbon-capping ambitions and is a longstanding supporter of the mining companies and unions of his state.”

What was the impact?

Republicans, of course, handily won control of the House and greatly narrowed Democrats’ margin in the Senate. In light of the heavy assault by the GOP on the cap-and-trade bill, what role did it play in the party’s big victory? That was a subject for journalistic reporting and analysis as soon as the results were known.

Greenwire got a jump on the analysis aspect of that coverage with an Election Day article, headlined on the *New York Times* website, “Will the Ghost of Cap-And-Trade Haunt Democrats Tomorrow — and Beyond?” The unbylined story put the subject into the broader electoral context:

“The Democrats’ anticipated loss of the House will be attributed to the sour economy and unpopular health care reform law, the Wall Street bailout and economic stimulus bills, among other things.

“But Democrats’ vote to support the House cap-and-trade climate bill has played prominently in more than a dozen races



across the country and has haunted moderate Democrats across the nation, as critics call cap-and-trade one more example of an overreaching government.”

Politico reporters **Darren Samuelsohn** and **Robin Bravender** had an article the day after the election in which they wrote that Democrats who had voted for the climate bill “had a terrible night” and “were slaughtered at the ballot box.”

More than two dozen members of Congress “who favored efforts to clamp down on heat-trapping emissions were swept away on Tuesday’s anti-incumbent wave, ushering in a new class of Republicans who doubt global warming science and want to upend President Barack Obama’s environmental and energy policies,” they reported.

Time’s **Bryan Walsh**, writing in a story that was posted on the magazine’s website the same day, also noted that number of Democrats who voted for the cap-and-trade bill and met defeat. He cautioned, however, that the significance of the climate issue in the overall election outcome was not a clear-cut matter:

“But how big a factor was cap-and-trade on election night? In reality, not all that much. It’s worth noting that no Republican who voted in favor of cap-and-trade lost their reelection battles last night (although that’s admittedly a small sample size, as only eight Republicans supported the bill, and one of them — Delaware’s Mike Castle — lost in a primary election to a more conservative opponent). Even in the midst of a Republican tsunami, a few Democrats who supported a carbon cap still managed close victories, including Brad Miller of North Carolina and John Yarmuth of Kentucky — two conservative leaning states. ...

“Indeed, aside from a few districts where climate change and energy was high on the agenda — like [Virginian] Rick Boucher’s coal-mining land — Americans voters weren’t really focused on environmental issues. This was a wave election, an expression of volcanic anger on the part of the public, and what House and Senate Democrats did or didn’t do on climate and energy likely made very little difference to the overall tide.”

The *New York Times*’ **John Broder**, in a “Green” blog post three days after the election, reported that a scholar’s statistical analysis likewise suggested that the debate over the climate bill didn’t make much difference in the election results.

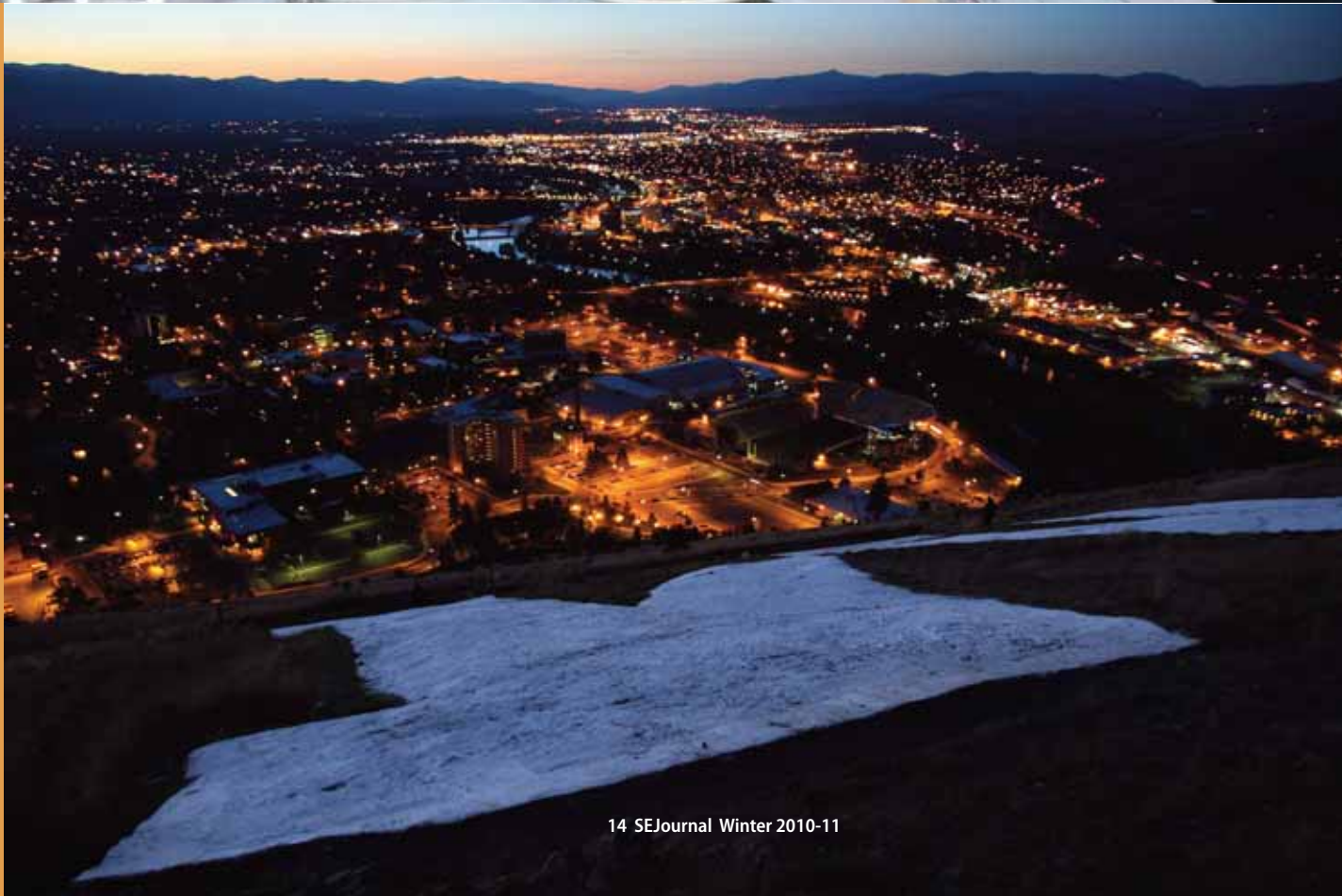
Broder noted that environmentalists and other backers of the measure were trying to evade blame for the Democrats’ losses, while Republicans were offering contrasting spin. He then added:

“Michael Levi, a fellow in energy and environmental studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, tried to take a neutral look at the results, using what he described as ‘simple multivariable linear regressions,’ to see whether or to what extent the Waxman-Markey vote affected the outcomes.

“He looked at 334 competitive House races and included the party makeup of the districts and the incumbent member’s vote on the climate bill, the health law and the stimulus package among the variables.

“He admits that the results are suggestive rather than definitive, but his bottom line is that the climate vote mattered not at all in most races and only a little in a few.”

Bill Dawson is assistant editor of SEJournal.



SEJ 2010 Conference in Missoula, Montana Remembered

Top left: Food for thought — journalists attending SEJ's 2010 conference were simultaneously well nourished by meals derived from the University of Montana's Farm to College program that procures food supplies from local farms and ranches, while also being intellectually stimulated by such plenary discussions as U.S. Energy Frontiers: Beyond the Gulf Disaster, seen here. Photo: © Kate Lutz

Top right: To better understand tornado-like fire swirls that can occur during extreme wild fire behavior, scientists at the U.S. Forest Service's Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory recreate the phenomenon under controlled conditions, which was demonstrated for the visiting journalists on the Wildfire Tour. Photo: © Dennis Dimick

Bottom left: Missoula, Montana after sunset, as seen from the "M" on Mt. Sentinel, a 100-ft square cement initial set into the mountainside 600 feet above the University of Montana campus directly below, which hosted SEJ's twentieth annual conference. Photo: © Roger Archibald

Bottom right: Participants in the day-long Wildfire Tour, one of many field trips offered to conference attendees, being briefed by University of Montana forestry professor Ronald Wakimoto at the site of a major 2003 forest fire just outside Missoula. They are, from left, Rachael Gleason with the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University; Axita Gupta of Louisiana State

University; Frede Vestergaard with *Week End Avisen* in Copenhagen, Denmark; Dirk Asendorf from *Die Zeit* in Bremen, Germany; Dennis Dimick, Executive Editor — Environment at *National Geographic*; Prof. Wakimoto and tour co-leader Richard Manning, a Missoula writer and author. Photo: © Roger Archibald



After rough start, radio story on green architecture turns into award winner

By BILL DAWSON

Jason Margolis, a reporter for Public Radio International's program "The World," won first place in the 2010 SEJ Awards for Reporting on the Environment in the category for "Outstanding Beat/In-Depth Reporting, Radio."

The judges said this about Margolis' winning entry, "Architects Share Green Building Ideas:"

"This piece stood head and shoulders above the competition for the reporter's skill in taking a simple and increasingly familiar concept — greenhouse gas emissions — and helping the listener understand it in terms of the spaces so many of us inhabit during our

workdays. Margolis used sound exceptionally well to bring the listener to the streets and buildings of Toronto and Mexico City. His writing and interviews helped make architectural challenges, which are so often opaque to the lay public, clear and understandable. The content was surprising, revealing and compelling, and the manner in which it was conveyed to the listener was masterful."

PRI describes "The World" as "a one-hour, weekday radio news magazine offering a mix of news, features, interviews, and music from around the globe." The program is a co-production of WGBH/Boston, PRI, and the BBC World Service.

Margolis has been a reporter for the program for nearly five years. The PRI website's biographical sketch includes these details:

"Jason focuses primarily on economics stories but also covers a wide range of topics from U.S. foreign policy to climate change. Jason has reported from the top of a rickety tower 150 feet above the Panamanian jungle, an abandoned town near Chernobyl, Ukraine, and the grassy plains of North Dakota. Prior to coming to "The World," Jason was a reporter at KQED Public Radio in Sacramento, *The Seattle Times*, and "CBS MarketWatch" in San Francisco."

Margolis answered emailed questions from *SEJournal's* Bill Dawson.

Q: Tell me about your work for "The World." How long have you been a reporter for the program? Always focusing mainly on economics stories? How did that concentration come about — Was it something you did in previous jobs? Were you hired for that beat? How far-flung are your reporting travels?

A: I've been a full-time reporter at "The World" since April 2006, and had been freelancing there since 2001. We're too small a staff to have reporters dedicated exclusively to beats, but that being said, all the reporters have areas of specialization. I tended



Photo courtesy of PRI's The World via Flickr

Reporter Jason Margolis on assignment in Liberia for The World, a nationally syndicated news program co-produced by Public Radio International and the BBC at WGBH in Boston.

to focus on environmental and immigration issues, then started covering economics toward the end of 2008 when the economy was in a full tailspin and the show producers decided that we had better have somebody on it more regularly.

I had covered financial news before as a reporter with Marketwatch.com. The executive producer of "The World," Bob

Ferrante, called me into his office and asked me if I'd like to cover economics again. I was a bit reluctant as I felt I was really hitting my groove with environmental coverage, and was really enjoying it, but the producers assured me that I could continue to report stories about environmental issues too. While covering economics, I've realized that much of what drives environmental regulation comes down to how it impacts the economy.

As for my travels, basically I go wherever we don't have a full-time reporter or reliable stringer. I don't get sent to London or Tokyo; I go to some pretty under-reported areas, such as Liberia, the Philippines, or Mississippi. I really enjoy treading the less-worn path. I also do a lot of reporting from my desk in Boston.

Q: Have you reported much in previous jobs about environmental and sustainability issues? In your current job, how often do you cover such concerns, as in your award-winning story on green building techniques?

A: I've always leaned toward environmental and sustainability issues in past reporting jobs. The topic really matters to me; I think it's a worthy way to spend my time. I try to cover the environment as often as I can, but it's only about six to 10 stories a year these days. I'd like to do more and help do my part to erode the false perception that being pro-environment amounts to being anti-growth or anti-business. That's a red herring that bothers me.

Q: Was the architecture story assigned to you? Was it your own idea? Was the subject something you'd reported on in the past?

A: The architecture story was my idea. I read a paragraph about the organization Architecture 2030 on an environmental blog — which I'd love to give credit to but can't remember where I saw it — and I thought, wow, that's a great story! I had reported a bunch

on climate change issues, but never on how big buildings factor into the climate change discussion. I really liked this story because it was about people, architects in this case, being proactive.

Q: How did you decide to spotlight the two architects and their two cities — Toronto and Mexico City — that were featured in your report?

A: I needed to do this story from a foreign country as our program focuses on international news, and I was heading to Mexico to do some other stories. Meeting with the architect in Mexico City only tacked a few hours onto my trip, so I thought why not have a meeting? After we met, it dawned on me that the techniques he was using to cool his building would be relatively useless for much of the year in a cold weather climate. Canada was the coldest foreign place I could find that was also easy to get to, so I headed up to Toronto next.

Q: Were there any surprising or difficult aspects of reporting this story, compared to others that you handle?

A: I had a lot of trouble communicating with the architect in Mexico. He was a very intelligent, thoughtful person, but his spoken English was rather slow, which made for tough radio. We tried chatting in Spanish too, but his English was better than my Spanish. Originally I wanted the story to be just about him, but his voice couldn't sustain several minutes of radio.

Figuring out how to resurrect the story got me thinking of heading to Canada. Convincing my editor that I needed to visit another country was a tough sell, however. My editor said if I found a few more stories in Toronto to justify the cost of a trip, he'd send me. In retrospect I'm glad the Mexican architect's English wasn't the best, because it resulted in a much more dynamic story.

Q: Did the architecture story suggest ideas for other stories on related topics? Do you have anything environmentally-related in the works that *SEJournal's* readers can look forward to?

A: I keep a running list of fantasy stories I'd someday like to cover from remote parts of "The World." I've got some wacky ideas for the interior of Australia, but we'll see if I get there in this lifetime.

I'm really curious about people who are trying to live off the grid, and the best, most affordable way to do that. I'm particularly fascinated by people who are building windmills on their property. I've tried to convince my Dad to do that because he likes to tinker with stuff, but he won't go for it.

Q: How does "The World" approach environmental coverage institutionally — for instance, is there an environmental issues beat, per se? How is the environmental coverage by various staff members coordinated? I know that Peter Thomson, an SEJ board member, has the job of environment editor for the program.

A: We are very fortunate to have Peter coordinating the environment desk. He alone is our environment section (again, small staff) and has really elevated our level of environmental coverage. Peter assigns a lot of stories to various reporters and suggests interviews for our hosts, Lisa Mullins or Marco Werman.

Reporters also regularly approach Peter with ideas, which he can approve or reject. The show producer, Andrew Sussman, always stresses that he wants stories to be about people, not

statistics, so I try to pitch stories that are driven by interesting voices.

Q: I noticed in reading the online text version of your architecture story that you took the photos. Browsing the program's website, I came across an unrelated video by you. Is it now standard practice that reporters for "The World" — best known as a radio program — are expected to handle audio, video and photo duties? Are there plans to boost the multimedia character of the website even more?

A: I wouldn't say it's standard practice, or a requirement, for reporters to come back with photos and/or video from a field assignment, but it's strongly encouraged. It's really a matter of time. If I'm out in the field, I'll always ask a person I interviewed if I can take their photo after our radio interview. That's pretty easy to do. If the story is really dynamic, and again if I have the time, I'll try and take a bunch of photos so I can later build an audio slideshow.

Video is tricky. It's virtually impossible for me to get good audio and video at the same time, especially when there's action, so one or both has to suffer. Or rather, I haven't figured out how to do both well. So, video is a rare feat I can pull off in the field. That being said, it's fun to keep trying.

Bill Dawson, SEJournal's assistant editor, is the editor of an online magazine, Texas Climate News, published by the nonprofit, nonpartisan Houston Advanced Research Center. He also works as a freelance journalist.

Advertisement



Advertisement for the MBL Logan Science Journalism Program. The ad features a photograph of a person in a field, possibly a scientist or researcher, with a yellow object in their hand. The text reads: "Get your hands-on science . . . with leading global change experts". Below this is the program title: "MBL Logan Science Journalism Program" and "Environmental Hands-on Laboratory Fellowships*" with the dates "May 18 - 27, 2011".

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- **Plum Island Long Term Ecological Research Station**, Plum Island, MA

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The MBL (Marine Biological Laboratory) is dedicated to scientific discovery and improving the human condition through research and education in biology, biomedicine, and environmental science. Founded in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1888, the MBL is an independent, nonprofit corporation.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 1, 2011 www.mbl.edu/sjp



Media on the Move

New website ventures and social media initiatives win awards

By JUDY FAHYS

The website of *OnEarth* magazine, OnEarth.org, relaunched this fall under the guidance of online editor **Scott Dodd**. In addition to a completely new look, the overhaul includes new web-only features and columns, greater reader engagement through social media and blogs, and expanded storytelling through videos, photo galleries and other multimedia. Reworking the site took more than a year and transformed the site into a lively new forum.

“When I became web editor last year, *OnEarth* was producing very little original content for the web, so the site was basically just updated every three months with new magazine stories,” he said. “Now we’re publishing more online than we do in print, and the web gives us the flexibility to do everything from quick-hit, newsy blog posts to monthly columns to in-depth features by great writers.”

Now, Dodd said, the online *OnEarth* is an equal, complementary partner with the print version.

“There are things that still make the most sense to do in print, and others that work better online,” he said. “But I think we’ve won over some doubters with both the quality and quantity of what we’ve been able to do on the website.”

OnEarth.org’s transformation was just one of many new projects, job changes, fellowships and awards reported up by SEJ members this fall. Among those reporting developments:

Christine Woodside, a Deep River, Connecticut-based freelancer, is covering the environment now for the Connecticut Mirror, www.ctmirror.org. She continues to edit *Appalachia* journal and write articles for magazines, websites, and newspapers.

Marsha W. Johnston began full-time work for the Earth Day Network in Washington DC as its Creative Director, responsible for the content of its web presence and other communications platforms. She can be reached on 1-202-518-0044, x50, and johnston@earthday.net.

Christy George had a stint as a producer for the PBS show “History Detectives.”

Daniel Gottlieb has two new books: *The Fires of Home*, a novel about the tipping point, and *The Dialogues of Sancho and Quixote, Mythical Debates on Global Warming: 1997 - 2010*, a set of humorous debates on anthropogenic forcing of the radiative balance. Both are published by Canopy Publishing.

Margaret T. Simpson authored a series on California city wellness programs for the www.HealthyCal.org site. The urban

ecology series detailed how cities are changing the environment to help residents reduce obesity, incorporate walking and bicycling into their lifestyles and locate healthier food sources.

SEJ member **Cara Ellen Modisett** is now a graduate student in the creative nonfiction program at Goucher College in Maryland. Linked to that are a number of professional changes: she has stepped down from her full-time position as editor of *Blue Ridge Country* and is now editor-at-large for the magazine (the position includes writing, web editing and social media); she is also reporting more regularly for WVTF public radio and teaching writing for Community High School, an independent school in downtown Roanoke.

Sara Shipley Hiles starts as a full-time instructor in the journalism department at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in January 2011. Sara previously was a newspaper reporter, freelancer and part-time journalism instructor at Western Kentucky University, where her students are finalists for the 2010 Online Journalism Awards for their project on agriculture, <http://fgscholars.com/farmtofork>.

Jane Braxton Little presented an innovative wastewater-to-electricity project, described in a story she wrote for *Scientific American*, to energy investors and entrepreneurs at a J.P. Morgan conference in New York.

Margie Hobson joined *Congressional Quarterly* as a senior staff writer, covering energy and environmental issues among other things. The energy and environment reporter at the *National Journal* for two decades, she took a buyout in the summer.

The Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University organized a workshop for Kenyan and Tanzanian journalists this summer on the impact of climate change on East Africa. Knight Center director **Jim Detjen** and his graduate student **Emma Ogutu** organized the workshop.

An environmental summit on new economic models to support environmental journalism was held at Michigan State University on Oct. 23, 2010 as part of the MSU School of Journalism’s centennial activities. The summit was organized by Detjen and **Carol Terracina**, an MSU doctoral student in environmental journalism.

David Biello, associate editor of Environment & Energy for *Scientific American*, received a 2010 Jefferson Fellowship to look at two of the largest users of energy, the U.S. and China, and their efforts in addressing energy security.

Jennifer Weeks was a science journalism fellow at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in September. The fellowship covered topics including underwater archaeology, whale conservation, ocean acidification, science in the Gulf of Mexico during the BP oil spill and deepwater corals.

Terri Hansen was selected to be an Earth Journalism Network 2010 Climate Media Fellow. The fellowship covered and

continued on page 21

SEJ launches new Diversity Task Force to promote discussion, diversity

By AYANA MEADE

Despite the large number of environment-related issues that affect minority communities, the predominant face of journalists reporting on these issues, and of people working in the environmental community, continues to be disproportionately white.

Unfortunately, this reality may in part be responsible for the perception within some minority groups that environmental issues are the exclusive domain of upper middle class white people.

In order to change this perception, the newly formed SEJ Diversity Task Force (SEJ-DTF) asserts that it is of vital importance that there be greater minority-focused environmental media coverage in general, and specifically that there be more minority journalists reporting on the issues that affect their communities.

Diversity Task Force membership is open to SEJ members of all backgrounds who have an interest in fostering and promoting greater coverage and understanding of environmental issues that affect minority and other marginalized communities by engaging in activities that serve to increase ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic diversity in SEJ, its conferences, and the environmental journalism community at large.

A major initiative of the DTF is to increase minority participation at SEJ's yearly conferences at all levels, as well as to work with UNITY Coalition J-group partners (i.e., NABJ, NAHJ, AAJA, NAJA) to encourage the inclusion of environmental topics at their conferences.

UNITY Coalition J-group partner members and other SEJ membership-eligible journalists are also encouraged to join the DTF's SEJ-DIVERSITY email discussion listserv. The open listserv forum is intended to support the goals of the DTF and promote collaboration, such as connecting SEJ panel submissions with other sister journalism groups.

To join the SEJ-DIVERSITY discussion listserv or to find out more about volunteer opportunities for SEJ members and UNITY J-group partner members, please contact Ayana Meade (DTF Co-chair) at aameade23@gmail.com with your name, email, and a brief description of your journalistic affiliation, coverage area and /or interest.

Ayana Meade is a freelance writer covering environment and sustainability issues based in White Plains, N.Y. She is a Metcalf Institute Environmental Reporting Fellowship alumna.

Answer the call: Give \$20 for the 20th anniversary

By TIM WHEELER

It's SEJ's 20th anniversary. Twenty great years of helping thousands of journalists tell the story of the century.

Twenty is something to celebrate, don't you think? We've been doing it all year, with a big online "We love SEJ" valentine celebrating the organization's birthday (February 14, 1990), with Founding President Jim Detjen's recounting in *SEJournal* of the story of the group's founding, and with more tale-telling and a rocking party in October at the annual conference in Montana.

SEJ's year-long celebration is almost complete now, but the stories that have brought us together are far from done. The environment's not going away, and neither should SEJ. The need for probing, insightful reporting has never been greater. But the tough economy has put a dent in SEJ's finances. Foundations have cut back on their grant-making. SEJ's ability to keep helping us — and the public — stay on top of the changing environment is in jeopardy.

That's why SEJ is appealing to its members and friends for help. In recognition of SEJ's 20th, we're aiming to raise at least \$20,000 from members and friends to help keep the organization strong as it begins its third decade.

Challenging times call for leadership, and SEJ's leaders past and present have stepped forward. The 11 people listed below who have been fortunate enough to serve as president of SEJ since its beginning have banded together to collectively pledge more than \$4,000.

Won't you join us? We're not asking for much — we know times are tight for everyone. But if every SEJ member and friend gives at least \$20 in appreciation for SEJ's 20 years of service to the cause of quality environmental journalism, we'll easily surpass our goal. And we'll see that SEJ is there to help a new generation of journalists get that story.

With gifts and pledges already made at the Montana conference and since, we're more than halfway to our goal. \$20 for 20 will put us over the top. It has a ring to it, don't you think? SEJ needs YOU now — will you answer the call?

Jim Detjen — Rae Tyson — Emilia Askari — Marla Cone —
Mike Mansur — Jim Bruggers — Dan Fagin — Perry Beeman
Tim Wheeler — Christy George — Carolyn Whetzel

Tim Wheeler covers the environment at The Baltimore Sun. He served as the 10th president of SEJ.

In the world of make-believe journalism, how's this for a hypothetical, scare-the-populous, tabloid-style headline?

"TAKING THE STINK OUT OF SOCKS MAY POSE PROBLEM"

Tiny bits of silver, used as bacteria-eaters, emerge as new health concern

By RAE TYSON

Stinky socks may be socially embarrassing, but aren't in the same league as other pressing environmental issues. On the other hand, there may well be a connection between odor-resistant socks and an emerging health and environmental concern.

Scientists, environmentalists and regulators alike are increasingly concerned about nanosilver — microscopic particles that are now used for bacterial control in well over 1,000 consumer products. These include toys, cosmetics, sunscreen, air and water filters, household cleaners, clothing and washing machines. One increasingly common use of nanosilver is in athletic socks to minimize offensive smells.

Though research is inconclusive, scientists have found evidence that nanosilver, once in the environment — most commonly in wastewater effluent — can potentially bioaccumulate in organisms such as earthworms, insects and fish. Studies also suggest that nanoparticles in soil can harm plants.

Uncertainty about the hazards of nanosilver is related to size. Silver in larger particles is known to be toxic. But in silver nanoparticles, which are about one billionth of a meter across, the effects are not fully understood. The scientific community, with federal funding, is scrambling to find the answers.

Some of the findings are raising concerns about nanosilver in products.

For example, in a new study on the effects of low levels of nanosilver on roundworms, researchers at Duke University discovered that not only did the material bioaccumulate — it also got passed on to offspring.

"The fact that [nanosilver particles] were transferred to the next generation also raises the question of what effects such exposure might have on offspring, especially since early development is frequently a time of particular vulnerability to exposure to toxic substances," said the study by Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and Center for the Environmental



Implications of NanoTechnology.

Meanwhile, University of Utah scientists exposed zebrafish to low levels of nanosilver, which resulted in physical malformations and, in some cases, death.

In announcing the findings in 2009, Utah researcher Darin Furgeson told Environmental Health News that "we may have jumped the gun" with the proliferation of nanosilver in consumer products.

The impact of low levels of nanosilver on human health, if any, is unknown. But a recent study by the National Nanotechnology Center in Thailand evaluated the potential for human exposure to nanosilver. Researchers there found that people might possibly absorb silver nanoparticles through their skin. "Fabrics laced with silver nanoparticles designed to limit bacterial growth release those particles when the fabric is exposed to artificial human sweat," they reported.

Some researchers are urging caution about the growing use of nanosilver. Troy Benn and colleagues at Arizona State University warned: "Because government does not specifically regulate the use of nanosilver in products, the onus of protecting human and environmental health from potential adverse effects currently falls on individuals. This research demonstrates that consumers will subject themselves and/or the environment to some exposure of silver (nanoparticle, ionic, or microscale) by using and/or disposing of silver-containing products."

For its part, industry dismisses recent concerns about nanosilver, saying silver has been safely used in an array of products for years.

"Nanosilver is an old material with a multi-decade history of safe use demonstrated by significant bodies of data and experience drawn from real-life use," said the Silver Nanotechnology Working Group, an industry organization.

Amid the controversy, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been evaluating the effects of nanosilver on human health and the environment. The agency regulates products that kill or inhibit the growth of microorganisms — including nanosilver — as pesticides under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide & Rodenticide Act. Through this law, EPA is asking product manufacturers to conduct more tests on nanosilver.

In August 2010, the agency proposed to conditionally register a product containing nanosilver as an active ingredient — that's the part of a pesticide that actually harms a pest, including bacteria. The antimicrobial product, called HeiQ AGS-20, is proposed for use as a textile preservative.

As a condition of registration, EPA proposed to require the manufacturer to conduct toxicology, exposure, environmental, and other tests then turn the results over to regulators. "The agency will evaluate these data as they are submitted during the period of the conditional registration to confirm the product will not cause unreasonable adverse effects to human health and the environment," EPA said. The agency is expected to make a final decision on the testing requirements in 2011.

Rosalind Volpe, executive director of industry's Silver Nanotechnology Working Group, said the research requirements proposed by EPA are "onerous." She added, "There is a lot of work that will have to be done."

Keep your eyes open for scientific developments around silver nanoparticles, which are increasingly entering commerce in everyday products your audience uses. Non-stinky sock stories can be tailored to local, regional, national and international news outlets.

Rae Tyson is a veteran journalist and co-founder of SEJ. Currently on the staff of Environmental Health News, Tyson lives in an old farmhouse near Gettysburg, Pa.



Media on the Move continued from page 18

arranged travel to Cancun to cover the climate talks Nov. 27-Dec. 11, accommodation for the full two weeks, per diems and COP16 accreditation.

Craig Miller and **Gretchen Weber** of KQED Climate Watch in San Francisco are the winners of the 2010 Environmental Journalism Innovators of the Year Award given by the Knight Center for Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. The two journalists were awarded for a "Matter of Degree," which combines academic research and social media to advance the public discussion of climate change. The deadline for the 2011 contest is March 1, 2011.

New SEJ board member **Tom Henry** was named the 2010 recipient of the Clean Streams Partner Award by the Toledo-based Partners for Clean Streams. In the spring, an Ohio group called Science Alliance for Valuing the Environment gave him its top award of the year for environmental stewardship.

William R. Freudenburg and co-author **Bob Gramling** saw their book on the BP oil spill, *Blowout in the Gulf: The BP Oil Spill Disaster and the Future of Energy in America*, as the *Publishers Weekly* "Pick of the Week." The book is available both in electronic and good old-fashioned book forms from MIT Press.

Animal People editor **Merritt Clifton** received the 15th annual ProMED-mail Award for Excellence in Outbreak Reporting on the Internet, presented by the International Society for Infectious Diseases.

Frances Backhouse won the Butler Book Prize for her *Children of the Klondike*, published by Whitecap Books.

The Knight-Risser Prize gave SEJer **Dawn Stover** special

Science Survey Bibliography:

August 2010: *Scientific American*: "Silver Beware: Antimicrobial Nanoparticles in Soil May Harm Plant Life"

September 2010: *Journal of Environmental Quality*: "The Release of Nanosilver from Consumer Products Used in the Home"; "Environmental Occurrences, Behavior, Fate, and Ecological Effects of Nanomaterials"

Science Survey Sources:

California NanoSystems Institute: www.cnsi.ucla.edu

Duke Center for the Environmental Implications of NanoTechnology: www.ceint.duke.edu

Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/pesticides/

Environmental Working Group: (202) 667-6982

Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies: www.nanotechproject.org

Silver Nanotechnology Working Group: www.silverinstitute.org, Rosalind Volpe, executive director, (919) 361-4647 x3023

University of California Center for Environmental Implications of NanoTechnology: cein.cnsi.ucla.edu/pages/

recognition for her article, "Troubled Teens," in *Conservation* magazine. The piece examines the decline and the demographics of the West's cougar population, which is increasingly running into conflict with human populations.

Elizabeth Kolbert won a \$100,000 Heinz Award for "groundbreaking environmental journalism and devotion to informing readers."

Judy Fahys is an environment reporter at The Salt Lake Tribune. Contact her with your news of awards, job changes or new book projects at fahys@sltrib.com

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Contact the SEJ office and start receiving SEJ-Freelance:

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Disaster: Response is not recovery is not response

In the last issue of *SEJournal*, we discussed local issues and perspectives that merit attention from journalists writing about recovery from disasters. In the end, the impacts of most disasters are local or at most regional. Historically in the United States, responsibility was largely or entirely viewed as local or regional, but much has changed in the last half-century. Today, almost every disaster of consequence triggers at least state-level involvement, and the federal government is entwined in most disasters at least on a financial, if not operational, level. To understand all that is happening as a community or region recovers from disaster, it is crucial that reporters gain at least a rudimentary understanding of the current system of outside assistance. Excellent reporters will also learn how to critique both the benefits that system offers and the impediments to recovery it often creates, even with the best of intentions.

By JIM SCHWAB

The only important words in the Federal Emergency Management Agency are “Emergency Management.” The others simply tell you it is a federal agency. Emergency management focuses on managing and responding to risk. It includes such immediate functions during and after a disaster as search and rescue, evacuation, and the restoration of essential services. Although there is no clear dividing line, it does not include the long-term reconstruction of a community, which is much more of a planning function. FEMA has long been far better equipped to handle the provision of immediate aid, as well as fostering hazard mitigation, than to address long-term community recovery needs, where local and regional planning play a larger and more sustained role.

That said, FEMA has in recent years inched its way gradually into the arena of long-term community recovery, mostly by providing assistance to communities for such planning. From the late 1990s until 2005, this aid was largely ad hoc and experimental. This aid is typically in the form of providing a lead planner for a defined period of time during which the community will produce a plan describing how it wishes to rebuild, what projects it envisions, and ideally how they will be financed. FEMA had no official functions in this area but provided such aid on a trial basis where it seemed potentially useful. Most communities involved, with the exception of New York after the World Trade Center attacks, were small, rural towns hit by tornadoes, with little if any local planning capacity.

The first major change in this pattern occurred in five Florida counties following the four hurricanes that crisscrossed the state in the fall of 2004. In that instance, the Florida Department of Community Affairs, which oversees the state’s mandatory community-planning process, played a major role in shaping the



PHOTO © CRARTIST/LOUIS VIA FLICKR

Collapse of the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City (CRANDIC) railroad bridge during June 2008 flooding on the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

outcomes. One critique, however, which endures to this day, was that the county plans that emerged looked more like lists of desired projects than like true long-term recovery plans. Be alert for this kind of wishful thinking without means when disaster comes to your community.

Federal assistance in post-disaster planning became formalized as Emergency Support Function

14 (ESF-14), part of an expanded National Response Framework replacing an older system, the Federal Response Plan. That framework now governs federal disaster response. ESF-14 was an untested rookie when confronted with the enormity of Hurricane Katrina, with many initial missteps in its first months. But note that this long-term planning assistance was grafted onto a response framework by an agency that employs relatively few professional planners, none of them currently in ESF-14. To say this is not to blame FEMA for trying, but the agency faces a daunting task with minimal expertise. Even five years after Katrina, it is not clear that FEMA has assembled adequate expertise to succeed when faced with major disasters. For reporters, the interaction between local planners and FEMA (or its contractors) in this regard is a crucial element of the recovery story. Do they share the same goals? Do they even agree on the process for establishing those goals?

In this context, it is important to know that FEMA (part of the Department of Homeland Security) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development were engaged through early 2010 in developing a new National Disaster Recovery Framework that went to the White House for review last spring. The Obama administration has made no decision about it yet, but it proposes a new system focused on recovery that would parallel the response

framework, with its own set of recovery support functions. While this would clearly separate response and recovery, it remains unclear who would manage the National Disaster Recovery Framework, particularly its planning components, or what federal resources will be devoted to it. But the proposal, whatever its strengths and weaknesses, does recognize a need for a clearer federal policy governing disaster recovery. Stay tuned.

Recovery Planning at the State Level

In the United States, land-use regulation is largely controlled by state law. Local plans and zoning ordinances are an extension of state law, governed by state-enabling legislation. As a result, state involvement in recovery planning is a somewhat different beast than the federal programs described above. In Florida, it is an integral part of the growth management legislation under which communities produce required comprehensive plans. Florida, however, faces an impressive range of natural hazards, and not to plan for them could well be foolhardy in view of the state's development history.

For some years, the Florida statute has required coastal jurisdictions to produce a post-disaster redevelopment plan as part of that process, but until recently that requirement had not been activated. However, the state has now completed a pilot test of such planning with six jurisdictions, and in October the Florida Department of Community Affairs released a guidance document to help communities comply. The fundamental idea is to produce a plan guiding how the community will manage recovery after a disaster. Among the issues getting advance consideration is where to rebuild safely. Hillsborough County, for instance, designated priority redevelopment areas to which new development would be directed. This is a very different focus from the federal ESF-14, but one central to the purpose of community planning.

One big issue for the future is whether Florida remains a stark exception as the only state to implement such a requirement, or whether its approach becomes a model copied elsewhere. Most other states lack such a strong state planning agency, and many have no such agency at all. Louisiana did not before Hurricane Katrina, after which it created the Louisiana Recovery Authority. Iowa did not before the 2008 floods, after which it created the Rebuild Iowa Office. But such focused, short-term entities do not necessarily integrate long-term recovery into a larger planning scheme. Continued experience with major disasters may nonetheless eventually push state policy in that direction. It's worth asking ahead of time if your state government is prepared for The Big One.

Issues for Reporters

Even from this all too brief article, it should be clear that state and federal policy pertaining to disaster recovery is in a state of flux. It is hard to say for sure what system will be in place even five years from now. That only heightens the importance of informed reporting on the local interface with state and federal recovery initiatives. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, did not expect to be at the vortex of such discussions until faced with record floods in June 2008, nor did Nashville in early 2010 before flooding there. Each community faced with such circumstances works out its own accommodations between its existing planning and what state and federal policy and practice have to offer. At the moment, each case has its own historic implications in further evolving both a challenging relationship and policies that are still seeking both an

adequate rationale and a higher rate of success. Reporters need to master enough of the complexity of that relationship to be able to tell their readers just how dramatically it may affect their lives.

Jim Schwab is the manager of the American Planning Association's Hazards Planning Research Center, and editor and co-author of its recent report, "Hazard Mitigation: Integrating Best Practices into Planning." He wrote an article on recovery planning issues, "Winds of Change," for the October 2009 issue of APA's magazine, Planning. He is also co-editor of APA's monthly Zoning Practice.

RESOURCES

A number of websites provide resources on post-disaster recovery:

APA's Hazards Planning Research Center, with links to past and current research.

<http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/hazards/index.htm>

Information on Florida's Post-Disaster Redevelopment Plan requirements <http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/dcp/PDRP/index.cfm>

Draft of National Disaster Recovery Framework <http://disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov/ndrf.pdf>

Background on Disaster Recovery Working Group <http://www.disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov/>

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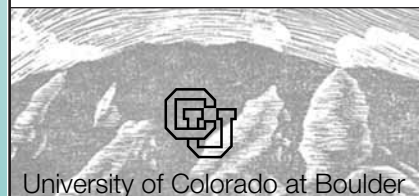
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www.colorado.edu/journalism/cej

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Can geoengineers really save the warming planet?

How to Cool the Planet:
Geoengineering and the Audacious Quest to Fix Earth's Climate
by Jeff Goodell
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010

Hack the Planet:
Science's Best Hope — Or Worst Nightmare — for Averting Climate Catastrophe
by Eli Kintisch
John Wiley & Sons, 2010

Reviewed by SUSAN MORAN

Geoengineering is either the worst idea for the planet since the invention of ozone-eating chlorofluorocarbons or it is the globe's salvation. Perhaps it's a bit of both.

Without question, it is a bold, audacious concept to amend for our profligate hydrocarbon fuels consumption by reining in climate change. That's the upside, so what's the downside? The downside is that geoengineering, a catchall term for a suite of unproven technologies, may treat the symptoms and do nothing about the root cause of climate change. Depending on the fix, ocean acidification could continue, wreaking havoc on biota critical to life on the planet. Furthermore, a technical fix could unleash new, unintended climatic consequences for some parts of the world.

Geoengineering proposals fall into two categories: long-wave approaches and short-wave approaches. Long-wave approaches would draw carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere to arrest the pace of warming. They involve either high-tech scrubbing methods or enhanced natural processes, such as carbon sequestration in the oceans and in forests. Short-wave methods would make the planet look whiter so it reflects more visible (i.e., short-wave) sunlight back into space before the light gets turned into heat. They could include massive projects that shoot sulphate particles into the stratosphere from high-altitude aircraft or from boats. These projects sound ambitious and expensive, but by some estimates, they could be a less expensive way to combat global warming than using carbon-trading markets.

This year, several books have emerged that help make sense of the geoengineering options undergoing serious research. The first two books simultaneously appeared on the shelves this spring. *How To Cool the Planet: Geoengineering and the Audacious Quest to Fix Earth's Climate*, by Jeff Goodell, a contributing

editor for *Rolling Stone*, and *Hack the Planet: Science's Best Hope — Or Worst Nightmare — For Averting Climate Catastrophe* by Eli Kintisch, a reporter for the journal *Science*. Other books that have not been reviewed yet in *SEJournal* are *Fixing the Sky: The Checkered History of Weather and Climate Control*, by James Rodger Fleming, a professor of science, technology and society at Colby College, and *Coming Climate Crisis? Consider the Past, Beware the Big Fix*, by Claire L. Parkinson, a NASA scientist. Yet another book, *The Climate Fix*, by Roger Pielke Jr., a professor of environmental studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, is waiting in the wings with a fall publication date.

How do Goodell's and Kintisch's books compare? Goodell's book benefits from story-telling, colorful characters and a coherent narrative. For those who want a more detailed description of the science and engineering involved in the various "hack the planet" attempts, Kintisch delivers. Yet their underlying message is the same. Neither Goodell nor Kintisch are geoengineering evangelists. Both stress that in the ideal world we would solve the climate crisis through energy conservation, renewable energy and mandatory emissions reductions. But, they say, given the accelerating rate of climate change, we can't afford not to put research money and brains into a possible Plan B.

So what does this alleged Plan B look like? All answers are little more than rough blueprints so far, with no proof of concept beyond small experiments. One short-wave method that may hold the most bang for the buck involves reflecting sunlight — solar radiation — back into the atmosphere. Imagine a giant hose that sprays sulfate aerosols into the sky, a process that essentially mimics a volcano and could reduce average global temperatures for a low sticker price. The second method involves pulling carbon from the atmosphere and sequestering it in the oceans or in buried geological formations. The potentially largest-scale approach here is fertilizing the oceans with iron (a micro-nutrient in short supply) to spur blooms of phytoplankton, which soak up carbon and deliver it to the ocean floor when they die. As Goodell says, "It's like pouring Miracle-Gro on your garden."

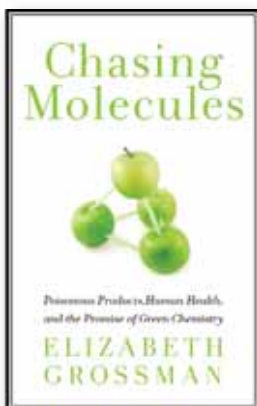
Both technologies could have dangerous side effects. The impact on ocean life from iron fertilization, for instance, is uncertain. And it is unclear how much of the carbon temporarily captured in the plant biomass would actually be mineralized. Scientists such as Sallie Chisholm, an MIT ecologist, caution that marine sequestration could drastically alter ocean chemistry and the ocean food chain.

Beyond the potentially dire ecological costs of geoengineering, any global-scale project, even if it worked, could send whole regions and cultures into a tailspin. Global climate is a complex system. Rain patterns can shift as dramatically as temperature, for example. Would there be some mechanism to compensate African farmers in the Sahel, if temperatures cool but rain no longer irrigates their crops? And both authors ask who would — or should — control any geoengineering deployment. Given the lack of existing international treaties or laws regulating its use, the potential for geopolitical conflict and inequity is huge.

Goodell — a child of the Silicon Valley and a father of three — writes in his book that he found himself fearing that nothing short of an audacious techno-fix could solve global warming. He eloquently sums up the precarious ethical juncture of the prospect of altering the planet: "I do believe this is what it comes down to. We can use our imagination and ingenuity to create something

beautiful and sustainable, or we can destroy ourselves with stupidity and greed. It is our choice.”

Susan Moran is a freelance journalist based in Boulder, Colo.



Green chemistry offers hope to current dangerous situation

**Chasing Molecules:
Poisonous Products, Human
Health, and the Promise of
Green Chemistry**
by Elizabeth Grossman
Island Press, \$26.96

Reviewed by MADELINE BODIN

In 1929, there was no such thing as a plastic bag. Synthetic materials were made from cellulose, corn, milk, alcohol and starch. Cellophane, made from cellulose, was a big deal. It was thin, flexible and water resistant. Still, it wasn't perfect. For example, it wasn't waterproof.

In the 1930s and 1940s, researchers developed formulas for polyvinyl chlorides, or PVCs, to create waterproof, flexible, malleable and strong products. It was a revolution in materials science and culture and there was no turning back. But while we have all benefited, writes Elizabeth Grossman in *Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health, and the Promise of Green Chemistry*, we also have paid a price.

In *Chasing Molecules*, Grossman details the problems a new generation of synthetic materials, mostly derived from petroleum, created for human health. Her book offers a lively primer on the toxic compounds in consumer goods. That may be why *Booklist*, a magazine of the American Library Association, named it one of the top 10 Sci/Tech books of 2009.

Grossman examines five toxics with full-chapter treatments that discuss everything from their development and harmful health effects to the efforts to produce benign materials to replace them. Grossman chases toxics literally to the ends of the earth, describing scientific expeditions to the Arctic that found high concentrations of compounds far from where they were manufactured and used. "Anything released in the mid-latitudes travels rapidly north," one researcher tells her. In other words, the Arctic is the final resting place for the contaminants generated in most of the developed world.

For decades, these contaminants traveled north on wind and water until they became trapped in Arctic ice. Grossman points out that the melting of Arctic ice releases the contaminants back into the environment. The contaminants include not only the toxic materials that vex us today, such as brominated flame retardants, but also substances like DDT, PCBs, and dioxins whose risks we thought we had put behind us.

Some products can be reformulated to reduce the risk. Grossman mentions formaldehyde-free plywood that uses a glue mimicking the substance mollusks use to cling to rocks. But she is skeptical of some chemical formulations billed as greener or better for human health. For example, she points out that the new,

hard plastic that has replaced the bisphenol A formulation in water bottles hasn't been subjected to the same tests that revealed the long-term risks of bisphenol A in the first place.

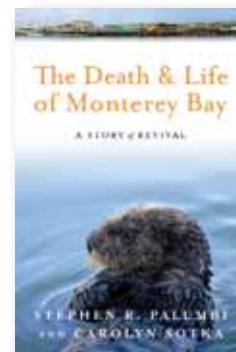
She points out that more than 82,000 synthetic materials are registered for commerce in the United States today. But she prevents any of this from becoming paralyzingly frightening by salting her explorations of harmful synthetics with "the promise of green chemistry." In the final chapters, she profiles green chemists working on non-hazardous products. They insist that green chemistry is a set of principles, not a set of standards like LEED for green building or the USDA's organic food criteria.

Grossman's optimism enables her to investigate the darkest corners of our consumer economy and remain not just unshaken but hopeful for the future. Simply banning hazardous materials is too slow if done one compound at a time, she writes. Also, a ban doesn't take into account the entire life cycle of a synthetic material, from its design to wherever it finally winds up. The answer, Grossman says, is openness. Today, many of the compounds used in consumer products are kept secret. Consumers who are told what things are made of, and what toxics are generated in their manufacture, will demand safer, greener products and drive toxic products out of the marketplace, she writes.

Madeline Bodin is a freelance journalist based in southern Vermont. She specializes in writing about the science of wildlife conservation and has also written about technology, waste, and alternative energy.

Turning Cannery Row into an eco-paradise

**The Death & Life
of Monterey Bay:
A Story of Revival**
by Stephen R. Palumbi
and Carolyn Sotka
Island Press, \$26.95



Reviewed by JENNIFER WEEKS

People are both villains and heroes in *The Death & Life of Monterey Bay*, which recounts how humans first despoiled this scenic stretch of central California coastline and then helped it recover. Today, Monterey Bay is an eco-travel destination anchored by a world-class aquarium — but as Stanford University professor Stephen Palumbi and NOAA outreach officer Carolyn Sotka show, it wasn't always that way.

In his 1945 novel *Cannery Row*, John Steinbeck described Monterey's fish-processing factories as "a poem, a stink, a grating noise ... the gathered and scattered, tin and iron and rust and splintered wood, chipped pavement and weedy lots and junk heaps, sardine canneries of corrugated iron." Fifty years ago, the

stench of cannery waste turned residents' stomachs and swarms of flies buzzed over the beaches. Now Monterey Bay is a national marine sanctuary, home to sea lions, otters, great white sharks, humpback whales, and dozens of other marine and bird species.

Humans started exploiting the bay in the late 1700s, when French and American explorers developed a lucrative business shipping sea otter pelts across the Pacific to China. By the 1840s, otters were nearly eliminated along California's coast. Whales were next: from 1850 through about 1870, whalers took hundreds of gray and humpback whales off of California and Mexico, until the populations collapsed.

In the early 1900s, manufacturers started building canneries along the Monterey waterfront to process sardines, which migrated up the coast in summer to spawn. The market for canned fish was limited but Norwegian canning expert Knut Hovden introduced a new product line: "reducing" fish heads, tails, guts and skin into meal that could be processed into fertilizer and livestock feed. Reduction was cheap because it didn't require much labor, and the market for fishmeal was unlimited. Monterey became a cannery town.

Anyone who has covered fisheries knows what happened next: fishermen ignored warnings from regulators about limiting their catch and insisted that the sardine supply was inexhaustible. By the mid-1940s, catch levels started fluctuating wildly from year to year, and then takes fell — from 250,000 tons in 1941 to 26,000 tons in 1946 and 49 tons in 1953. Drawing on recent research, the authors show that an irregular cycle called the Pacific Decadal Oscillation turned water temperatures colder in the mid-1940s, driving sardines southward and intensifying the pressures brought on by overfishing.

With the fishing industry shut down, Monterey Bay gradually cleansed itself of fish guts and cannery waste during the

1950s. But it was devastated underwater too: without otters to keep them in check, sea urchins had multiplied, devouring kelp forests that sheltered juvenile fish and shellfish. The only exception was a five-mile swath of underwater refuge created in the 1930s by Julia Platt, the progressive mayor of Monterey's neighboring community of Pacific Grove. Platt, who had earned a doctorate in zoology in Europe in 1898, persuaded the California legislature to let Pacific Grove manage its own coastline, and then pass a local law barring most fishing in what became the Hopkins Marine Life Refuge.

Platt didn't live to see her bet pay off, but in 1962, a small population of sea otters that had survived along California's remote Big Sur coast ventured north into Monterey Bay. They feasted on shellfish in the refuge and quickly spread across the bay, stripping urchins from the sea bottom. As the authors point out, scientific literature is full of so-called trophic cascades, where removing one key species from an ecosystem triggers other harmful effects down the food chain. Here the opposite happened: the "reconstruction of an ecosystem, link by ecological link." Otters returned and ate urchins, which let kelp forests regrow, which brought back fish, sea lions and birds.

Today the former Hovden cannery building houses the Monterey Bay Aquarium, built with \$50 million from the Packard Foundation and run by Julie Packard since its opening in 1984. The founders bet rightly that visitors would come to learn about Monterey Bay's ecology; today the aquarium is the economic anchor of Monterey's rebirth. After months of BP oil spill coverage, this book is a welcome reminder that sometimes ecosystems can bounce back from years of harm and indifference — and that people can learn to see their real value.

Freelancer Jennifer Weeks lives and writes in Watertown, Mass.

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Saved by the Sea

A Love Story with Fish

by **David Helvarg**

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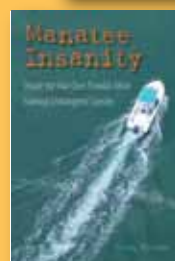
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Mark Twain (born Samuel Clemens) was a journalist and reporter for more than twenty years before he became a novelist. Depicted here in an 1871 group portrait attributed to the famed Civil war photographer Mathew Brady, he is flanked by two fellow journalists, American Civil War correspondent and author George Alfred Townsend (left) and David Gray, editor of the *Buffalo Courier*. Twain had bought an interest in another Buffalo paper, the *Express*, and in articles for it, he blasted racism, corruption in Congress, the immorality of big business and religious hypocrisy. But he later sold his interest at a loss and said goodbye to newspaper journalism, turning instead to fiction with his first novel in 1873. His last work — an autobiography intentionally withheld from publication for a hundred years after his 1910 death — has just been released. Francesca Lyman's reflection on Twain's contributions to nature, writing and journalism begins on p. 5.