

SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

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SEJ tackles data controls

Restricted access to public data prompts board response

By KEN WARD JR.

I'm not sure which federal agency went first. It could have been EPA, which removed key chemical safety information from its Web site—www.epa.gov.

Or, it might have been the Department of Transportation, which eliminated Internet access to pipeline safety maps. It could even have been the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), an arm of the Public Health Service, which expunged—of all things—a report on potential terrorist threats to chemical plants from its Web site.

Whichever the case, plenty of agencies have followed suit since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on

Sept. 11.

Documents and data that would be helpful to environmental reporters are among the prime targets. The public interest group OMB Watch maintains a list of the information removed from government Web sites post-Sept. 11.

It's available online at <http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/213/1/104/#agency>.

In early April, the SEJ board decided that the group needs to do something about all of this new government secrecy. Board members agreed to form the SEJ First Amendment Task Force. Thirteen members were appointed. I feel privileged to have been asked to serve as the group's first chairman.

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A journalism laurel: *Environment Writer* saved

By BUD WARD

Environment Writer, I used to say with intentional over-statement, "is what keeps me here."

Now, in many ways, it was what sent me away.

In the end, here's what should be important to environment writers: The *Environment Writer* is about to return.

Published for 14 years by my former employer, the non-profit, non-governmental National Safety Council, *Environment Writer* was a watchdog and cheerleader of environmental journalism.

It detailed the birth of the right-to-know movement and championed the growth of the Society of Environmental Journalists. It also singed a few egos

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Inside Story

Veteran journalist unravels emerging issue

By MIKE DUNNE

When one thinks of water pollution, one usually conjures up a picture of industrial substances dumped into a stream or lake. But that definition is being expanded to include substances like hormones, pharmaceutical residues and other "micropollutants" often found in concentrations nearly too weak to detect.

Science News senior editor Janet Raloff has been one of the journalists at the forefront of covering this emerging issue about new pollutants. Raloff has done a series of stories on environmental hormones, antibiotic resistance and water pollution caused by drugs and personal care products.

In March, the U.S. Geological Survey issued a report outlining its findings from a two-year study. During 1999

and 2000, a network of 139 streams in 30 states were sampled and analyzed for the presence of chemicals often found in wastewater. Environmental officials have not set standards for most of the substances.

The issue is new and the science is complex but Raloff approached it much like she has other scientific subjects.

"Too often reporters assigned to cover scientific stories react as if they are allergic to science. Some people, when they hear scientific terms, freeze up. They think I don't understand. It is beyond my ability to understand. Most of science reporting is going in cold, not understanding it either. You don't go in knowing necessarily what the science is telling you. You ask people what the science is

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Photo courtesy of THE BALTIMORE SUN



SEJ's 12th Annual Conference in Baltimore is shaping up. See page 5.

SEJ launches new First Amendment effort

By JAMES BRUGGERS

"Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone."

Some journalists may be singing these words from Joni Mitchell's song "Big Yellow Taxi," but the subject will be freedom of information—not the loss of paradise to a parking lot.

Blame it on the Sept. 11 terrorists and a Bush administration that uses "homeland security" as a justification for tightening the free flow of information.

Because of this, the SEJ board has launched a new initiative—a First Amendment Task Force. It's our first foray into any sort of organized freedom-of-information work.

Our goal is to make sure that our members, and the larger journalism community, know what we've got before it's gone. That way, at least we can file a protest. And perhaps let our readers, viewers or listeners know too. Along the way, we can assist journalists in their own struggles to seek information that our government covers in veils of secrecy.

We've got some ground rules. SEJ is not a lobbying organization—our tax-exempt status restricts the amount of lobbying we can do. (This is different from SEJ's bylaws restriction that no members lobby on environmental issues.)

But there's nothing stopping us from using our wide net of more than 1,200 members, colleagues in our newsrooms, and friends in other J-groups like IRE to monitor First Amendment issues. The SEJ board also authorized the task force to "collaborate with other journalism organizations, or communicate with government agencies, legislators and regulators and with the general public."

What kind of communication?

Here's one example, and I know there have been more. In March, I wrote a letter on behalf of the SEJ board to EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman, objecting to changes in access to critical environmental data bases. Last fall, the EPA moved to block Web-based access to documents that let communities—including reporters—know what kinds of risks industries represent.

These new restrictions ban any public direct-connect access to a variety of databases: air, water, chemicals, facilities, hazardous waste, Superfund and drinking

water. I told Ms. Whitman that I was well aware that journalists—and the public—will still be able to visit those databases on the Web, and query them—but only in ways selected and approved by the EPA.

In many cases that may be enough for a reporter working on a daily deadline. But journalists also need to be able to conduct computer-assisted reporting projects with full access to these databases.

Let's say a reporter was doing a story on nitrate pollution in community drinking water systems and wanted to generate a list of nitrate violations in his or her state for the past five years. With direct-connect access, the reporter could rapidly down-

loads we care, and that we're watching.

Letters may not be enough.

What we need are reporters across the country equipped to fight these battles on the local, regional, state and national levels. To that end, I hope that the new SEJ First Amendment Task Force will serve to keep all of us motivated to keep up the good fight for the free flow of information.

Certainly we all understand the need to protect our country from attack. But there is an equally compelling need to protect the First Amendment, which offers its own important national security safeguards. It was not lost on the SEJ board that laws requiring this information be made public were adopted in the first place to inform the public about threats to the environment and public health.

Mind you, this effort is not about advocating for any particular environmental policy. It's about advocating for the First Amendment—something every journalist should be doing. Especially in times when the First Amendment is challenged.

Many thanks to Ken Ward Jr., of the *Charleston (W.V.) Gazette* for agreeing to chair the task force, and to everyone else who volunteered to serve.

Make no mistake—this task force is a volunteer effort. We have not asked staff to be involved.

Russ Clemings, longtime SEJ board member and *Fresno Bee* reporter, has agreed to be an adviser on database issues, and assisted me greatly in understanding the Envirofacts concerns.

If you have ideas or concerns, please contact Ken, myself or anyone on the committee: Ken Ward Jr., chair; Joe Davis, SEJ *TipSheet* editor; Robert McClure, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*; Heather Dewar, *Baltimore Sun*; David Shaffer, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; Audrey Cooper, *The (Stockton, Calif.) Record*; Vince Patton, KGW-TV, Portland, Ore.; JoAnn Valenti, BYU; Elizabeth Bluemink, *The Anniston (Ala.) Star*; Mark Brush, Great Lakes Radio Consortium, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mark Schleifstein, *The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune* and SEJ board member; Tim Wheeler, *The Baltimore Sun* and SEJ board member; James Bruggers, *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*, SEJ president and the task force's board liaison. ♦

Report from the Society's President

By
James
Bruggers



load that data in a form that would permit detailed analysis on any desktop computer.

In contrast, retrieving that information from the existing Envirofacts site would mean retrieving it one water system at a time—no trivial task in states with thousands of such systems.

We were told by the EPA that the public can still seek the data through an FOIA request. But, thanks to Attorney General John Ashcroft, FOIA requests face greater roadblocks.

What makes no sense is that direct-dial access was password-protected. In other words the EPA could determine who gets access and then could know exactly what information was downloaded.

At best, the new EPA policy means a delay of weeks, even months—a delay during which readers would remain ignorant of an important public health issue that deserves their attention.

As of late April, Ms. Whitman hadn't replied, and frankly I didn't expect her to change the policy. But at least she

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The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)3 organization. The mission of the organization is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting. We envision an informed society through excellence in environmental journalism. As a network of journalists and academics, SEJ offers national and regional conferences, publications and online services. SEJ's membership of more than 1,200 includes journalists working for print and electronic media, educators, and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's annual conferences and to subscribe to the quarterly *SEJournal*.

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Are we injecting favorite flavors into reporting?

A long time ago and in an employment galaxy far, far away I was a designer of machinery. All sorts of machinery, too, from torpedoes to automotive bearing-making stuff for the former Soviet Union, and even gizmos that injected jelly into the bowls of doughnuts. Believe me, however, the world is much better off with my hands on a keyboard than it is with me holding a drafting pencil.

In any event, in engineering we had a little axiom. It went: "Enough research tends to support one's conclusions"; a reference to the all-too human ailment of injecting our own tastes into our final product. Sort of like putting a favorite flavor of jelly into a thick pad of doughnut dough.

The problem for reporters is that such subjectivity is a disservice both to our profession and to our readers. Increasingly I am viewing members of the Society of Environmental Journalists less as objective reporters of what's happening out there and more as environmental activists with their own flavors of jelly to inject.

A good example is the Spring 2002 edition of our *SEJournal* and its cover "Inside Story," a piece by Mike Dunne and relating the efforts of *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reporter Robert McClure. The very first quoted paragraph Dunne uses exposes the tendency of environmental reporters to inject their tastes rather than to observe and report the facts. He writes: "Under terms of the antiquated law, miners can cart away..." Now if McClure meant "old" instead of "antiquated" he should have used the former, since the latter's definition implies out-of-

date or obsolete. Such words are the purview of columnists and editorial writers, *not* reporters. It immediately sets up opinion in place of facts. The sentence is a further indictment as it leaves the reader with the simplistic impression (increasingly typical of environmental writers) that green is good and business is bad. That may play well in the eyes of granola crunchers but it falls far short of meeting objective journalistic standards.

That McClure "won" a journalism award from a left-leaning environmental group comes as no surprise either. I'd be proud too to hang such a shingle on my living room wall but with the caveat that it arrived via a special interest group, no different—nor better or worse—than from, say, the American Petroleum Institute.

It is no wonder that the public perceives a bias on the part of journalists. With an all-too sad increasing frequency our research does seem to support our pre-ordained conclusions. And thus our so-called reporting becomes a sour-tasting goo wrapped inside a stale bread, rejected more and more by the public we say we serve.

—Jeff Frischkorn, *The News Herald*

Response:

All sides in the debate over the General Mining Law of 1872, including industry groups such as the National Mining Association, acknowledge that the law is antiquated and in need of reform. All concerned agree, to use Frischkorn's words, that the law is obsolete and out of date. To describe the statute merely as "old" would obscure some of the most salient points made in our series. After researching the topic off and on for nearly two years, conducting hundreds of interviews across about 10 states and reading thousands of pages of documents relating to the modern performance of the law, we concluded that the law is antiquated. And that's what we called it.

—Robert McClure *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

***SEJournal* submission deadlines**

Fall '02	August 1, 2002
Winter '02	November 1, 2002
Spring '03	February 1, 2003
Summer '03	May 1, 2003

SEJ**News**

Board to consider streamlined membership guidelines

SEJ's Board of Directors plans to consider revisions to SEJ's membership guidelines at its upcoming quarterly meeting. SEJ membership chair Peter Fairley says that, as with the successful streamlining of SEJ's application form last year, the rationale for these revisions is entirely stylistic. Fairley says that SEJ's membership policies are serving the organization well and that the board stands behind decisions that have been struck on how broad to pitch the SEJ tent and where to draw the lines between active, associate and academic members.

"Our goal is not to alter those policies, but to make them more understandable and, to the extent possible, to give more weight in the guidelines to a definition of who we want to attract to SEJ," says Fairley.

The revisions under consideration were completed by the SEJ membership committee over six months and have been

reviewed and polished by the board's executive committee, consisting of SEJ's president, first and second vice presidents, treasurer and secretary. The full board will take them up at its July 13 board meeting in Pittsburgh.

The revised guidelines can be viewed on the members-only section of SEJ's Web site at members.sej.org/business/draft guidelines.

New species discovered?

Grab your sketchbook, J.J.! One of Philadelphia's local TV stations in April ran a story on great thorned owls. And next October, one of SEJ's tours at the annual conference will take reporters to the nation's—or world's—only whopping crane captive-breeding program.

Annual conference

And a generous dash of Old Bay seasoning

By TIM WHEELER

BALTIMORE—Like a train gathering steam, plans are rapidly taking shape for SEJ's 12th annual conference Oct. 9 - 13 here, in the birthplace of the American railroad industry (which is why I use that hackneyed metaphor).

Sponsored by the University System of Maryland, the four-day meeting based at the Wyndham Hotel downtown promises a lively mix of science, politics, journalism and socializing—all seasoned with a generous dash of Old Bay, the spicy red powder that is the region's favorite flavoring on steamed crabs, potato chips and almost every other kind of food consumed. And, the icing on the crabcake will be the grand announcement of the winners of SEJ's first-ever journalism awards.

This will be SEJ's first annual conference in the mid-Atlantic, a region rich in history, culture and natural beauty, not to mention some sensational seafood. It's also a hotbed of environmental issues, from environmental justice to smart growth and sea-level rise.

A panoply of tours has been arranged for Thursday, Oct. 10, including cruises on Chesapeake Bay, visits to renowned environmental research centers, kayaking an urban river and a march through a military base that is both a Superfund site and a wildlife sanctuary.

One tour promises to search for the light in the heated debate over the nation's energy policy and its environmental impacts. There'll be a visit to a coal-fired power plant, among other facilities, for an up-close look at the baghouse—and discussion with EPA officials, industry execs and activists on what they see in the Bush administration's "Clear Skies" initiative.

Another gets out on the bay, where a dwindling number of "watermen," as commercial fisher-folk are known hereabouts, still harvest with their hands or in aging, sail-powered dredge boats. The bay's once-abundant bivalves—which help keep the

bay's waters clean, when they're not stocking restaurant raw bars—have been devastated by diseases. Tour participants will hear from scientists, fishery managers and the watermen themselves about a controversial remedy: introducing disease-resistant Asian oysters into the bay.

If the bay is not your oyster, there'll be an opportunity to get down on the farm with some of the nation's leading scientists dealing with agricultural pollution. Spend the day at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's sprawling laboratory in Beltsville, where you can put down a bet at the "algal raceway." Or learn the latest about the hormones used in raising livestock and how they're trying to prevent them from winding up in the environment.

Not wild enough for you? Then check out the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, one of the nation's top critter laboratories, where scientists study wetlands, bird habitat and toxic contamination. They also have been breeding whooping cranes there in a bid to revive the majestic migratory birds' depleted population.

Or, if you prefer to see your wildlife in the wild, try the tour of Aberdeen Proving Ground, one of Maryland's largest and least-visited wildlife refuges. Least-visited, because it happens to be an active military base, where the Army still tests artillery. And a Superfund site, chockablock full of toxic contaminants in soil and water, not to mention unexploded artillery rounds, from decades of military activity there. It also happens to be a center for training soldiers how to defend against chemical weapons on the battlefield, and there's an aging stockpile there of mustard agent—the stuff used to poison troops in World War I, not what goes on hot dogs. Hear about how the Army plans to dispose of it, and none too soon for the residents who live around the base.

(Continued next page.)



Photo courtesy of THE BALTIMORE SUN

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, home to tens of thousands of waterfowl, songbirds and eagles.



Photos by CHIAKI KAWAJIRI courtesy of The Baltimore Sun



Chesapeake Bay is one of seven tour destinations for Thursday, Oct. 10, and will focus on oysters: over-harvesting, pollution and diseases, and whether the bay's salvation lies in importing non-native oysters from Asia.

With Washington, D.C., just a short drive away, there will be a chance to tour the nation's capital, though not for the usual Mall crawl. Paddle down the Anacostia River which flows through some of the city's poorest inner-city neighborhoods, and learn about an ambitious joint government and grassroots effort to restore the degraded waterway.

Or, if you prefer to stay close to home, try a leisurely cruise of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, and learn about why folks fishing there shouldn't eat too much of their catch. Hear about how ships at the docks are delivering a troubling hidden cargo to our coastal waters—exotic species carried in their ballast. Get a run-down on efforts to overcome the toxic legacy of the city's industrial past, and to restore wetlands at the 19th-century fort that inspired the "Star-Spangled Banner."

Friday will open with a plenary session that explores our "blind spots," why so little ink or airtime is devoted in most mainstream media to some of the forces underlying environmental problems, such as population growth and consumption. We'll hear from a panel of experts as well as from journalists who've shed some light on these topics, and can offer tips on how to get more such stories in print and on the air.

On Saturday, over lunch, we'll review what the Bush administration and Congress have done the past couple years and talk about how environmental issues may influence the congressional elections in November. Featured speakers will include administration officials, congressional leaders, pollsters and pundits.

There'll be a wide array of panel discussions and workshops Friday and Saturday, delving into everything from the oceans and bays to urban problems, environmental justice, smart growth and ethnobotany. There'll also be glances at

Republican environmentalism, journalistic ethics (not an oxymoron, we hope) and a look back at the media hysteria in these parts a few years back over *Pfiesteria*, the "cell from hell," lurking in bay waters.

In addition, there'll be some down-to-earth sessions offering practical tips on how to spice up your writing (liberal doses of Old Bay), dig deeper in your reporting or produce more compelling TV and radio reports.

Invitations have been tendered to the White House (as well as to that 'undisclosed location' where the vice president hangs out), to congressional leaders and a bevy of other dignitaries and luminaries. Confirmed speakers so far include former Sen. Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day and author of a new book on population and immigration, and Jon Franklin, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes for his narrative science writing. Check out www.sej.org for updates on other speakers corralled since this piece went to press.



Saturday afternoon, there'll be another chance to get out in the field, with a myriad of mini-tours. Visit the front lines of an urban tragedy, where inner-city children are daily being poisoned by lead paint in their homes. Drop in on an experimental crab hatchery, or a Superfund site. Try a kayak tour of the Inner Harbor, or bike along a leafy rail-trail on the outskirts of town.

Throughout the conference, there'll be plenty of opportunities to catch up with colleagues, both in planned and informal events. The highlight will be the announcement Friday evening of the recipients of SEJ's first crop of environmental journalism awards, followed by a reception at the National Aquarium, put on by our gracious conference hosts from the University System of Maryland. On Saturday night, we're brewing something special—a coffeehouse, where SEJ members can share their creative talents, whether it's reading poetry, juggling or belting out some Gilbert and Sullivan.

As if that isn't enough—and why must all good things end?—extend your stay and take a two-day post-conference tour deep into the heart of Chesapeake country. We're planning a cruise to Smith Island, a colorful, traditional waterman's community in the middle of the bay, which is vanishing in more ways than one as the fisheries dwindle. Back on the mainland, though not necessarily firmer ground, we're looking to explore Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a sprawling complex of water and wetlands that is home to tens of thousands of waterfowl, songbirds and eagles—and to a pesky, destructive visitor, the nutria.

Space is limited for the post-conference trek, and for many of the other tours and small-group sessions, so register now. All aboard!

Tim Wheeler is environment editor at The Baltimore Sun and chairman of SEJ's 12th annual conference.



SEJ's inaugural awards contest brings unexpected response

By PERRY BEEMAN

SEJ's inaugural journalism awards drew a higher-than-expected 254 entries and added 75 members to the rolls.

You'll have to wait until the Baltimore annual conference to find out who won. The announcement of the nine \$1,000 first-place winners and the certificate-winning honorable mentions will come at a reception at the National Aquarium Friday, Oct. 11. The winners may even get a one- or two-dolphin salute.

After a decade of mulling the idea in fits and starts, the SEJ Board of Directors launched the nine-category international competition in broadcast, print and online journalism. The action followed a strong push by the programs committee to make it happen. Mike Mansur of the *Kansas City Star*, who was still on the board at the time, helped lead an extensive research effort to see what other groups had done. Board member Dan Fagin of *Newsday* spent long nights drafting the rules.

The board appointed a seven-member awards committee led by board members Perry Beeman of *The Des Moines Register* and Natalie Pawelski of CNN to run the contest. Other members are freelancer George Homsy, former board members Mansur and Tom Meersman of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*; board member Peter Lord of the *Providence Journal*; and online consultant Amy Gahrn.

No one knew what to expect.

Committee members worked with Associate Director Chris Rigel and colleagues Amy Simmons and Jutland Medina to advertise the contest in trade journals, listservs and Web sites. Later, they considered group prayer when, with the April 1 deadline only weeks away, the entry tally stood at 40. The inside betting was that 100 entries would be a good first-year showing; 150 would be reason for celebration. Diane Graham, who helps *The Register* enter contests, told Beeman not to panic. Journalists and their colleagues, she assured from experience, would push the deadline to the last minute, but enter in force, she said. Pawelski promised that award- and money-hungry broadcast journalists would turn out. Both were right.

Practically every day, Pawelski and Beeman fielded questions from people wondering if their work was eligible, or confirming how it should be presented. The awards committee cast a variety of votes to interpret the rules, and has worked hard to track suggestions for fine-tuning of the contest next year.

Calls and emails came from Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and the United States, for example. In the end, entries came from journalists in the United States, Portugal, Africa, Canada, Mexico, Portugal, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. Their news organizations included *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Forbes*, *Scientific American*, *Good Housekeeping* and a host of fantastic smaller publications. Broadcast? We've got broadcast: CBC, CNN and local affiliates of NBC, PBS and CBS are among the contenders. Online entrants turned out, too.

Rigel calls the contest the single biggest membership-boosting program in the organization's 11-year history. Even before the winners have been picked, the Society of Environmental Journalists Awards for Reporting on the Environment has pushed SEJ even further into the international limelight. SEJ

also made some very important new friends and tapped the expertise of SEJ colleagues while setting up judging panels.

The contest offers nine \$1,000 first-place awards with plaques, and a stack of certificates for two honorable mentions in each category (which don't carry a cash award, yet). SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke decided to play it on the safe side in the year's budget, figuring entry fees would bring in perhaps \$4,000. So from the beginning the thought was the contest would need to be subsidized at first, with the possibility of making money in later years. SEJ ended up taking in more than \$9,200, enough to cover the top prizes, if not every expense associated with the contest.

Stories had to be published or aired between March 1, 2001, and Feb. 28, 2002, for this cycle.

The list of journalists and journalism educators who will pick the winners is solid and a tribute to SEJ's reputation for supporting fine journalism. The judging-panel chairpersons alone will grab plenty of attention: Geneva Overholser, columnist and University of Missouri professor, who has judged the Pulitzers and led *The Des Moines Register* to a Pulitzer in public service; Betsy Marston, widely known editor at *High Country News*, now running the Writers on the Range syndicate; Emilia Askari, *Detroit Free Press* reporter and former SEJ president; Peter Lundquist, director of the online contest for the Gannett Newspaper Division; former SEJ board member Peter Dysktra, executive producer of the CNN Science/Technology Unit; Deborah Potter, executive director of Newslab; and Al Tompkins, Broadcast/Online Group leader at The Poynter Institute.

The biggest turnout came in small-market print with 73 entries. Second was print feature with 58. Print series drew 39; broadcast feature 32; broadcast series 20; online reporting 18; small-market broadcast six; print deadline five; and broadcast deadline two.

The awards committee learned a lot as the entries poured in. Turns out not everyone knows what "tearsheets" are, or that the word "copies" means "photocopies." Entrants discovered that entry fees as low as \$30 can be tough to scrape up, especially if you happen to be in South Africa. On the other hand, Simmons was gleeful when she opened some entry packets to find several new membership applications. CBC signed up a handful of new members in one stroke of the check-writing pen.

Committee members also found that potential judges were honored and generally quick to sign on when asked to help pick winners. That is a testament to SEJ's reputation. The judges came from an initial field of nearly 30 candidates suggested by committee members.

At this writing, SEJ's first contest is in the hands of the judges. When they make their selections, they will have capped one of the most rewarding programs SEJ has launched. The many board members, SEJ volunteers, staff members and others who pushed over the years for this initiative should be proud.

Perry Beeman is environment reporter at The Des Moines Register and serves on SEJ's board of directors.



SEJ expands mentoring program

Early in his career as a newspaper reporter, Mike Dunne was lucky to have a mentor—an older reporter named Gibbs Adams who took Dunne under his wing. When Adams died of a heart attack years later, Dunne was left with nobody to turn to for advice. “One day I looked around the newsroom, and I realized that I was the new Gibbs,” recalls Dunne, a senior reporter and environmental writer at the *Baton Rouge Advocate*.

Now Dunne is using his 25 years of experience to mentor Judy Fahys, a reporter at *The Salt Lake Tribune* who has been on the environmental beat for about a year. The two spent some time together at SEJ’s national conference in Portland last October, and Dunne told Fahys that “you have permission to bother me” for advice in the future.

Dunne and Fahys were part of SEJ’s first mentoring program, a pilot project that paired experienced journalists with newcomers to the environmental beat. The pairs met at the Portland conference for face-to-face discussion, writing critiques and networking with other mentors and “mentees,” as program coordinators Orna Izakson and Dawn Stover dubbed the rookies (the dictionary doesn’t offer a convenient counterpart for “mentor”).

The conference agenda also included a breakfast gathering attended by two dozen journalists who shared their ideas and hopes for SEJ’s mentoring program. The breakfast was an opportunity for mentors and mentees to make additional connections outside their pairs.

Younger writers at the breakfast said they’d like help with finding good sources, pitching ideas to editors, and turning their work into front-page clips. “We can help walk mentees through the big stories they really care about,” responded Heather Dewar, an environment reporter at *The Baltimore Sun*. Dewar served as a mentor to Kristin McDonald of Florida A&M

University at the conference.

“We need people to remind us that we are talented,” Dewar added. “It’s important to create an atmosphere that is supportive and where the message is that ‘we’re on your side.’”

SEJ plans to build on the success of the 2001 pilot project with an expanded program that will include long-distance mentoring. Unlike the pilot program, the long-distance component will have no limit on the number of journalists who can participate.

Long-distance mentors and mentees will be asked to make a one-year commitment and to interact with each other at least four times during the year. Mentors should be willing to critique stories and offer advice via e-mail or the telephone.

Oregon freelance writer Izakson and Stover, an editor at *Popular Science* magazine, have agreed to continue as SEJ’s volunteer matchmakers. They will e-mail prospective partners before formalizing each match, to make sure both the mentor and mentee are comfortable with the “marriage.” As with the pilot program, the coordinators will consider factors such as geographic location and type of media in making matches.

The mentoring program is primarily aimed at helping professional journalists but will also accept applications from college and graduate students who have demonstrated an interest in environmental journalism. The coordinators hope to arrange matches for everyone who wants a mentor or mentee, but that will depend on the availability of volunteers. All mentors and mentees must be SEJ members.

SEJ’s mentoring program is also adding a student outreach component, said Dan Fagin, environment reporter at *Newsday* and SEJ’s vice president for programs. Experienced journalists who sign up to become long-distance mentors can also volunteer to visit nearby schools to talk about environmental journalism. SEJ staff members will arrange the visits.

Applying to become a mentor or mentee is as easy as filling out an online application at www.sej.org and hitting the “submit” button. Computer whiz and longtime SEJ volunteer Russ Clemings of the *Fresno Bee* has designed the online forms that make this possible. The forms will ask a series of questions about an applicant’s experience and special interests or expertise. Mentees will also be asked to submit three recent writing samples, preferably ones that have been published.

Program coordinators will reply with an e-mail message confirming receipt of the application. You can reach the coordinators directly by writing to mentor@sej.org.

“Unfortunately, in my career, I’ve seen the whole system of mentoring in the newsroom die,” said Paul H. MacClennan, a veteran environmental columnist, at the mentoring program’s breakfast gathering in October. Organizers of SEJ’s program hope that long-distance mentoring can take up some of the slack.

Correction

In *SEJournal* Volume 11 #4, the photographer for photos on pages one, five and 12 is Dale Willman, whose name we misspelled as Wilman.

Have you registered yet?

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Oct. 9-13, 2002

Baltimore, Maryland

Don’t miss this important opportunity to hone your reporting skills and network with peers and sources!

For conference details and registration please visit

<http://www.sej.org>

Regional report

Boston and Bay Area events train journalists

Backpack journalism. Multimedia storytelling. Convergence reporting. Whatever you want to call it, the ever-longer waiting lists for an introductory workshop coached by multimedia pioneer Jane Stevens showed that many people think it may be the future of journalism.

All told, 45 journalists participated in the intensive hands-on training held at Harvard Medical School's Countway Library in July, November and May. In each workshop, 15 journalists from newspaper, radio, television, magazine, federal research agencies and university news bureaus learned the new language of Web-based story telling.

For three days, they learned how to develop storyboards, shoot and edit video, extract photos, excerpt audio, write text, develop nonlinear narratives and compile it all on several Web pages for the final presentations.

For their stories, they interviewed researchers from Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Children's Hospital and New England Aquarium.

The workshops were co-sponsored by the Society of

Environmental Journalists, New England Science Writers and the National Association of Science Writers and organized by Carol Cruzan Morton.



CNN science correspondent Ann Kellan (left), freelancer Deborah Franklin and Harvard Medical School publications director Bob Neal selected video clips from their interview in the Countway Library computer training room.

California's Bay Area was the site of a walking tour for reporters to learn about smart growth, held April 27 in Berkeley with a jaunt to El Cerrito.

SEJ member Lisa Vorderbrueggen came late into the program at SEJ's request to moderate the panel discussing the various facets of Smart Growth. Panelists included Gary Binger, director of Urban Land Institute's California smart growth Initiative; Steve Price, principal, Urban Advantage; Doug Shoemaker, policy and program director of Non-Profit Housing; and Jeremy Madsen, director of Greenbelt Alliance.

Participants ate lunch at one of Berkeley's largest and most controversial infill housing projects, the Gaia building, then took a building tour with developer Patrick Kennedy (Panoramic Interests) to observe "eco-features" such as stacked parking and a City CarShare pod. Afterward they took a walking tour of smart growth innovations in Berkeley. Participants



Daryl Norcott, East Bay director of City CarShare



Participants dine on the Gaia building rooftop.

then boarded BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) to El Cerrito Del Norte station where they met with architect Mark Gillem and developer Charlie Oewel for a discussion on El Cerrito's current efforts to create a transit-based community.

SEJ member Janet Byron worked with Greenbelt Alliance, an advocacy group promoting smart growth, to coordinate the event. Turnout was slim—only eight participants—but those who came appreciated the event.

"The whole thing got me thinking in a much broader sense than I usually do about the meaning of 'environmental reporting,'" said *San Francisco Examiner's* Michael Stoll. "It can be about aesthetics, architecture, social interactions. And nowhere more than in a dense city, which, it could be argued, has a moral responsibility to grow even denser." ❖



Detjen from China: Send more chalk and other tall tales

SEJ pioneer **Jim Detjen** is taming another journalism frontier. He is teaching the first course in environmental journalism ever offered in mainland China. Detjen is at Nankai University in Tianjin, China, this semester as part of a Fulbright Scholarship.

Detjen reports that his students are “hungry to learn and eager to find out about environmental journalism and Western-style reporting.” The country faces daunting environmental problems including very serious air and water pollution and a severe water shortage in northern China.

The young journalists also face high reporting hurdles. Censorship is a major problem. Detjen says that it is impossible to buy many Western magazines or newspapers; access to many Web sites is blocked; and e-mail is slow and unreliable. “I have, however, been able to call up SEJ’s Web site and I have used materials from it in my classes.”

In the classroom, Detjen says that resources are severely limited. “My teaching supplies for the semester at Nankai, one of China’s top universities, consist of 12 pieces of chalk.” He has lectured at universities around China, in addition to teaching at Nankai. He has also met with the reporters at the *Shanghai Star*, an English-language newspaper, and plans visits to television stations in Beijing.

Detjen is in China with his wife and two teenage sons. He promises to write all about his fantastic voyage in a future issue of the *SEJournal*. In the meantime, you can follow their journey at <http://communities.msn.com/DetjensinChina>.

Also overseas on a Fulbright Scholarship is **Yolanda Lukaszewski**, who has been studying journalism changes in Poland for the past year. The 2001 graduate of the master’s program in Science and Technology Journalism at Texas A&M University is comparing how Polish reporters wrote about the environment in the 1980s to how they wrote about it in the 1990s. “Poland’s an ideal place to do this study because it supposedly had the most liberal media of all the Soviet satellite nations.” After wrapping up the research, Lukaszewski will travel, then head back to the states this summer.

Yet another reporter trying to spread the good word about environmental journalism is **Brent Israelsen**. The environment reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune* spent three months last year in Bosnia-Herzegovina where he conducted a series of workshops funded by the Ford Environmental Journalism Fellowship program. Israelsen was not only teaching, he did some reporting. He found concrete never-before-published numbers on air quality in Tuzla, one of the most polluted cities in Europe. The data showed a strong correlation between increased respiratory and cardiac diseases and extremely high levels of particulate matter and sulfur dioxide in the air. He co-wrote a story about the research for a Sarajevo newsmagazine. Israelsen says journalism, like everything else in the country is “in transition.” But the best part is the nation’s beauty. “Despite the ugly things that have happened there in recent years, it really is a lovely place.”

Two years of reporting across several western states paid

off for reporters **Robert McClure** and **Andrew Schneider**. Their four-part series titled “The Mining of the West: Profit and Pollution on Public Lands” in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* captured the John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism. (The Natural Resources Defense Council administers the award.) The 13 stories focused on how the General Mining Law of 1872 is used by modern mining companies to take precious metals from public lands in the West for free. In some cases, they reported, companies privatize public land containing valuable minerals for the same prices set forth in 1872, \$5 an acre or less. Also, they wrote how wildly fluctuating prices forced some companies into bankruptcy—sticking taxpayers with hundreds of millions of dollars in cleanup costs. “We documented more than 16,000 miles of western streams that are tainted by runoff from mines,” says McClure. Schneider is now the deputy managing editor for investigations at the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.

Media on the Move

Working the Web led **Mary Manning** of the *Las Vegas Sun* to her award-winning story—and cost a wayward law firm a \$16.5

million government contract. After seeing its name on a list of nuclear industry lobbyists at the Center for Responsive Politics Web site, Manning discovered that the law firm of Winston and Strawn had an Energy Department contract with Yucca Mountain, a conflict of interest. For their efforts Manning, and the *Sun*’s Washington correspondent, **Benjamin Grove**, won second place for investigative reporting in the Associated Press News Executives Council’s annual contest. The lawyers lost and had to withdraw from the lucrative DOE contract.

Freelance writer **Florence Williams** captured her fourth award in six years from the American Society of Journalists and Authors. The latest, in the Outstanding Profile category, was “The Roquefort Files” that first appeared in *Outside*. The feature follows Jose Bove, the French sheep farmer and anti-globalization activist, who destroyed a McDonald’s under construction in southern France to protest U.S. beef policies and unfair trade tariffs—most notably on Roquefort cheese, which he produces. The French hero fears that U.S. cultural imperialism means the loss of local foods. Williams says that “environmentalism to [the French] very directly means quality of life. It’s very personal”

“Plant Wars,” the battle between native and exotic plant species, took second place in the magazine feature writing category of the annual Tennessee Outdoor Writers Association competition. Authored by freelance writer, and retired journalism professor, **Glenn Himbaugh**, the article ran last year in *Tennessee Wildlife* magazine. Interestingly, Himbaugh says, “The overwhelming majority of the public doesn’t even know [exotic species] exist. Meanwhile, unencumbered by diseases or pests they left behind when they came to the U.S., the exotics continue to dominate the native species in ever increasing ways.”

Sara Shipley is back on the environment beat full time as the new environmental reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

(Continued on page 19)

Debate looms over Federal Clean Air Act

By **MARGARET KRIZ**

On November 15, 1990, in a signing ceremony in the East Room of the White House, then President George H.W. Bush declared: "Every American expects and deserves to breathe clean air. And, as president, it is my mission to guarantee it for this generation and for the generations to come."

In pushing his Clean Air Act amendments, which passed both houses of Congress by wide margins, he had argued that new requirements were necessary to curb acid rain and to improve public health. Since then, scientists say they have developed more conclusive evidence that air pollution from power plants, motor vehicles and factories is linked to both lung cancer and heart disease.

Today, however, the electric-power industry and its allies within the current Bush Administration argue that the 1970

law, as amended, is needlessly burdensome and expensive. They maintain that it would be cheaper and easier to reduce pollution from power plants by creating an emissions-trading program for three significant pollutants: mercury, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide.

So President George W. Bush is set on changing his father's amendments. In February, President Bush released the bare outline of his proposed emissions trading program, which he dubbed the "Clear Skies Initiative." He is expected to provide the details of the program sometime this summer. But information on that plan has gradually emerged in public testimony and in administration interviews.

Under the administration's emissions-swapping proposal, Congress would set national limits for power-plant emissions of the three targeted air pollutants: mercury, nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide. Companies exceeding those limits would have a choice: They could either reduce their emissions or buy leftover pollution "credits" from a power plant that didn't need them because it was already well under the limit or because it could clean up its operations more cheaply.

One goal of the Bush Administration's proposal is to eliminate several key parts of the Clean Air Act. Specifically, Bush would ease the mandate that electric utilities install the most-up-to-date pollution-control equipment when they upgrade or expand coal-fired power plants.

The administration also wants to drop the Clean Air Act's "regional-haze" program as it applies to power plants, which requires states to help reduce emissions of pollutants that are severely limiting visibility in national parks and wilderness areas. In addition, the EPA is also studying whether to ask Congress to eliminate provisions that require the EPA to regulate industrial emissions of toxic chemicals from electric plants.

The administration officials have said that they're also considering eliminating parts of the law that allow states to turn to the EPA for assistance if local pollution problems are being caused by out-of-state power plants.

State officials and environmental activists say that dropping those mandates would make it virtually impossible for state and local officials to force electric-power plants within their jurisdictions to clean up their air pollution. "Many of the programs that are under attack by industry are programs that are critical to the efforts of state and local agencies to meet their health-based air-quality standards," said S. William Becker, executive director of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators and of the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials.

But EPA officials insist that the plan would reduce overall air pollution. "Under current law, we simply will not get the reductions that we would get under the president's proposal, at least not in this time frame," says Jeffrey R. Holmstead, the assistant administrator of EPA's office of air and radiation.

Environmentalists say that the president's effort to rewrite the Clean Air Act is just one part of a sweeping White House campaign to roll back environmental controls on the nation's energy industries. Vice President Dick Cheney's national ener-

(Continued on page 17)

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Urban sprawl may just be half the story

Mapping programs and census tell the entire tale

By RUSS CLEMINGS

Sometimes the more that you report, the more your story changes. That's as true of stories based on data as stories based on traditional sources.

Like many other newspapers, the *Fresno Bee* decided last year to use the newly released 2000 census to delineate urban sprawl in our area.

It seemed like a straightforward thing to do. Anyone who lives in the Fresno-Clovis metropolitan area has seen mile after mile of new subdivisions sprout in recent decades to the north and northeast of town, where only peach trees and grapevines once grew.

Similarly, vacancies had sprouted in close-in retail centers from the 1960s and 1970s, while in newer centers on the rapidly growing suburban fringe, you couldn't find a parking space.

That was our story: As the 20th century came to the close, the metropolitan area had sprawled rapidly toward the Sierra Nevada foothills. People had abandoned the older inner-city neighborhoods for the new northeast. And the "center" of town moved ever farther in that direction.

Or so we thought.

But a funny thing happened on the way to publication. The data proved us wrong.

It's not that our eyes deceived us; the sprawl was real. But the older city neighborhoods hadn't been abandoned. Rather, new waves of people, including many recent immigrants, had moved into the homes that others left behind.

Those new arrivals tended to have more children than the families they replaced. And they often shared quarters to make ends meet; we found numerous examples of extended families

living together, and of multiple families in a single house.

But back to the story we started with.

The first clue that our hypothesis was incorrect came early, when we tried to map how the "center" of the metropolitan area had moved to the northeast over the last two decades.

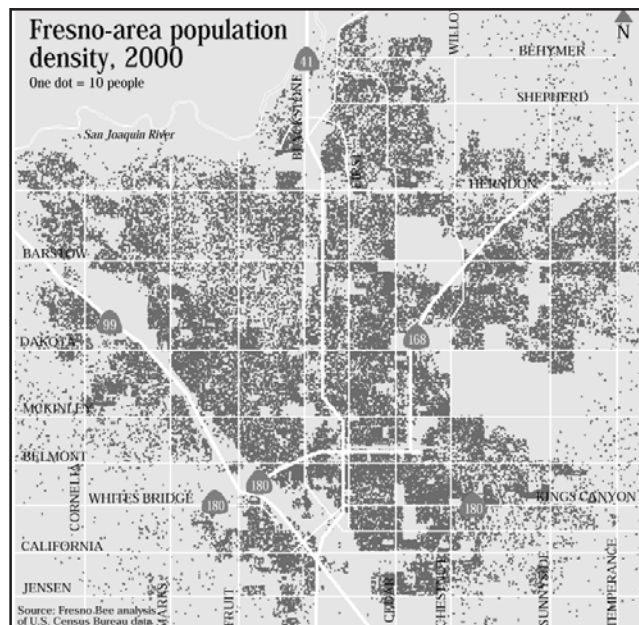
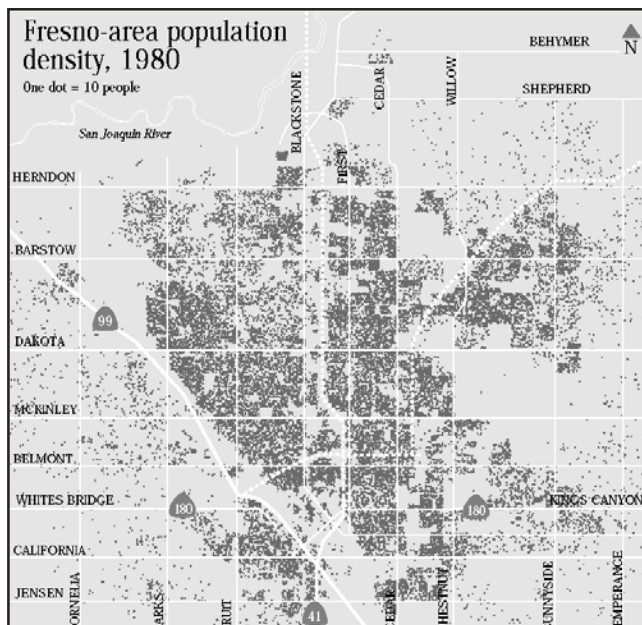
We started by collecting census data from 1980, 1990 and 2000. The two most recent years came directly from the census bureau's Web site (<http://www.census.gov>) and the 1980 data from a CD-ROM we bought from Geolytics (<http://www.geolytics.com>).

To map the center of the metropolitan area's population for each year, we first extracted the block level population totals, along with the longitude and latitude of the center point of each block. (A block in census-speak is pretty much exactly that—a city block or similar area with clearly defined physical boundaries.)

We loaded those values—longitude, latitude and population—into a spreadsheet. Then we weighted the longitude and latitude by the population, which sounds more complicated than it is. For each block, you just create two new values. One is the population multiplied by the longitude; the second is the population multiplied by the latitude.

Next, you add up all of these weighted values and divide them by the total population of the area you're examining. What you end up with is two values, which represent the latitude and longitude of the "population center" of your area.

Just plot those values on a map for 1980, 1990 and 2000, and you can see how the center of your area's population has moved over the years. In our case, we expected to see that "population center" migrate to the northeast by a couple of miles in that time.



So much for expectations.

When we actually plotted those three points, two of them—1980 and 2000—lay right on top of each other. The third, 1990, was maybe a block away.

Even though our eyes told us the metropolitan area was moving to the northeast, the data told us otherwise. The center of population hadn't budged in 20 years despite the lopsided sprawl that we all knew and saw.

After ruling out bonehead computation errors (which are generally the most frequent source of surprising results in this kind of data work), we tried a couple of different approaches to help us figure out what was going on.

First, we calculated the population density for each census tract (a tract typically consists of several dozen adjacent blocks) and created color-coded maps for each decade. Again, we did the heavy lifting in a spreadsheet, using two fields for each tract in the census data files—the total population and area of each census tract.

In our color-coding, red represented the highest population densities, areas with 10,000 or more people per square mile. A quick comparison of the 1980 and 2000 maps gave us our first big clue. In 1980, only a couple of tracts were red. In 2000, more than a dozen tracts were red, all of them in older Fresno neighborhoods. Thousands had fled those neighborhoods for the new suburbs, but somehow, after they left, thousands more took their place, and population densities actually rose.

We sent reporters out to those neighborhoods to find out what was going on.

They talked to principals whose schools were bursting, something that we had known but had forgotten about in our rush to do the suburban sprawl story. They found single family homes with multiple families living in them.

And they found children, children everywhere.

In the rest of the nation, the baby boom lasted from about 1946 to about 1963. In the San Joaquin Valley and other immigrant-rich regions, it's started all over again.

Meanwhile, back in the office at the computer, I struggled with a different question: How best to show graphically what

we had found in the data.

The color-coded maps put us on the right track, but they left a lot to be desired. Explaining what they meant required—well, it just plain required too much explanation. I needed to find something that would convey at a glance what the data was saying.

Browsing through the instruction book that came with my mapping program (Maptitude; other popular brands are ArcView and MapInfo), I found what I needed—a dot density map. This type of map is pretty simple, consisting of a mass of dots, or other icons, each of which represents an arbitrary number of people (or whatever else you want it to represent).

The effect of a dot-density map is akin to looking down from a helicopter at a plaza full of people. You can easily see where the people are packed most densely, and where they are more spread out. Only in our case, instead of looking down on a plaza, we were looking down on a city.

Because we were mapping about three-quarters of a million people, we couldn't make each dot represent a single person. After some experimentation we settled on a scheme in which each dot represented 10 people.

The resulting maps showed the contrast between 1980 and 2000 with startling clarity: Yes, the suburbs had grown significantly. Entire sections of farmland were now covered with dots. But so was the inner city, even more so in 2000 than in 1980. What one segment of the population had left behind, another had picked up and used even more intensely than before.

In the accompanying story, two quotes from children said it all. Alonzo Jenkins counted 11 people in his five-bedroom house. "Me, my brother, my cousin, another cousin, my niece, my aunt ..."

And his next-door neighbor, Paul Sanchez, told a similar story: "Two sisters, an uncle, my dad, my grandpa's brother, my grandpa and grandma," all living in a four-bedroom house that somebody had most likely abandoned on the way to the suburbs.

Russ Clemings reports, using databases, on the environment and many other issues for the Fresno Bee.

From Academe

Universities educate on the environment

By DEBORAH SCHWARTZ

Environment reporters have a new source on the Web to tap for academic contacts: The Council of Environmental Deans and Directors.

The new professional organization began in December 2000 with about 20 deans and directors of colleges of the environment, schools of natural resources, and institutes of environmental studies. Now, 41 schools are represented.

All conduct research and grant degrees in environmental studies and/or environmental science. Institutions involved include Duke, Yale, University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where courses to study the environment began shortly after the first Earth Day in 1970.

"What this does is provide environment reporters with a link to the leaders in these programs. In the past you had to go

one-by-one, not necessarily knowing who was the top environmental administrator at a university," said David Blockstein, executive secretary for the organization. Blockstein is also a senior scientist specializing in ecology and birds at the National Council for Science and the Environment.

The NCSE is administering the new organization. CEDD's bylaws prohibit NCSE from interfering with any of the group's policies.

Increasing scientists' participation in "society's great debate" about the environment is the group's unifying goal, said organization President Anthony Michaels, a marine biologist at the University of Southern California. That means improving communication between scientists and the press, he said.

"There are scientists who are good at it, and some who are
(Continued on page 15)

New stormwater rules can produce a flood of stories

By MARYJO SYLWESTER

New federal requirements for the cleanup of storm water mean the issue is likely to land frequently this year on the agendas of public works commissions and city councils.

Urbanized areas will have to establish programs to cleanse the foul concoction that drains off construction sites, parking lots and other urban and industrial properties. This could mean street cleaning, cracking down on construction sites or building retention ponds and other devices to reduce the impact of runoff.

The new rules beef up decade-old requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, or NPDES. They are known as Phase II. Last year I decided to test whether the old regulations, known as Phase I, were working in and around Columbia, Mo., in a series of stories for the *The Columbia Missourian*.

The activity most commonly requiring an NPDES permit was construction. All development disturbing five acres or more was covered. Among other changes, Phase II will now require a permit for any land disturbance of one acre or more over the life of the project.

My stories showed that systems for planning and developing subdivisions placed little emphasis on stormwater's potential to cause flooding and damage water quality. Regulations were inadequate, particularly in unincorporated areas, and existing laws lacked enforcement.

The most significant finding was that only half of the subdivisions approved in Boone County in the previous three years had obtained the state-issued land disturbance permit required under Phase I.

County officials were stunned by those findings. They had counted on the state being the watchdog on big projects to make up for inadequate county ordinances. State officials, in turn, weren't so surprised. They had just one inspector keeping tabs on storm water and every other pollution complaint in a 17-county area.

I relied on a wide array of sources and some simple computer-assisted reporting. Most of it was a matter of studying the laws, then seeing if reality matched.

The most useful paper records were plat files for recently approved subdivisions from the county planning office. These included local officials' comments during the planning process, such as those regarding storm water by the local soil and water conservation official. It turned out that developers were largely ignoring suggestions for better storm water and sediment management.

Generally, a state agency is responsible for issuing NPDES permits, but some cities have authority to operate a local permitting program. In Columbia, construction sites within city limits applied for a permit from the city. Those outside city limits applied to the state.

The Missouri state agency that issued land disturbance permits, the Department of Natural Resources, kept a database of all NPDES permits issued. (This included all types of permits, such as hog operations and other non-point-source pollutants). I sliced out the portion pertaining to storm water permits for my area, then matched that to an Excel listing of recent subdivisions to show which sites had not obtained a permit.

My stories focused on unincorporated areas, where laws were most lax. But the city still had problems, even though it



NPDES Storm Water Program:

Mandated by Congress under the Clean Water Act, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Program is a comprehensive two-phased national program addressing non-agricultural sources of storm water discharges. NPDES requires permits for many activities, such as hog operations and car washes. Generally, state environmental agencies issue permits and enforce the law.

Major provisions of Phase II:

- All areas designated "urbanized" by the U.S. Census Bureau must establish a storm water pollution reduction program. Specific requirements are being set by each state. Previously only medium and large communities (designated MS4's) fell under the law.
- Any land disturbance activity of one acre or more must obtain a storm water permit, which requires explaining how they will reduce sediment runoff during construction. Previously the threshold was five acres.

For More Information:

General information about the EPA Storm Water

Program: <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/>

Copy of the EPA Storm Water Phase II rule: <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/regulations/phase2.pdf>

Center for Watershed Protection: <http://www.cwp.org/>

The Quality of Our Nation's Waters (an EPA report): <http://www.epa.gov/305b/>

National Association of Flood and Storm-water Management Agencies: <http://www.nafsma.org/>

USGS Water Quality data and other information: <http://water.usgs.gov/>

Stream-flow data is at: <http://water.usgs.gov/nsip/>

The story, "A Flood of Problems," published in *The Columbia Missourian*, is available from the IRE Resource Center, story #18585. It can also be viewed in the *Missourian's* Web site, www.digmo.com. Search the text archive for "Sylwester" and you will find four related stories.

had set up its own storm water program a decade earlier. City inspectors readily provided examples of homes flooded because they were built at elevations lower than those approved. The law didn't require them to check the actual elevation of the new house against what was approved.

Neither the county nor the city was thinking about the big-picture, long-term consequences of a new subdivision. Generally, local officials worried more about traffic, sewage and similar problems and thought little about what happened when more water rushed faster downstream to the neighboring homes.

I wanted to delve further into environmentalists' arguments that growth was also damaging water quality. But reliable data were not available in Boone County.

However, there's a fairly good chance that you might be able to find water-quality data in your community—most likely streams that are known to be polluted. Check with the state environmental agency and the U.S. Geological Survey.

Universities...(from page 13)

awful at it," he said. "So much of the debate around environmental issues comes from misunderstanding, because we're bad at communicating. We thought if we [scientists] work together at it, we might become more effective about communicating consensus to the press."

As an example, Michaels cited the debate about global warming. "The social science side has more diversity of opinion than the natural sciences, but overall the academic dispute is narrower than society's dispute," he stressed.

To some extent the CEDD plans to do outreach in the form of press contact. That might include making known their support for federally funded programs such as NCSE's Science To Achieve Results (STAR) fellowships, which is endangered. Congressman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), chairman of the House Science Committee, and James A. Barcia (D-MI), ranking member of the Subcommittee on Environment, Technology and Standards, want to preserve the fellowships.

According to NCSE figures, between 1995 and 2001 the EPA funded more than 800 STAR fellows at 168 colleges and universities. Fewer than 10 percent of applicants received funding. The EPA received 1,600 applications for 100 available 2002 fellowships. President Bush's budget request for FY 2003 eliminates funding for any new STAR fellowships in a proposal to terminate the program. More details are available by clicking on the orange box at <http://www.ncseonline.org>.

CEDD's long-term funding will come from donations and dues. Seed money came from AT&T and the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (<http://cnie.org/NCSE/CEDD/page.cfm?FID=1348>).

Colleges and universities with existing interdisciplinary environmental programs, such as colleges and institutes headed by individuals with responsibility above the departmental level, are eligible for membership.

"We want to do the science better, do the education better, and do the communication better, then collectively do some action. Those are our priorities," Michaels said. "We won't do advocacy from the standpoint of taking sides in debates. But we might advocate for more science to be done, to increase the

For the more advanced data junkies who want to determine if increased runoff is negatively impacting local waterways, stream-flow data from the USGS might accomplish this. You would have to do a regression analysis on the data, though, so this isn't for beginners.

A great place to start is the General Accounting Office's Report #01-679, "Better Data and Evaluation of Urban Runoff Programs Needed to Assess Effectiveness." The report, issued in June 2001, basically said the EPA doesn't know if Phase I worked, so how can they be ready for Phase II?

I guess we'll see the answer to that later this year.

MaryJo Sylwester is the database editor for The Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C. She wrote about storm water in Columbia, Mo., while pursuing her master's degree at the University of Missouri.

amount of science funding for environmental research."

The group's main goal is to improve the quality and nature of environmental science and environmental studies in the academic world, both in terms of research and education. Environmental studies, Michaels explained, focuses on policy, while environmental science revolves around the natural sciences.

"We're thinking about how to improve interdisciplinary research activities and scholarship," Michaels said. "Because universities are structured around colleges or departments, there are unnatural divisions given what's needed to do [study] the environment right."

Blockstein added, "The focus of this group is how do they, as university leaders, better educate their students? How do they increase the support for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the environment? And how can they, by working together, make a stronger contribution to society? By working together and collaborating for the first time there clearly will be opportunities for joint programs that don't currently exist."

For example, the group might pattern future efforts after an international program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, which collaborates with universities in Thailand to help educate students there about the environment. Another might follow an example set by Western Washington University in Bellingham, which shares its faculty in the Huxley College of the Environment with Northwest Indian College. Tribal students spend the first two years at Northwest Indian College then go to Bellingham to finish their degrees.

David Blockstein may be reached at 202-530-5810 x 205, David@ncseonline.org; Anthony Michaels at 213-740-6780, tony@usc.edu. Online, the Council of Environmental Deans and Directors (CEDD) is located at www.CEDD.org, which includes a link to the National Library for the Environment.

Debra Schwartz covers environment and science from the D.C. area, where she is a journalism doctoral student at the University of Maryland-College Park.

On the cancer trail in Florida town

By SCOTT STREATER

The laugh-starved Sandra Bullock movie “Ms. Congeniality” featured this joke:

“Why is New Jersey called the Garden State?”

The answer: “Because we can’t fit, ‘We’re the oil and petrochemical industry capital of the country’ on a license plate.”

The joke is funny, I suppose, unless you live in New Jersey—or Escambia County, Fla.

Escambia County, which includes Pensacola, is a relatively small county on the westernmost edge of the Florida Panhandle. Yet industries there discharge more toxic chemicals into the air, water, land and underground than all the manufacturing facilities and petrochemical plants in the entire state of New Jersey. For that matter, more than the total toxic releases in 18 other states.

These statistics launched a months-long investigation by the *Pensacola News Journal* to answer an obvious question: What impact, if any, is all this legally emitted pollution having on the health of residents in Northwest Florida?

Did we find the definitive answer? No. But our reporting prompted Congress last year to allocate \$1.7 million to begin a five-year study examining whether toxic pollution is making us sick.

The concern is justified. We found:

- Escambia County’s cancer mortality rate far exceeds the national rate.
- The county exceeds the state’s age-adjusted incidence rate for many cancers, including brain cancer.
- The county has very high rates of major birth defects associated with the exposure of infants and pregnant women to neurological and developmental toxins. The county ranks in the Top 40 nationwide for industrial emissions of neurological and developmental toxins to the water and air.
- Childhood cancer mortality rates in the county have been among the highest in the nation in the last 15 years.

The reporting began when state Sen. Durell Peaden, a retired family practice physician, called me in late 2000 to tell me he was concerned about high cancer rates in northwest Florida.

Several health maintenance organizations had pulled out of the area in the last several years, he said. He provided me with letters from one HMO chief executive officer who threatened to drop coverage for 6,000 state employees in the Pensacola area unless the Legislature raised insurance premiums immediately. The reason: cancer rates within the group were many times greater than the national average.

“There needs to be more research on this,” he said.

I kept my immediate supervisor, Deputy Managing Editor Bob Bryan, apprised of what I found. But I collected a lot more data before I lobbied for the time to conduct a full-fledged investigation.

The pollution statistics were easily downloaded from the Internet. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Toxics Release Inventory database is an amazing tool, and was easy to use. (<http://www.epa.gov/tri/>). I was able to quickly rank Escambia County among the 25 most polluted counties in the nation. In addition, I knew exactly what toxins were being emitted and by what company.

It was much more difficult to obtain relevant medical data. The Florida Cancer Data System—a partnership between the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami and the state Department of Health—compiles all cancer data in the state (<http://fcds.med.miami.edu/>). They have databases with rates of cancer incidence and mortality per 100,000 population.

This allowed us to compare age-adjusted cancer rates in Northwest Florida to other counties across the state and nation. In addition, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has mortality records that can be downloaded, state by state, for each county (<http://wonder.cdc.gov/>).

Now I was ready to pitch the story. When my editors saw the information I collected, and the questions the data raised, they responded enthusiastically.

I was on the story full time.

One of the first things we did was pay the Florida Cancer Data System to compile cancer incidents per ZIP code, allowing us to pinpoint areas of concern. This cost only \$500.

But what we didn’t find was almost as compelling as what we did.

An example: I didn’t find a lot of specific data on the health impacts of the toxic chemicals emitted by industries. A surprising number of chemicals on the market today have never been tested for their impacts on human health.

What’s more, there is a dearth of research on the health effects of humans being exposed to a mix of chemicals in the environment.

I discovered this fact was particularly troubling to health experts such as Dr. Lynn Goldman, a pediatrician who teaches at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Hygiene and Public Health in Baltimore, and Richard Jackson, director of the CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health in D.C.

After I collected pollution and health statistics, I shared them with local physicians and health experts, many of whom were startled. Without exception, they acknowledged growing concerns about the possible link between toxic pollution and local health problems. They also agreed to help us interpret statistics and lead us to better sources of information.

Once we understood the technical aspects, we began looking for people with health problems who lived near sources of pollution. We were surprised to find a support group comprised of mothers with children born with developmental disorders and birth defects. They suspect pollution played a role in their children’s disorder.

Some of these parents had gone to extraordinary lengths, taking their children to a Baton Rouge, La., pediatrician who specializes in an experimental treatment to rid the children’s

bodies of mercury and other heavy metals.

We found other potential victims.

Many people who had lived near the Escambia Treating Co. Superfund hazardous waste site were happy to talk. The old wood-treating plant saturated soils in nearby neighborhoods with creosote, PCP and dioxin. More than 350 families were moved as part of the third-largest permanent relocation in the EPA's history. The residents settled into the neighborhoods near the site in the 1940s and '50s because those areas were among the few places where African Americans could buy homes in Pensacola.

The fact that hazardous waste sites were nearby was no accident, some complained.

"We were poor, black people who were not important," said Annie Scott, a former resident near the Escambia Treating plant. "We were expendable."

Our series, entitled "Hidden Hazard," was published on three consecutive Sundays.

Reaction was swift.

There was an outpouring of support from readers and health experts, many of whom told us our report confirmed suspicions they had for some time.

The Escambia County Health Department and the University of West Florida joined forces to devise a detailed plan to study the issue for the first time. The plan was presented to the local congressional delegation, which immediately expressed support. Congress, in separate appropriations bills approved in October and December, set aside \$1.7 million to begin a five-year study—remarkable considering the sagging economy and the costs associated with the ongoing war on terrorism.

We reprinted the series and distributed copies to each Florida legislator. The Legislature responded by finding \$300,000 in a tight budget year to continue funding a health clinic that screens former residents near Escambia Treating and another Superfund site for problems associated with exposure to toxic chemicals.

No one questioned the veracity of the stories, but some business and elected leaders feared the stories tarnished the image of the area as a desirable place to visit and live. The Pensacola area is known the world over for its sugar-white sands and the emerald-green waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The tourism industry pumps hundreds of millions of dollars into the local economy each year.

At a public meeting several months after the series, I sat dumbfounded as Pensacola's mayor chastised U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., for aggressively lobbying to find money for an environmental health study. The senator's comments appeared on C-SPAN, further eroding the facade that everything is OK in Pensacola.

Today, researchers are looking for answers. And there's still a lot more work to do.

As Peaden recently reminded me, "You've just scratched the surface."

Scott Streater is environmental reporter for the Pensacola News Journal. His stories on high cancer rates in Escambia County this year won an Edward J. Meeman prize for environmental reporting presented by the Scripps Howard Foundation.

FCAA...from page 11

gy strategy report has served as a blueprint for what is shaping up as an attempt to fundamentally shift federal policy on energy in ways that generally please energy producers and alarm environmental activists and health groups.

The administration seeks, for example, to expand oil and gas drilling on public lands, ease environmental restrictions on coal mining and coal burning, block efforts to significantly improve the energy efficiency of new generations of cars and SUVs, and provide massive new tax breaks to the energy industry.

"Once the feeding frenzy begins on the Clean Air Act, other polluters will be lining up for their rollbacks as well."

—Paul Billings
The American
Lung Association

Electric-industry lobbyists, meanwhile, argue that although the Clean Air Act has dramatically improved the nation's overall air quality, the price has been needlessly high because of what they see as excessive regulation. "We have at least 15 overlapping regulatory programs that deal with the identical pollutants," says Quin Shea, executive director of environment at the Edison Electric Institute, an industry trade group. "If you set tough emissions limits on the three [Bush-targeted] pollutants, then you wouldn't need some of these programs."

But more than clean air may be at stake, says Paul Billings of the American Lung Association. Billings warns that changing the regulations for the electric industry could trigger a full-blown assault on the Clean Air Act. "I've seen a lot of e-mail traffic from the manufacturing sector and the refinery sector," he says. "It's clear that once the feeding frenzy begins on the Clean Air Act, other polluters will be lining up for their rollbacks as well."

So the impacts of President Bush's proposal are not yet clear. But it is certain that President Bush's plan represents a dramatic change in the 1990 Clean Air law that his father championed.

Just a decade ago, George H.W. Bush declared, "It is simply the most significant air-pollution legislation in our nation's history, and it restores America's place as the global leader in environmental protection."

Margaret Kriz is an environment and energy correspondent for the National Journal.



Wild Earth:

Wild Ideas For A World Out of Balance

Edited by Tom Butler

Milkweed. 334 pp. \$18.95

The New Economy of Nature:

The Quest to Make Conservation Profitable

Gretchen C. Daily and Katherine Ellison

Shearwater. 250 pp. \$25.00

At the beginning of the twentieth century, President Teddy Roosevelt—rough-rider, big-game hunter and political reformer—worked with naturalist John Muir and forester Gifford Pinchot to protect vast tracts of America's wilderness from what T.R. labeled "the great special interests."

John Muir was a romanticizer of nature. An advocate of wilderness preservation, he founded the Sierra Club in order to "be able to do something for wildness and make the mountains glad."

Pinchot, an avid outdoorsman, was one of the first Americans to be trained in European forest management. He advocated the "wise use" of resources, believing they should be carefully utilized to meet peoples' needs.

Sometimes Roosevelt had to mediate among his two friends, supporting Muir in turning down a proposal to mine the Grand Canyon but siding with Pinchot when the city of San Francisco wanted to dam Hetch Hetchy, a spectacular valley inside Yosemite National Park that Muir fought to preserve.

Almost a century later two new books speak to the state of

our present day environment, even as "great special interests" in oil, mining and other industries again ride high in the saddle, or at least in a pick-up with Crawford, Texas, plates.

The collected essays of "Wild Earth" and examples of win-win environmental solutions in "The New Economy of Nature" reflect many of the same arguments and passions that drove Muir and Pinchot. The books argue wild nature must be preserved either for its own intrinsic value or else for its utilitarian value providing irreplaceable economic services to the project of civilization.

In battling for the hearts and minds of readers these two books offer a counter-intuitive surprise, for it's the book on economics that tells a more intriguing story, while the trumpet call for restoring great wilderness often shies from great vision, relying instead on the empirical arguments of biological and conservation science.

"Wild Earth" is a collection of essays from the eco-restoration magazine of the same name (compiled by its editor Tom Butler). Unfortunately the book, subtitled "Wild Ideas for a World Out of Balance," is front-loaded with too many (now) conventional ideas in conservation biology about the need for protecting big habitats, wildlife corridors and genetic diversity. Only a few of its early essays, like "Bring Back The Elephants!" (by Paul S. Martin and David A. Burney) manage to both surprise and delight. They argue that like the 19th-century buffalo slaughter by European settlers, the Clovis culture's destruction of mammoths 13,000 years ago is a recent and regrettable event (given this animal was native to North America for more than 10 million years). After finding mammoth bones and tusks, Thomas Jefferson and other scientists of his day were confident Lewis and Clarke would encounter wild

(Continued on page 24)

Advertisement

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Data controls...(from page 1)

The board's action was spurred in part by EPA's announcement that it would eliminate direct-connect access to its Envirofacts databases. This change means that reporters—and the public—will no longer be able to easily download information from Envirofacts for computer-assisted reporting projects. We'll be able to search the data, but only through the Web in the way EPA wants us to.

Creation of the
task force was
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access to its
Envirofacts
databases.

In its task force resolution, the SEJ board said that the group was being created, "to address freedom-of-information, right-to-know, and other news gathering issues of concern to the pursuit of environmental journalism.

"Toward that end, the task force may, if it deems appropriate, seek to collaborate with other journalism organizations, or communicate with government agencies, legislators, and regulators and with the general public," the board stated.

The board concluded that "raising concerns about government restrictions on journalists' ability to report on environmental issues constitutes a legitimate exception to SEJ's general policy (prohibiting) its members (from) engaging in lobbying."

SEJ Board President James Bruggers said lawyers for SEJ, to protect the group's non-profit status, has reviewed the new policy.

Also, the board made it clear that any representations of SEJ's position on proposed legislation or regulations must be approved by the task force chairman, the board liaison (Bruggers) and the SEJ president (also currently Bruggers).

What the task force is really looking for now is input. Like all things SEJ, this task force exists to serve our members. What can we do to help you?

We're in the midst now of trying to write a work plan. What will we do, and how will we function?

It's that first part that I'd really like input. If you have suggestions, please e-mail me at kward@wvgazette.com.

If you come across information that is newly removed from public access post-Sept. 11, let me know about that as well.

My own ideas are these:

First, the task force must try to monitor as best we can the kinds of environmental information that are being removed from the public domain, or made more difficult to access through removal from the Web, because of concerns about homeland security.

Second, we need to look at some of these information removals and try to understand more clearly, as best we can, what is being lost. Is the information still available, but just more difficult to get to? What kinds of stories could we previously give our readers, viewers and listeners that we can't now?

We also must try to understand more clearly the reasons for

these changes in access. That will help us be able to, when necessary, make arguments in favor of access.

Third, what kind of tools can we give our members that will help you understand and deal with changes in access to information?

Along with that, when and how should SEJ speak out to inform the public, policymakers and other journalists about these changes?

Finally, what about access issues that go beyond Sept. 11? We have to look beyond homeland security vs. public access. What other things should our task force be doing to help SEJ members with FOIA and other access issues?

Perhaps we should have a section of the SEJ Web site devoted to providing tools for access.

Even before creation of the task force, SEJ was involved in efforts to monitor and speak out about government secrecy in the name of homeland security.

In October 2001, Bruggers signed onto a statement from the Council of Presidents of National Journalism Organizations that said:

"We, as leaders of national journalism organizations, express our concern over increasing restrictions by the United States government that limit news gathering and inhibit the free flow of information in the wake of the September 11 attack.

"We recognize that these are perilous times when unusual measures must be considered," the statement said. "However, we believe that these restrictions pose dangers to American democracy and prevent Americans from obtaining the information they need."

As SEJ president, Bruggers also wrote a letter to EPA Administrator Christie Whitman objecting to the new Envirofacts restrictions.

Ken Ward Jr. is an environmental reporter at The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette., (304) 348-1702.

Media on the move...from page 10

She last penned for *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, where she headed its south-central bureau for two years. Before that Shipley reported for the *Statesman-Journal* of Salem, Ore., where she "absolutely loved" her job—all environment, all the time. Welcome back.

Officially, **Natalie Pawelski** will be studying domestic energy policy when she begins her Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. Unofficially, the CNN environment correspondent says, "I want to jump start my creativity." Eager to step away from television's restrictive two-minutes-and-out format, Pawelski says her classes will hopefully include such liberating activities as art or fiction writing as well as the energy and environmental business courses she craves.

Win an award? Land a great new job? Decide to go back to school? Write a book? Let your colleagues know. Contact George Homsy at ghomsy@rochester.rr.com or fax to (253) 322-5176.

Environment Writer...(from page 1)

and provided fodder for “darts” in the *Columbia Journalism Review*’s darts and laurels column.

In January, everything changed.

Before I explain that change and what appears to be a full recovery, I should address some obvious questions that hung for years over the *Environment Writer* and my emphasis on environmental journalism at the Illinois-based National Safety Council.

The Safety Council for nearly all of that period published the environmental journalism newsletter and distributed it without charge to more than 1,000 reporters and editors nationwide, initially monthly and then 10 times a year.

Why?

Neither environmental issues nor journalism were “core functions” of the 87-year-old organization known more for home, vacation and workplace safety.

I should emphasize, up front, that it is never easy to practice responsible journalism in a fundamentally non-journalism organization (just ask the major news networks about that one!). But the Council in many ways proved to be an outstanding publisher, regularly tolerating the newsletter’s editorial independence.

Environment Writer began publication as a National Safety Council newsletter in mid-1988. The theory behind it: The American public comes to understand—and to misunderstand—environmental and health issues through the mass media. Lacking the resources to directly reach out to some 270 million Americans, how better to inform their judgment than to work with the mass media in responsibly communicating those environmental and health issues?

That was the theory. And for a long time it held.

Environment Writer in the late 1980s and early-to-mid 1990s became what many reporters considered to be one of environmental journalism’s leading promoters and critics. It sought to bootstrap environmental journalism in America’s newsrooms and create a community among those reporters toiling the fields in too-frequent anonymity and isolation.

It became an early booster—all right, let’s admit it, a shameless cheerleader—for what eventually became the Society of Environmental Journalists, SEJ.

In practice, as so often is the case, things worked differently from the theory.

To outsiders—and even to some Safety Council longtime insiders—it never was entirely clear just how and whether environmental issues play in to traditional public safety concerns.

Drawing the connections between, let’s say, urban sprawl or global climate change and public safety may seem obvious to environmental geeks. But the linkages were less obvious to many others. The linkages became even more tenuous with other issues—such as the media’s use of geographic information systems (GIS) software technology for tracking asthma incidence.

Also a challenge was explaining why the more frequent *TipSheet* and related programs—especially international ones like the Central European Environmental Journalism Program—were housed within the Safety Council.

The challenge heightened when *Environment Writer* published pieces potentially at odds with the Safety Council’s own interests.

That happened with a piece on a Du Pont-sponsored focus group of reporters to address the company’s approach to providing insights on agriculture—and pesticide-related information for the public and the news media.

Environment Writer’s coverage of that ill-considered and poorly executed effort named more than a half-dozen “reporters” who participated in the activity and accepted from Du Pont not only associated travel and lodging expenses but also \$750 in cash for their time and effort.

The piece prompted *Columbia Journalism Review* to award “darts” to those named in the piece. *CJR* credited *Environment Writer* for reporting the story. (We took pride when our reportage earned recognition in the form of the review’s “darts.” I wonder if our satisfaction would have been as great if we had also prompted some “laurels.” As yet, we have no way of knowing.)

We published the Du Pont piece when a former Du Pont safety and health executive chaired the Board of Directors of the Safety Council. Advised of the story and that numerous Du Pont officials had declined comment, then-Safety Council President Gerard F. Scannell commendably took a hands-off approach. Publication proceeded.

Some years later, *Environment Writer* reported on efforts by Anheuser Busch’s public relations program to provide gratis subscriptions of the daily “Greenwire” to reporters in areas where the company owns major theme parks or breweries. Interviewing and naming the reporters who accepted the questionable gratuity—leading again to a series of *CJR* “darts”—*Environment Writer* risked offending another Safety Council corporate member.

We heard not a peep from the Safety Council’s management about the piece—either before or since.

Nor did the Council raise an eyebrow over *EW*’s coverage of coal-industry-funded Patrick Michaels, a Virginia climatologist and ad hoc political scientist/activist on global climate change. That coverage, over a period of months, could not have pleased the Council’s coal and mining interests and members. Again: Not a word.

The Council abided even our somewhat pretentious panning of journalistic lapses by the “Big Three” networks and the nation’s most influential newspapers. In doing so, it afforded *EW* the kind of editorial independence most editors could only dream of.

There was, of course, one exception—John Stossell.

Environment Writer held little regard for the ethical lapses repeatedly demonstrated by the ABC “20/20” correspondent. The newsletter reported a number of times that Stossell accepted rich honoraria from chemical interests and other parties at interest in his controversial TV reporting, reporting that usually left environmental activists—and some media critics—in a frenzy. At one point, in 2000, our reporting on Stossell came at a time when the Safety Council had retained Stossell, for his standard handsome speaker’s fee, to keynote its annual convention and conference, expected to attract 17,000-plus attendees.

The piece was labeled “commentary” and challenged well-established conflicts of interest, but it prompted a strong rebuke by Council leadership. This time, they said, the newsletter had

gone too far off the reservation.

That was the one exception in 14 years of editorial oversight. A pretty commendable record, I dare say, and one for which the Council deserves recognition and credit!

Over the past year or so, the Council, as part of a reorganization, had “elevated” me, as executive director of its Washington, D.C.-based Environmental Health Center (EHC) and as editor of *Environment Writer*, to “acting” vice president of a newly established “Home and Community” group.

That position was potentially attractive, as it would continue to embody the kinds of environmental and public health activities my EHC staff and I long had managed—ranging from childhood lead poisoning to indoor air quality and climate change. The new responsibilities would also involve me in some traditional Safety Council efforts, such as first aid and agricultural safety. It also offered me new learning opportunities.

For one who was beginning to feel threadbare from more than two decades of environmental and environmental journalism work, I welcomed the change. (How many monthly columns can one write about environmental journalism without becoming repetitive and predictable? I had wondered.)

By the end of 2001, however, it was becoming apparent those new opportunities might not materialize. The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the weakening economy had dealt serious blows to the Council’s “bottom line,” precarious in even the best of times.

On the last day of January 2002, Council top-management told me it would have to pull the proverbial plug on *Environment Writer*, *TipSheet* and a number of other environmental journalism and public health projects.

The Council told me and several colleagues it was returning to its core activities in traditional workplace and highway safety arenas. Management decided it would forego additional foundation—and government-grant-funded environmental communication programs—always a break-even financial proposition in any event. And it would pare the EHC staff.

For the succeeding three months-plus, with the Council management’s knowledge and approval, I sought a new “home” for *Environment Writer* and *TipSheet*, published with SEJ and the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF). I also hoped to continue work on climate change journalism and communications projects.

The goal was to find a single nonprofit organization that would house two existing journalism grants from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. But the new nonprofit also would have to agree to accept two imminent federal grants—one from the Department of Energy and the other from EPA—dealing with climate change issues.

The universe of potential homes narrowed continuously and quickly.

In time, my journalism partner organizations and colleagues and I gave up on the pursuit of a single nonprofit “home.”

Instead, I’ve found one—the nonprofit Environmental Law Institute (ELI) in Washington—to house the two federal grants.

ELI is “the environmental bar’s SEJ,” representing a broad spectrum of the professional environmental legal, government, and policy community.

For various reasons, though, ELI didn’t meet the criteria for being publisher of *Environment Writer* and *TipSheet*.

For those publications, our journalism funders at Hewlett and our important partners, SEJ and RTNDF, believe we have found an ideal partner in the Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting at the University of Rhode Island’s highly esteemed Graduate School of Oceanography.

Metcalf was founded in 1997 with an endowment from the foundations of *The Providence Journal* and its parent company, A.H. Belo Corporation, and the Philip Graham Fund of *The Washington Post*. The organization’s desire to embrace not only marine reporting, but also environmental reporting appears to make it a perfect host for our environmental journalism ventures. The late *Providence Journal-Bulletin* Publisher Michael P. Metcalf, for whom the foundation is named, is described as “passionate about journalism and the quality of the environment.”

For its part, the Safety Council, having said it no longer wishes to remain active in these fields, has verbally agreed to the transfer of funds to URI Foundation from Hewlett.

With the combination comes a second opportunity to focus on the kinds of environmental journalism activities that kept me and my colleague Joe Davis, in particular, “gainfully employed” at the Safety Council through the end of January.

It took a lot of hard work and a lot of sleepless hours—and support not only from Hewlett Foundation program staff but also from outsiders, including SEJ and many individual SEJ members—to secure the new home for the upcoming environmental journalism publications and activities.

With luck and more old-fashioned hard work, both *Environment Writer* (which suspended with the December-January issue) and *TipSheet* will continue.

Expect *Environment Writer*—yes, it will keep that name—to resume publication this summer.

Bud Ward, an SEJ co-founder and honorary member, in addition to being editor of Environment Writer, has new affiliations with the Environmental Law Institute and with the University of Rhode Island’s journalism program. (He also wants you to know he didn’t write that headline; SEJournal editors wrote it.)

Journalists, students and educators,

Are you getting **ALL** that SEJ has to offer?

Okay, you’re getting your **SEJournal**; that’s a given. But what about *TipSheet*; SEJ-Beat, a daily digest of environmental news stories from across the continent; access to SEJ’s members-only Web pages (which houses, among other things, an online directory of members); SEJ-Talk, a listserv where journalists can discuss issues or pick the brains of peers. (Hey, what if you had to cover something like bioremediation? Who you gonna call?) And don’t forget those hefty discounts for the annual conferences.

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Inside Story**Emerging issue...**(from page 1)

telling you. Asking people to walk you through it. What is it they have done? What are they finding? Why is it important?"

One of the pioneering researchers in chemicals that mimic hormones, John McLachlan of the Tulane-Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research, told one reporter that if he wanted to know more about hormones and substances that can affect the endocrine system, he should read Janet Raloff's articles in *Science News*.

SEJournal interviewed Raloff to get the "Inside Story" on covering these new pollutants:

Q. How did this whole issue of hormones and endocrine disruptors end up on your radar?

A. It was about 1993. I went to a meeting in New York, the Vice President's Council on Breast Cancer, and they were having a morning session on environmental links to breast cancer. I was thinking, this will be cool. It will be all these new things that maybe I hadn't heard at this point. People were talking about DDT and PCBs. In fact, there seemed to be one pervasive theme for every presentation that day—and that seemed to be something that acted like estrogen or worked through the estrogen systems. I thought that would be an interesting theme for a story.

That was the first thing I did on hormones and endocrine disruption. I didn't like the term "endocrine disruption." I really hadn't heard it at that point. And, while I was working on the story, someone told me about Theo Colborn's Wingspread Conferences. (Colborn has co-written a book on the issue called "Our Stolen Future," and convened conferences on the topic.) So I called her, and she said, "We don't talk of these things as hormones, we talk about them as endocrine disruptors. It's a term I came up with, and I like it, so I think you should use it." I told her I didn't think it is something reporters can relate to; it's kind of a jargon term.

Anyway, what it is called is not the important issue. (Colborn said) what is important is the second-generation effect (of exposures to hormone-mimicking substances). I felt that that was too broad, so I put her aside and focused on what I heard at that New York meeting.

Several months later I came back to her because I heard there was going to be another Wingspread meeting. And she told me, "You really made a mistake in the first story by focusing on the breast cancer thing because cancer is not the issue. It is the second-generation effects." So, I told her, "Tell me more and tell me about more people." And that led to a two-part series on the whole idea of environmental hormones and what they can do in terms of reproduction (problems). That came out about six months after my first story.

Since then, I have continued to keep in touch (with the researchers).

Q. Why is this story important?

A. In some ways, it is something like carcinogens. I think there are tons of them out there that can have an effect, an impact. But nobody had thought about that as a sort of mechanism for

action, for determining what's toxic. In fact, some things are carcinogens at one level and environmental hormones at another level and they probably do something else at another concentration. So, you have to find the window of vulnerability for that mechanism or that agent.

It doesn't cause something unique in terms of toxicity (like death). There is a certain range of developmental problems or cancer that occur spontaneously, or what we think of as spontaneously. So unless you looked specifically at a mechanism of action, you'd never be able to tie a particular toxicant to a problem.

Q. The whole idea of toxicity and safety has been oriented to the question of does it cause cancer. But some of the science points to these chemicals and hormone-mimicking substances having reproductive effects or other impacts along those lines. Is that an important part of the story?

A. Cancer can be one of the end-points. I think hormones have a more generic impact—they rule everything that happens in the body. Something that is an environmental hormone can have an impact. It could have an impact on anything. It could make you age faster. It could cause neurotoxicity. It can cause diabetes. It can impact any tissue and organ system.

It's not that this causes cancer or it doesn't, or that it causes neurotoxicity or it doesn't. It can affect any living system, since hormones do everything. They orchestrate everything that goes on in the body. If you substitute some pollutant for a hormone, you can now alter almost every system. You realize this could do anything. It can alter metabolism.

Q. How do you balance between writing a story that sounds an alarm to sounding ho-hum—"Gee whiz, we change the sex of a few fish, who cares?" I think that is a problem most of us face a lot of the time.

A. This is also one of those rare cases where more is not necessarily worse. In toxicology, there has normally been this idea that if a certain amount is dangerous, then less is more benign. This is one instance where less may be more dangerous. That is so contradictory in terms of what we think about in toxicity, I also find that interesting. You have a hard time bringing that idea to the reader. We are told that if one milligram causes cancer, one picogram probably won't. In hormones, it may be exactly the opposite.

Q. These agents are thought to cause problems at very, very low levels.

A. Yes, one of the things I find interesting about this story too is that hormones work in those parts-per-billion, parts-per-trillion levels. Most of the time, you get this "Gee whiz, that's barely detectable" response.

Well you can't gauge by just looking at an amount of something how toxic it is going to be. And, because the way hormones work, there are these windows of vulnerability. So what

(Continued on next page)

Cover Story

is toxic at one time, or one gender, or one species or one part of your lifecycle may not be (toxic) in another one. Again, it makes it very complex and you have all of these caveats. Each time you do a story, this is when it proved toxic, but it may not prove toxic at the other times. In a sense, it makes it a much more complex story, to explain all those things. So, how do you not sound alarmist?

I think our leaders are pretty good (at understanding risk), although not perfect. You stick with the scientific method: It is only valid in these terms you have spelled out. And, we try to spell out the most important conditions in the experiment we are trying to describe.

Your readers want you to extrapolate and your sources don't. That's the real challenge. (For example,) if this were something other than a flathead minnow that was reproductively active and exposed to these particular hormones, what might you expect to see? Some researchers will try to speculate but offer a ton of caveats. That is one place where I find John McLachlan is very good. He knows enough about the area and he is confident enough in what he knows and his reputation, and he is not afraid to speculate. Other people speculate well beyond what I think is reasonable. I won't quote them because I think they go too far and we will end up looking more alarmist than the data justify. And that is a real judgment.

You find someone who has collected data; you run it by two or more scientists in the field. You can literally stack the decks by using people who will give you some kind of extreme response, but we try not to do that. They (the scientists) help you curb how far you can go. Asking two or more people to comment and their perspective on the research, I think, will keep us from straying. You find someone in the same field and they know the literature on the topic.

Q. Since you are writing for *Science News*, are you assuming your readers already know a good bit about science?

A. In fact, most of our readers do have a science background. Most of them have two-plus technical degrees. However, we never make the assumption that their field of interest or research is in the subject we are writing about. We may be writing about genetics or soil conservation to mathematicians. Or we may be

writing about mathematics for physicians. So we are not expecting they are familiar with the field we are writing about. We can use compound, complex sentences.

Unlike a newspaper, we have a pretty rigid length limit. Most people don't realize how short we have to write—1,500 or 2,000 words, absolutely no more. For a news story, it may only be 500-700 words. For a feature with 15 sources and complex ideas, we still can't get more than 2,000 words. The idea is how much can you shoehorn into a small space and still make it comprehensible. That's what I wrestle with every day.

Q. When you write your first draft, how often are you well in excess of 1,500 or 2,000 words and how to you trim that down?

A. One hundred percent of the time. I do what I call 'surgical cuts.' I go through there and start pulling from the middle of every sentence any extraneous words. Every quote that isn't essential. You get these great quotable quotes that are usually fairly long and rambling, like what you are hearing from me now. Any excess caveats. You just pare it down, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph. Then count again. I spend perhaps 70 percent of my time doing the reporting, then 30 percent doing the writing. Of that 30 percent, at least a third to 35 percent (of the writing time) is on cutting. On these kinds of issues, you have to put in a lot more reporting time, especially compared to other stories.

Q. Regarding your story on the use of hormones in the beef industry, I think anybody who eats beef would be interested in a story like that.

A. This gives you a little better picture of the environmental footprint our choices are having. I am always interested, as an environmental reporter, pointing out the environmental implications of the choices we make when we choose to buy something with all the excess wrapping on it. What are the costs of the production and disposal of that wrapping independent of the product we were ostensibly buying? What are the upstream costs of a particular choice to eat beef, versus chicken or fish or soybeans? What are the downstream costs of, say, waste disposal? This is one of those upstream costs that isn't ordinarily captured when you look at what it costs to produce this beef. (Use of antibiotics in livestock production and) antibiotic resistance is another one of those issues.

Q. You also seem to be a rarity—a journalist with a scientific background. Do you have any advice for people considering science journalism?

A. I have been at *Science News* 24 years. I have been a reporter 26 years, plus six internships I had when I was in college. I went into Northwestern University's journalism program with the intent of being a science journalist. I was interested not only in journalism but also astronomy and physics. Both my bachelor's and master's (degrees) are in journalism, but one quarter of my credits were in physics.

If someone going into science journalism today asked me what would be the magical combination, I would say chemistry and journalism. I cover chemistry all the time but I have learned most of that on the job.

Whatever you learn, it no longer ceases to be terribly relevant three or four years out of school. ♦

Some of Raloff's work on these topics:

- Hormones: Here's the beef

<http://www.sciencenews.org/20020105/bob13.asp>

- Composting cuts manure's toxic legacy

<http://www.sciencenews.org/20011103/note15.asp>

- Excreted drugs: Something looks fishy

<http://www.sciencenews.org/20000617/fob1.asp>

Resources

- U.S. press release on U.S. Geological Survey's first nationwide look at pharmaceuticals, hormones and other organic contaminants in U.S. streams

http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1569m.html

- U.S. Geological Survey's report:

<http://toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc.html>

Bookshelf...from page 18

elephant herds in the wild West. So why not honor our founders and reintroduce the mammoths' closest relatives the elephants to share and transform our rangeland ecologies with their fellow Americans, the buffalo, the porcupine and the wolf?

Further into the book some more radical visions bloom like spidery wild orchids. The Rod Nash essay, "Island Civilization" argues that in 1,000 years 1.5 billion people could live in a series of 500 habitats on an otherwise wild planet, to which John Davis counters, 1.5 billion "has three too many zeros...1.5 million is plenty."

Having vented deep-ecology's misanthropic tendencies, the book closes with some fine field essays on wild places and critters from writerly contributors like Doug Peacock, Barry Lopez, Anne LaBastille and Bill McKibben, who notes that in instructing Job, God pointed out (in his longest speech of the Bible) that people are but a part of creation, not its central figure.

"The New Economy of Nature" speaks to our newer free-market God of Mammon, arguing that environmental conservation has to become economically profitable to work, and will once we begin to treat our ecosystems as the vital capital assets that they are.

Written by Stanford scientist Gretchen Daily and investigative reporter Katherine Ellison, "New Economy" builds on Daily's earlier work, "Nature's Services," by adding narrative and storyline. The narrative is loosely based on the work of the Katoomba group, named after the Aussie resort town where a few dozen scientists, economists and investors met two years ago under the auspices of the D.C. think tank, Forest Trends. They went there to discuss how to turn natural services into commodities that the market-system will value at least as much as timber, pulp and concrete. Forests, after all, provide biodiversity and sequester carbon, wetlands purify water and reduce flooding, oceans create oxygen, weather and protein.

By the end of the book it's not clear that the Katoombas are going to be the winning tribe in our planetary game of survival, but at least they've provided a storyline for Daily and Ellison to

pursue, introducing us to a series of colorful characters and settings along the way.

There's King County, Wash., official Ron Sims using personal charisma, family anecdotes and political arm-twisting to broker trades of development rights for urban construction permits, saving forests in the process.

There's New York City investing \$1.5 billion to restore the Catskill Mountains' watershed around its reservoirs rather than spending \$6 billion for a filtration plant (and where would you rather picnic?).

In Napa, Calif., two women activists play good cop, bad cop in order to get the Army Corps to tear down its ineffective concrete flood control channel and restore a natural flood plain (which in turn sees waterside real-estate values rise like geese off the river).

"Earth Sanctuaries" in Australia are profit-making eco-reserves full of wallabies, numbats and platypus restored by John Wamsley, an entrepreneurial bloke in a cat-hat (feral cats are killing native wildlife, so he's out to even the score).

And while win-win examples in Canada, Costa Rica and Africa prove more problematic, the authors argue that only when you can provide real economic value to local residents for the protection rather than the liquidation of nature, will we have a fighting chance of saving the environment.

In the end, of course, we'd like to believe that we are an altruistic species, but the death of carrier pigeons and coral reefs argues otherwise. So we may have to accept the logic of the market and the new economy of nature. Still one hopes that we can also use self-interest to advance a greater interest in the stewardship of our rather awe-inspiring blue marble planet. After all the economic services provided by caribou herds and polar bears in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge may not be equal in dollar value to its subsurface oil, but the existence value of that bit of wild Earth, even if one never gets to see it, is still, like holy grace, something to treasure.

—David Helvarg is SEJournal Bookshelf editor.

Fourteen journalists win Metcalf Fellowships

The Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting has awarded 14 fellowships to journalists in broadcast, print, and electronic media to attend a week-long marine and environmental science workshop at the URI Graduate School of Oceanography.

The journalists are Jennette Barnes, *Warwick Beacon*, Warwick, R.I.; Susan Cover, *Springfield News-Sun*, Springfield, Ohio; Tracey Davanna, freelance, Belfast, Ireland; Pamela Ferdinand, *The Washington Post*, Washington, D.C.; Molly Kavanaugh, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Elyria, Ohio; Pagnawath Kuhn, *Business News* and National Television, Phnom Penh, Cambodia; Jake Miller, freelancer, Jamaica Plain, Mass.; Scott Miller, KING TV, Seattle, Wash.; Aaron Nicodemus, *The Standard-Times*, New Bedford, Mass.; Alex Nussbaum, *The Record*, Hackensack, N.J.; Smita Paul, multimedia freelance, New York, N.Y.; Jean Plunkett, *The Providence Journal*, Providence, R.I.; Annie Sherman, South County Newspapers,

Wakefield, R.I.; David Wiwchar, *Ha-Shilth-Sa* newspaper, Port Alberni, British Columbia.

The six-day immersion program, Coastal Impacts: Marine and Environmental Science for Journalists, June 23-28, gives journalists an opportunity to learn about the basic science underlying the news. The workshop includes basic research in the field and lab with scientists and graduate students; lectures that examine the intersection of science, policy, and politics; and a public lecture and debate series about science and journalism.

The Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting was established in 1997 with funding from the A.H. Belo Corporation, The Providence Journal Foundation, and the Washington Post's Philip L. Graham Fund, with additional funding from the Telaka Foundation in 1998. The Metcalf Institute was named in honor of the late publisher of *The Providence Journal*, Michael P. Metcalf. For more information, visit www.gso.uri.edu/metcalf.



Application for Membership

Society of Environmental Journalists

P.O. Box 2492

Jenkintown, PA 19046

Phone: (215) 884-8174 Fax: (215) 884-8175 Email: sej@sej.org

<http://www.sej.org>

SEJ does not make membership eligibility decisions based on race, religion, gender, national origin or sexual orientation.

Return completed application with special-offer payment of \$20 US funds to the SEJ office.

(Special offer applies to first-time members only. Previous members, please include \$40.)

Please include a résumé. Attach a business card if available.

Categories of membership:

Active: Persons primarily engaged in the gathering, reporting, editing, photographing, producing or cartooning of news for dissemination by regularly published, general circulation newspapers, magazines, and newsletters, radio and television stations and networks, syndicated news services, and other media available to the general public.

Associate: Those individuals who do not qualify for Active or Academic membership but who, in the majority opinion of the SEJ board, will contribute to the attainment of the objectives of the SEJ. Associate members must be substantially engaged in journalistic pursuits. Associate members enjoy all the programs, services and discounts that active members do. Associate members may run only for the board position representing associate members, and to vote only in the associate members election.

Academic: Persons on the faculty or enrolled as students of an accredited college, university or other school who have an interest in environmental writing. Academic members enjoy all the programs, services and discounts that active members do. Academic members may run only for the board position representing academic members, and to vote only in the academic members election.

SEJ bylaws preclude from membership persons who engage in lobbying or public relations work relating to environmental issues and preclude from active membership persons whose employer engages in lobbying or public relations work relating to environmental issues.

SEJ defines lobbying as professional work primarily designed to influence legislation or government regulations. SEJ defines public relations as professional work on behalf of an organization, institution or business that promotes its views on issues affecting the organization, institution or business. It often involves issuing press releases or other statements to the media.

If you are uncertain about your eligibility, please refer to SEJ's bylaws at <http://www.sej.org/about/index5.htm> and SEJ's membership guidelines at <http://www.sej.org/join/index.htm>, or call (215) 884-8174 for a copy. SEJ staff is happy to help you should you need assistance.

1. Is journalism your primary occupation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please go on to question 2.

If no, please consider questions 2 and 3 with regard to your primary employer as well as your journalism work.

2. Are you presently engaged in lobbying or public relations work relating to environmental issues? (See definitions above.)

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answered yes, we regret that you are not eligible for membership in SEJ. You are, however, welcome to subscribe to our quarterly newsletter, SEJournal, and to attend national conferences at a special subscriber's discount rate. Please see the enclosed SEJournal subscription form to determine your subscription rate. If you answered no, please go on to the next question.

3. Is your employer engaged in lobbying or public relations work relating to environmental issues? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please go on to the next question.

If yes, you will most likely be eligible for SEJ's associate category, if other criteria for membership are met. Please complete the rest of the form.

4. Are you a full-time faculty member or student at an accredited college, university or other school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, you are most likely eligible for SEJ's academic category, if other criteria for membership are met. Please complete the rest of the form.

If you answered no to questions 2 and 3, you are most likely eligible for SEJ's active category. Please complete the rest of the form.

5. Select one only: Which one of the following most accurately describes your employment?

- ☐ Author ☐ Faculty ☐ Freelancer ☐ Magazine ☐ News service ☐ Newsletter
☐ Newspaper ☐ Nonprofit ☐ Online Media ☐ Photographer ☐ Publisher ☐ Radio
☐ Student ☐ Television Other: _____

6. Please list media companies for whom you report stories. Freelancers, please list your primary companies first. Feel free to add a page or refer us to your résumé.

7. Are the stories you publish or produce available to the general public? ☐ Yes ☐ No

8 Tell us about yourself. Please list any books, awards, special reports or other work you have done that you'd like us to be aware of. _____

9. I hereby apply for membership in the Society of Environmental Journalists and do attest that the information I have provided on this form is true and complete. I understand the Board of Directors retains sole authority in determining eligibility for membership in any category. I understand that my continuing eligibility depends upon my employment being acceptable for membership by the terms of the SEJ bylaws, and upon my returning a completed survey each year to the membership committee. I further understand that if I engage in professional activity which renders me ineligible for membership in SEJ, I will notify the membership committee and have my name withdrawn from the membership rolls.

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SEJournal Vol. 12 #1

Environmental news from across the continent

Are you getting your daily dose of environmental news? Are you getting your stories out there for your colleagues to see?

The SEJ-beat listserv is an electronic version of *EJToday*, SEJ's Web-based news digest that offers annotated links to the day's most interesting new environmental stories.

Journalists, submit your stories by visiting www.sej.org and clicking the *EJToday* link. When you're there, select the "Submit a story" option.

Members are subscribed to SEJ-beat automatically, but anyone can receive this free service. Every weekday you'll get an e-mail listing the newest stories posted to *EJToday*. You can then read the full text of any of those stories by visiting the *EJToday* page at www.sej.org

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ARIZONA

► **Water settlement:** *The Arizona Republic's* Shaun McKinnon reported the federal government is soon expected to sign the largest Indian water settlement in U.S. history with the Gila River Indian Community. That will complete negotiations with a dozen tribes. The tribes' combined population isn't even 80,000 but it will control enough water to serve the household needs of roughly Arizona's entire population, 5.3 million people. The supply will be virtually the only water supply remaining that's available for continued urban growth beyond what can be supported by the supplies that Tucson and the Phoenix-area cities and suburbs already possess. Contact McKinnon at (602) 444-8632 or at Shaun.McKinnon@arizonarepublic.com

► **Owl habitat:** *The Arizona Daily*

Star's Tony Davis wrote a story based on a computer analysis of building permit data that showed the Pima County and Marana governments had issued more building permits in federally designated critical pygmy owl habitat in the two years after it was designated in July 1999 than in the two years before. Developers discounted this data, however, on the grounds that many or most of the permits since 1999 were issued for developments that had graded their land before critical habitat was approved and more federal restrictions kicked in on building in the area. But since land sale prices in the habitat area generally rose during those two years for all but large parcels, environmentalists said the data showed that owl protection was good for the economy and not a detriment. Contact Davis at (520) 807-7790 or erdin@azstarnet.com. *The Star's* Ric Volante, (520) 573-4129, did the computer work.

► **Disappearing native fish:** *The East Valley Tribune's* Joe Kullman wrote about the plight of Arizona's endangered fish. All but eight of 32 native species are endangered or threatened, and almost every one of them is gone from the Valley's Verde and Salt Rivers. The same is true at Saguaro, Canyon and Roosevelt lakes, all crammed with non-native fish that are the major obstacle in the natives' struggle for survival, biologists say. Trout, carp, walleye, bluegill, catfish, etc. either feed off natives or overtake their habitats. Populations are declining 60 to 90 percent among most remaining species, says Paul Marsh, ASU fish conservation researcher. Contact Kullman at (480) 970-2342.

► **Protection vs. development:** *The Arizona Daily Star's* Mitch Tobin took a long, hard look at how Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan proposes to protect 55 vulnerable species from future extinction or endangerment. Only eight of the species are federally listed as endangered or threatened, but scientists working for the plan say they want to protect the others locally in case they later become endangered nationally. Nearly one-fourth of the 55 species have never been documented locally. The sci-

entists say so many of the species have "no recorded locations" because few people have looked for them and knowledge of the county's biological resources is poor. Biologists say that protecting habitat for the 55 lesser-known creatures will preserve the entire region's ecosystem and maintain the web of life that binds all species, including humans. But developers and private property advocates say county officials are using biology as a cover for another goal, to create a growth management tool that could raise housing prices and local property taxes and deprive people of their rights to use their land. Contact Tobin at (520) 573-4185 or mtobin@azstarnet.com.

► **The Arizona Republic's** McKinnon also wrote about the pluses and minuses of growth management in the state since the passage of separate "Smart Growth" bills in 1998 and 2000. Arizona gained 189,000 new residents between the time of the 2000 census and July 1, 2001, to reach 5.3 million people. The law has given cities and counties some additional tools to try to slow sprawl or help governments defray its costs, such as impact fees and optional urban service boundaries, but has no statewide standards or enforcement mechanism. Although city governments were required under the law to revise their general land use plans by Dec. 31, 2001, only 13 of 85 cities have complied to date and there are no penalties for those missing the deadline. Contact McKinnon at (602) 444-8632 or at Shaun.McKinnon@arizonarepublic.com.

► **High cost of mold:** *The Republic's* Christine Romero reported that a high number of mold and water damage claims by homeowners is pushing up home insurance rates, and that insurers say some customers' rates may rise up to 30 percent. State Farm paid \$11.6 million in Arizona last year related to water damage, with \$4.6 million of that stemming from plumbing leaks during the first six months. The insurer requested an average 16 percent rate hike from the Department of Insurance in December. Some people blame mold growth on building techniques stemming

from the Valley's frantic pace of construction. The state's warm temperatures, which incubate and help mold flourish, also contribute to the problem, Romero reported. Insurers say mold growth also can be caused by a lack of upkeep on a home and results from a slow leak or pipes bursting when temperatures dip. Contact Romero at christine.romero@arizonarepublic.com or at (602) 444-8285.

► **Campus controversy:** *The Star's* Inger Sandal reported on a controversy over the future of a cactus garden named after the pioneering naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch, whose books and television specials in the 1950s and 60s gave many Americans their first taste of the Sonoran Desert besides what they'd seen in cowboy movies. The University of Arizona had planned to move the cacti and three, 80-year-old boojum trees to another location to make way for an alumni plaza, but student and community protest forced it to back off and the ultimate outcome was a plan to expand the garden and plant more desert vegetation there than before. Contact Sandal at (520) 573-4115 or isandal@azstarnet.com.

► **Superfund cuts:** "Sixteen years. Thirty-three toxic sites. Zero cleanups." That was the *Republic's* Mary Jo Pitzl's lead on a story of the problems with the Arizona State Superfund program, created to clean up contamination that its federal counterpart couldn't handle, she said. Although the state's Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund is making some progress toward cleanups today, Pitzl reported that a state budget crisis is forcing a \$10 million cut from the program this year followed by a possible \$15 million slash next year. She quoted Richard Bark, an Arizona Chamber of Commerce lobbyist: "We've got this great car designed, and now it's stuck in the driveway." Contact Pitzl at (602) 444-8963 or at maryjo.pitzl@arizonarepublic.com.

► **Eco-terror fires:** The *Republic's* Judi Villa and James Hibberd of the *New York Times* covered the final chapter in the arrest and conviction of laid-off public relations and marketing executive Mark Sands for setting eight fires to luxury homes near the Phoenix Mountain Preserves from April 2000 through

January 2001. Sands in February drew an 18-year prison sentence in federal court, and must serve almost 15 years before being eligible for parole. A federal judge also ordered him to pay \$2.8 million in restitution. He told reporters that his first arson was a protest against an unsightly house that he felt was spoiling his jogging trail, but Hibberd quoted Sands as saying that he then started lighting fires to prove to himself that he could still run a campaign.

CANADA

From SEJ-BEAT

► **Kyoto Protocol pricetag:** In a story that ran April 26, Steven Chase of the *Toronto Globe and Mail* looked at provincial estimates that suggest the Kyoto Protocol could cost Canadians as much as \$23-billion in 2012 alone in a worst-case scenario, or add \$5-billion to the economy that year in an ideal situation.

CALIFORNIA

From SEJ-BEAT

► **Sweetheart Rent:** Paul Rogers of the *San Jose Mercury News* reports in a four-month database investigation how 136 ski resorts operating on America's national forests pay pennies on the dollar back to Uncle Sam in rent for the very land that makes their business, hotels and pricey condo developments possible. Resorts such as Vail, Telluride, Aspen, Heavenly and Taos pay a national average of 2.28 percent of revenues—compared to 5.4 percent that national parks concessionaires pay—through a little-watched 1996 law written by the ski industry and its accounting firm, Arthur Andersen. Contact Rogers at progers@sjmercury.com or (408) 920-5045. View the story at <http://www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/news/nation/3016670.htm>.

► **Wolf at the door?:** Within the next few years, biologists say, gray wolves will traverse the mountains and valleys between Idaho and northern California and begin showing up in the Golden State, reports Michael McCabe of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Environmentalists say a New Jersey-sized area in the Klamath-Siskiyou areas of northern California should be designated

a wolf recovery zone, but cattle and sheep ranchers are wary, says McCabe's Feb. 5 story. McCabe can be reached at (650) 210-0377 or mmccabe@sfnchronicle.com.

FLORIDA

From SEJ-BEAT

► **Manatees improving:** Craig Pittman of the *St. Petersburg Times* reported April 5 that a once-in-a-decade gathering of about 100 manatee experts found that the endangered marine mammal is actually doing better, with an increased population in several areas. But risks to the species' survival are on the increase as well, from an increase in boats and marinas, a decline in water quality and a drop in the number of power plants offering them a warm place to hole up during cool weather. Contact Pittman at (727) 893-8111. View the story at http://www.sptimes.com/2002/04/05/State/Study_hints_at_decade.shtml.

► **Alligator alarm:** Craig Pittman of the *St. Petersburg Times* looks at how the spread of suburban development in Florida has brought people into increasing conflict with alligators, especially in the spring when the males go looking for love in all the wrong places. Ran April 17. See contact above. View the story at http://sptimes.com/2002/04/17/TampaBay/Spring_in_their_step.shtml.

GEORGIA

► **Beetle attack:** The Southern pine beetle has hit North Georgia's 750,000-acre Chattahoochee National Forest hard. Infestations tend to occur naturally every seven to 10 years, but four years of drought have left the trees especially vulnerable. An extremely mild winter also contributed to the problem, because prolonged periods of freezing weather are needed to kill the insects. The only way to control the epidemic is to cut down and remove infested trees. But Forest Service officials complain that they've been unable to manage the situation properly. Logging in the Chattahoochee came to a standstill several years ago as a result of lawsuits by environmental groups. Debbie Gilbert reported this story in Gainesville's *The Times* Feb. 5. Contact her at (770) 532-1234, ext. 254, or dgilbert@gainesvilletimes.com.

► **Watering restrictions:**

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources is considering permanent restrictions on outdoor watering, even after the state's drought finally ends. Residents in 15 metro Atlanta counties have been following an odd-even schedule for watering lawns and washing cars. Under the new plan, they would continue to use this schedule even when rain is plentiful. As drought worsens, the hours and days of allowed watering would be progressively curtailed. A Level Four drought would trigger a total ban on watering. Critics say the plan focuses too much on homeowners and exempt industries, which are the biggest water users. Officials say industries don't need to be regulated, because they already have an economic incentive to control their water use voluntarily. Debbie Gilbert reported this in *The Times* April 7.

LOUISIANA

► **Gulf of Mexico waters worst:**

Mark Schleifstein of the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* looks at the new EPA report that rates the waters in the Gulf of Mexico as the most troubled in the nation in a story April 3. The report put a lot of the blame on Louisiana. See the full story at <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/front-page/index.ssf?/newsstory/coast03.html>. Mark Schleifstein can be reached at mschleifstein@timespicayune.com or (504) 826-3327.

► **Vinyl-tainted water:**

Contaminated groundwater stretches more than a mile from Bayou Jacob to Dow Chemical—water that some residents drank for years without knowing that test results had showed it was polluted. How the contamination got there, why residents were not told their drinking water was tainted for four years after the pollution was first found, and what the possible health effects may be remain unknown. Mike Dunne of the Baton Rouge *Advocate* looked at the problem and possible health impacts while reporter Emily Kern looked at the legal fallout. The story ran March 3. Contact Dunne at (225) 388-0301 or mdunne@theadvocate.com. Find the main story at: <http://br.theadvocate.com/news/story.asp?StoryID=28391>

NEW MEXICO

► **Drought emergency:** New Mexico joined several other western states on April 26 when Gov. Gary Johnson declared a state of emergency due to drought. *The Albuquerque Journal's* Tania Soussan reported that the declaration freed up more than \$90 million in state money. Parts of the state are in severe drought. Reservoirs are low, several cities have water restrictions in place and wildfires already have destroyed 28 homes and burned more than 57,000 acres. Soussan can be reached at (505) 823-3833 or tsoussan@abqjournal.com.

► **Rio Grande ruling:** The federal government has the authority to take water from middle Rio Grande farmers, the city of Albuquerque and other water contractors to protect the endangered silvery minnow, a judge ruled in April. Soussan reported that the ruling could come into play this summer as drought threatens to dry up the stretch of the river in central New Mexico where the endangered species lives. The ruling came in a nearly 3-year-old lawsuit filed by six environmental groups aiming to protect the minnow and the endangered Southwestern willow flycatcher. See contact information above.

► **Crumbling levees:** Flood-control levees along the middle Rio Grande are in such bad shape in some places that they are in danger of failing during a summer monsoon rain, Soussan reported in March. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which is responsible for maintaining the levees, said 25 spots are in critical condition and could crumble during the type of peak flows that come every other year. "This is shocking to me because it means a real and substantial threat exists to human health, safety and property in the middle Rio Grande," State Engineer Tom Turney said at a meeting of the Rio Grande Compact Commission. See contact information above.

► **Fire potential:** The potential for large, intense fires across New Mexico has already surpassed record levels several times this year, and is expected to do so again in April, May and June, Soussan

reported. "It looks pretty darn bad," said Chuck Maxwell, manager of the fire weather program for the interagency Southwest Coordination Center. A report released by the center shows New Mexico is likely to suffer eight to 10 weeks of very high fire danger, including two to three weeks of extreme risk in late May and early June. Tania Soussan can be reached at (505) 823-3833 or tsoussan@abqjournal.com.

► **Two fang's worth:** New Mexico State Land Commissioner Ray Powell Jr. said people tell him that if rattlesnakes could vote he'd still be in the governor's race. Powell dropped out of the race in March after receiving less than 5 percent of delegate votes at the state Democratic Party's pre-primary convention. But it might have been otherwise if New Mexico's pit vipers could have put in their two fangs' worth, Ollie Reed Jr. of the *Albuquerque Tribune* reported. Every year since he became land commissioner nine years ago, Powell has tried to discourage the annual Rattlesnake Roundup in Alamogordo by prohibiting the trapping or killing of the snakes on state trust land during the roundup. "We need to demonstrate respect for all living creatures," Powell, a veterinarian, said. "This is an unregulated exploitation of wildlife, which could disrupt the delicate balance of this desert ecosystem." Reed can be reached at (505) 823-3619 or oreed@abqtrib.com.

► **Gobbling goats:** Only two things will get rid of invasive salt cedar—a nuclear bomb or the pitter-patter of tiny hooves, Lani Lamming told the *Albuquerque Journal's* Jennifer McKee. Lamming, who owns Ewe4ic Ecological Services out of Alpine, Wyo., is using 1,000 cashmere goats to eat up salt cedar and Russian olive that have virtually taken over a creek bottom in northern New Mexico. The goats eat noxious weeds, poisonous plants, invasive shrubs and trees. Reach McKee at (505) 988-8881 or jmckee@abqjournal.com.

► **Elk hunting:** *The Santa Fe New Mexican's* Ben Neary reported in April on a new plan by the Game and Fish Department to buy the forage from a rancher who has complained for years

about elk eating his hay crop. In response, the game department has given him dozens of permit authorizations, which he could sell to hunters interested in hunting elk in the general area. The department also has given him a permit to kill elk on his property. Now, buying hay and fencing in a rancher's land could become another tool in the state's battle to deal with depredation complaints around the state. Contact Neary at bneary@sfnewmexican.com or (505) 986-3036.

NORTH CAROLINA

► **Mercury problem:** A dangerous and mercury-tainted chemical factory near Wilmington, N.C. kept operating because the company that built it decided that cleaning up its pollution would cost too much, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reported March 31. Internal documents of AlliedSignal Inc., now known as Honeywell International, reveal that the company supported the factory and others in three states for years after it sold them to a new owner. What's left is a mess by the banks of the Cape Fear River. Contact James Eli Shiffer at (919) 836-5701 or jshiffer@newsobserver.com.

► **Asbestos 'snow':** *The News & Observer* of Raleigh took readers into a paper mill in Plymouth, N.C., that has been owned and operated by Weyerhaeuser Co. for nearly 45 years. Workers in the economically distressed region were grateful for their jobs. But the company knew something the workers didn't: The "snowstorms" they experienced every day were, in fact, loaded with asbestos fibers. Many of them fell ill; some died. Internal company documents revealed that Weyerhaeuser knew about its asbestos problem since at least the early 1970s. The stories ran April 21-22. Contact Anne Saker at asaker@newsobserver.com or (919) 829-8955

OHIO

From SEJ-BEAT

► **Nuclear reactor corrosion:** John Funk of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote March 26 about a preliminary report from FirstEnergy that says signs of corrosion at the Davis-Besse plant were apparent as early as 1999, but that no one understood the evidence. Contact Funk at

jfunk@plained.com or (216) 999-4138 / See the story at http://www.cleveland.com/business/plained/index.ssf?xml/story.ssf/html_standard.xml?/base/business/101713877827574104.xml.

► **Pipeline problems:** In a two-part series, Tom Henry of *The (Toledo) Blade* shows how vulnerable the nation has become to underground pipeline explosions—and how horrific, deadly episodes documented in places such as Bellingham, Wash., and Carlsbad, N.M., have brought the issue close to home, no matter where you live. The story ran March 24-25. Contact Henry at (419) 724-6079 or thenry@theblade.com.

OREGON

► **Corps miscalculates:** A Portland *Oregonian* investigation found that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers inflated projected financial benefits and minimized the downsides of a \$188 million plan to dredge the Columbia River to allow bigger ships to utilize Portland's port. Corps officials dispute the finding. The story ran March 3, with numerous followups. *The Oregonian's* Brent Hunsberger can be reached at (503) 221-8359 or brenthunsberger@news.oregonian.com.

► **"Sound science" sounds good, but...** : *The Oregonian's* Michael Milstein took a thorough look at how politicians' calls for "sound science" in environmental decisions can be misleading. "Don't let someone tell you, 'Science made me do something,'" Thomas Mills, director of the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, told Milstein for his Jan.23 piece. "... People make decisions, and that's the bottom line." Milstein can be reached at (503) 294-7689 or michaelmilstein@news.oregonian.com.

► **Timber wars revived:** The Northwest Forest Plan adopted by the Clinton administration to assuage the wounds of the wars over the spotted owl is not working, reports Michael Milstein of *The Oregonian*. While environmentalists have launched a renewed campaign to put all old-growth on public lands off-limits to logging, the Bush administration is pushing to increase logging levels to

those envisioned in the plan, Milstein's April 29 story says. Milstein can be reached at (503) 294-7689 or michaelmilstein@news.oregonian.com.

PENNSYLVANIA

► **Factory farms:** *The Philadelphia Inquirer* described how large-scale farming operations, long an environmental threat in North Carolina and Iowa, have begun to proliferate in Pennsylvania. Lawyers from Washington and Philadelphia are fighting over whether communities have a right to keep the big farms out. The story by Tom Avril ran Mar. 18. Contact Avril at (215) 854-2430 or tavrill@phillynews.com. See the story at <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/2883578.htm>.

TENNESSEE

► **Water inventory:** Tennessee plans to conduct an inventory to find out exactly how much water residents and businesses use from the state's rivers and wells. The action is necessary to protect Tennessee's water supply from other states in times of drought. Six states surrounding Tennessee have already done such inventories, and Tennessee officials want to be able to defend their state's resources if other states sue them over water rights. Part of the Tennessee River loops down into Alabama. And in Georgia, fast-growing metro Atlanta is also eyeing the river as a potential water source. Anne Paine reported this in *The Tennessean* April 4. She can be reached at (615) 259-8071 or apaine@tennessean.com.

► **Flood study:** Federal and local officials fear that unchecked development has increased the risk of flooding in the Memphis metropolitan area. Subdivisions built in floodplains have squeezed the available area where rivers and streams can flow, preventing them from spreading out during high stages. After heavy rains in November, the actual volume of water in Shelby County's Wolf River suggested a 25-year flood, yet the river rose above projected 100-year flood elevations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is reviewing data to try to figure out why this happened. Local officials blame outdated FEMA maps, which didn't accurately delineate the floodplain. Others say stricter

regulation of development is needed. Tom Charlier reported this story in *The Commercial Appeal* April 7. Contact him at (901) 529-2572 or charlier@gomemphis.com.

► **Mitigation bank:** West Tennessee has established its first for-profit wetlands mitigation bank, along the Wolf River east of Memphis. Mitigation banks sell credits—artificial units of ecological value set by regulators—to builders needing permits. The bank then uses the money to conduct restoration work. When Wolf River bank is completed in five years, about 350 acres will have been restored. Another 400 wooded acres nearby are permanently protected from development. The Tennessee Department of Transportation paid \$1.07 million for 69 of the bank's 139 credits, which it will use to mitigate upcoming highway projects in West Tennessee. Tom Charlier wrote this story, which appeared in the April 27 *Commercial Appeal*. See above for contact information.

TEXAS

► **Hidden plant emissions:** A state district judge in Austin has ruled that the owners of a Houston-area chemical complex can't use a "trade secrets" argument to hide emissions data for toxic solvents. Kevin Carmody reported April 6 in the *Austin American-Statesman* that American Acryl L.P. had gotten the Texas Attorney General to agree the data was exempt from disclosure based on a trade-secrets claim, inexplicably ignoring two formal attorney general opinions from the mid-1970s that emissions data was always public. Although such trade secrets claims are increasingly common, Judge Margaret Cooper ruled that both those earlier opinions and the federal Clean Air Act say trade secrets never trump the public's right to know what's in the air they breathe. See the story at <http://archives.statesman.com/>. (The search is free, but the download requires small fee.)

UTAH

► **Salt Lake surrounded:** Tim Westby of the *High Country News* reports that Utah's Great Salt Lake has long been abused or, at best, ignored by

surrounding communities and industries, but in the past decade, its ecosystem has been subjected to greater scrutiny and appreciation. The article ran April 30. Tim Westby writes from Salt Lake City, Utah. Reach him at trw88@hotmail.com.

VIRGINIA

► **Year-round geese:** Virginia is grappling with environmental and other problems caused by Canada geese that have lost their instincts to migrate and live year-round in the state, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported March 25. The geese have polluted the James River with their droppings. The problem is so bad that federal wildlife officials have recommended cutting the number of resident geese by a third—from 1 million to approximately 650,000. For more information, contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► **U.S.S. Time Bomb:** About 100 mothballed ships moored off Newport News pose severe environmental hazards for the James River, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported April 7. The James River Reserve Fleet is the largest floating parking lot in the country, designed to hold government ships that might be used in a national crisis. Holding about 8 million gallons of oils and fuels in deteriorating tanks and hulls, and loaded with lead paint, asbestos and PCBs, the ships are "ticking time bombs": If a hurricane hits, pollution from the fleet could stretch for 50 miles along the river and take weeks to clean up. For more information, contact Harper at sharper@pilotonline.com or (757) 446-2340.

► **Sludge problems:** Researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science have found that sewage sludge often contains high levels of toxic chemicals that potentially could damage soil, hurt fish and taint wells, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported Feb. 4. The chemicals, called alkyl phenols, are considered endocrine disruptors. A recent VIMS study found alkyl phenols in sludge samples from 11 sewage treatment plants across the country. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

► **Mummichog mascot:** A group that hopes to clean up the Elizabeth River has adopted as its mascot the mummichog, a green minnow that lives on the river's contaminated bottom and has suffered from exposure to heavy metals, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported Jan. 27. In some especially toxic stretches of the Elizabeth, 90 percent of mummichogs suffer from liver cancer, tumors, lesions and deformities. So the Elizabeth River Project is using the mummichog's troubled tale to make a point: If the river ever is to recover, industrial chemicals must be removed from its muddy bottom. For more information, contact Harper at (757) 446-2340 or sharper@pilotonline.com.

WASHINGTON

► **Superfund looks less than super:** On Earth Day, April 22, Robert McClure of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported that the way things are headed, by this time next year the nation's best-known environmental cleanup program will be virtually bankrupt. The tax collected from chemical, petroleum and other industries to pay for the cleanups under the slogan "the polluter pays" hasn't been collected since 1995 because of a Congressional stalemate. McClure can be reached at (206) 448-8092 or robertmcclure@seattlepi.com.

► **Island seeks energy independence:** The 11,000 or so residents of Vashon Island, a small community in Puget Sound near Seattle, are gearing up to make their island completely energy-independent in the space of a few years. They are examining the potential for using wind, solar, tidal and biomass. They wouldn't go "off the grid," but rather would sell electricity to the grid when they have an overabundance, and then get it back when the sun isn't shining, the wind isn't blowing, and so forth, Robert McClure of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reported April 12. Because it would stay tied to the grid, Vashon's experiment is different from others being attempted around the country, although it has some precedents in Europe and South America. McClure can be reached at robertmcclure@seattlepi.com or (206) 448-8092.

➤ **Big Three got \$1 billion... for what?:** Although American taxpayers forked out more than \$1 billion over the last nine years helping the Big Three automakers develop cars efficient enough to travel 80 miles on a gallon of gas, they will never have to produce such cars, reports Robert McClure of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* March 7. He can be reached at robertmcclure@seattlepi.com or (206) 448-8092.

➤ **Hanford races the stopwatch:** Perhaps the biggest bit of unfinished business from the Cold War is the massive cleanup needed at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Wash., where the nuclear bombs that ended World War II were developed, reports Lisa Stiffler of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Her comprehensive April 18 package includes a detailed megagraphic describing the \$50 billion mess. Stiffler can be reached at (206) 448-8042 or lisastiffler@seattlepi.com.

➤ **Shoveling sand at the river:** Hal Bernton of *The Seattle Times* explores the conundrum facing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is running out of places to dump sand dredged from the bottom of the Columbia River. While the Corps wants to dump the material over a 14-square-mile area six miles offshore and 210 feet below the surface, others point out that the sand is needed to beef up eroding beaches further north. Before the dredging, the sand would have naturally been pushed north to beef up the beaches. Bernton can be reached at (206) 464-2581 or hbernton@seattletimes.com.

➤ **Corrupt Compost:** Authorities have recently discovered widespread contamination of compost around the nation because of the long-lasting herbicide clopyralid, reports Lynda Mapes of the *Seattle Times* on Jan. 22. Pronounced clo-PEER-a-lid, the herbicide can kill sensitive plants at levels as

low as 3 parts per million. While gardeners are worried, those pushing to keep clopyralid on the market include farmers, logging companies and land managers, who cite its longevity and potency as their reason for choosing it. Mapes can be reached at (206) 464-2736 or lmapes@seattletimes.com.

WEST VIRGINIA

➤ **Mountain removal:** Ken Ward Jr. of *The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette* reported May 5-6 on the contents of a draft environmental impact statement on mountaintop removal coal mining. The draft, more than a year-and-a-half overdue, was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act. As part of a two-day package, Ward also reported on documents which detail how the Interior Department hopes to streamline the process of mountaintop removal permitting, making it easier for mine operations to obtain new permits. Contact Ward at (304) 348-1702. ♦

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