Winter 2001

SEJournal

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A fellow's story

Why pay a journalist to think?

By Chris Bowman

Robert Stavins is not much for chit-chat. The cost-benefit of idle chatter doesn't pencil out.

A Harvard professor known for his rapid-fire lectures on environmental economics, Stavins walks the talk about optimal leveraging of time, money and other limited resources.

Asked at a 1991 Stanford University conference what would be the single most effective way to improve environmental policy, Stavins had a ready reply.

"I said it then, and I believe it now, that the one thing would be to improve the quality of the coverage in the news media of environmental problems and environmental debates."

About a year later, Stavins put some grant money where his mouth is.

The newly created V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation, named after the founder of a Danish roof window and skylight company, approached Harvard about supporting new environmental initiatives at the university. As faculty and administrators drew up a wish list of seminars and lecture series, Stavins tossed in an idea from left field: Establish fellowships for environmental journalists in the existing Nieman program.

Stavins had some selling to do, but ultimately he and Bill Kovach, then

(Continued on page 13)

Coping with 9/11

On the beat and at home

Compiled by the SEJournal

When the suicide bombers hit the first World Trade Center tower in Lower Manhattan, *Newsday* environment writer Dan Fagin was in his car, driving to the subway station. His car radio blared the news. Looking out his car window, Fagin confirmed the horror. Black smoke billowed from those towers he used to consider ugly.

Margie Kriz, environment reporter at the *National Journal*, sat in a Washington, D.C., office just five blocks from the White House. She wondered soon after she heard about the crash at the Pentagon whether she

(Continued on page 16)

11th Annual Conference

Including caribou protests (above) .....page 4

New Web Digest at www.sej.org

Where to go for breaking environmental news and a gallery of the best stories.....page 6

SEJ launches Awards program

A look at SEJ's first Environmental Reporting Awards .....page 7

Inside Story

'Poison in your backyard'

Exposing the hidden dangers of treated lumber

By Mike Dunne

Pressure-treated wood, used for everything from homes and gardens to playgrounds and picnic tables, is leaking arsenic into the soil.

Individuals should wear gloves when handling the wood and masks when cutting it. That's what the pressure-treated wood industry's consumer information sheets say—sheets rarely ever seen by those who use it.

Julie Hauserman of the *St. Petersburg Times'* Tallahassee bureau gathered bits and pieces of that story, while juggling legislative sessions and the Gore-Bush election flap. She eventually produced a Sunday package headlined "The Poison in Your Backyard."

A strong story backed up the strong headline.

"All over the state, pressure-treated boards and posts are leaking poisonous arsenic into the soil," Hauserman's story said. "The arsenic comes from chromated copper arsenate, or CCA, a powerful pesticide brew that is injected into the boards to give them long life against the elements.

"Arsenic is leaking out of huge wooden playgrounds that volunteers built all over Tampa Bay. It's leaking beneath decks and state park boardwalks, at levels that are dozens of times —even hundreds of times—higher than the state considers safe. And discarded pressure-treated lumber is leaking arsenic out of unlined landfills, state experts say, posing a threat to drinking water."

The stories used tests commissioned by the newspaper to show arsenic leaking into playground soils.

Reaction was swift—from local playground closures to bills in the U.S.

(Continued on page 22)

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Protecting SEJ's credibility a board priority

Credibility means everything for journalists. And journalism organizations.

Journalists who cover the environment beat are no different. Nor is the Society of Environmental Journalists.

For SEJ, there are a number of ways its volunteer leaders and professional staff have built and maintained credibility as an independent group of reporters, editors, producers, teachers and students.

One has to do with SEJ's membership guidelines. Anyone who lobbies or does public relations on environmental issues is not eligible. Some members, and would-be members, have debated the definitions of lobbying and public relations, but most people know what these activities are.

It's not that lobbying or public relations aren't important or legitimate. It's just not independent journalism. SEJ must safeguard the organization's independence.

SEJ also has financial guidelines that cover where and how the organization gets its money, and with whom it chooses to form partnerships.

SEJ's policies in these areas are among the most stringent of any national journalism group. That's why a flap on the final night of our recent and otherwise highly successful annual conference in Portland upset me.

SEJ had The World Forestry Center museum at a reduced rate for a reception. We paid for the food and arranged for a cash bar. Yet because of a miscommunication—apparently on both organization's parts—conference attendees were greeted by signs and brochures, prepared by the forestry center, that made it appear the event was underwritten by an environmental group, a government agency, a timber company and a trade group.

Conference Chair Christy George and an official from the forestry center clarified the situation during their welcome announcements. But the situation was still troubling.

Now, weeks later, I believe what happened at the reception will ultimately be good for SEJ. One reason is that it provides an excuse for a largely new board to discuss SEJ's financial policies in a year of funding uncertainties.

First of all, I need to say loud and clear that SEJ is not anti-environmental groups, anti-timber companies, anti-government or anti-trade groups. We're simply pro-journalism.

One prominent member told me that the apparent sponsorship of the reception by the four interest groups was actually good for SEJ's image. It illustrated, in the form of logos on a program, balanced support from industry, government and environmental groups. I think that's a point worth discussing.

For starters, though, one has to understand that SEJ has not taken this approach—some call it the "big tent"—with the majority of its funding.

This is what SEJ does: It seeks the support of philanthropic foundations and educational institutions—not environmental or corporate sources seeking visibility.

Report from the Society's President

By James Bruggers

We go to foundations with established guidelines and attempt to find those that are a good match for SEJ. What's a good match? Those who understand and support our vision, respect our self-determined objectives and want to invest in our methods.

We sign contracts with foundations based on proposals that SEJ's executive director, Beth Parke, has prepared on behalf of the board and members.

We later report back to the foundation on the progress we've made toward reaching our goals. SEJ only accepts foundation revenue—the bulk of our budget, by the way—for general support or for programs that are consistent with SEJ's strategic plan.

SEJ's foundation supporters have been incredibly helpful. They've understood our journalistic mission. They've assisted us in providing services that members—journalists working in the trenches—have identified as vital to them. These services include the listserv, the *SEJournal*, the organization's rapidly improving Web site, its regional workshops, *TipSheet* and, of course, the annual conference, which this year attracted more than 600 participants.

It should be noted that the SEJ board has not banned corporate, government or advocacy money from its budget. We've cashed their checks under terms and conditions that the board has decided are appropriate. Essentially, instances acceptable have been a fee-for-service basis.

For example, we welcome vendors to our annual conference and rent them space and tables so they can supply attendees with literature and other information. I look forward to going home each year with a stack of fact sheets and fliers.

Twice SEJ has put on a technology "expo," even giving conference attendees the opportunity to drive fuel cell and electric hybrid motor vehicles. And SEJ rents a members mailing list.

In the coming months, issues of funding and credibility will be important to the SEJ board as it wrestles with the challenges of sustaining the organization. The board wants to maintain services that members have come to appreciate, while also providing for new initiatives such as SEJ's recently announced awards program and a daily environmental news digest on the Web.

Let's not also forget that the SEJ board has a payroll to meet so that it can retain a talented and dedicated staff.

It's clear to me, more than ever, that this organization needs to move forward on building an endowment. We've made some progress in laying the groundwork, but not nearly enough.

And SEJ also needs to expand its sources of operating revenue.

Of course the question will always come back to this: How can SEJ stay financially strong while maintaining what's most important to all of its members—credibility?

As the board continues to discuss issues of money in the coming year, I can say two things with certainty. We welcome your suggestions and guidance. (Write me at jbruggers@courier-journal.com or contact any other board member.)

And we will continue to protect SEJ's credibility. We have no other choice. ❖

SEJournal

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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 1,100 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.*

SEJournal on the World Wide Web at http://www.sej.org

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In This Issue

Cover

■ Everything you ever wanted to know about journalism fellowships

A fellow's story: Why pay a journalist to think?
By Chris Bowman....1

A tale of two fellowships
By William Allen....14

■ **Coping with 9/11 on the beat and at home**

■ **Inside Story: Poison in your backyard: Exposing the hidden dangers of treated lumber**
Interview by Mike Dunne....1

Report from the Society's President

■ **Protecting SEJ's credibility a board priority**
By James Bruggers....2

SEJ News

■ **11th Annual Conference report**....4

■ **Making SEJ.ORG a daily must-see**....6

■ **Regional report: What's been and what's coming up**....6

■ **The brand-new SEJ journalism award unveiled**....7

■ **2001 board election results**....7

■ **Anthrax in their antlers: David Helvarg's annual irreverent comments on the conference**....8

From Academe

■ **Cyberjournalism via the Hudson River**
By Debra Schwartz....9

Online Bits and Bytes

■ **Mapping and unmasking lead poisoning in Rhode Island**
By David Herzog and Peter Lord....10

Toolbox

■ **Obscure but promising way to clean-water stories**
By Robert McClure....12

Book Shelf

■ **"GERMS" by Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg and William Broad**
Review by Tom Henry....25

■ **"Green Phoenix" by William Allen**
Review by David Liscio....25

■ **"Views on the Mississippi: The Photographs of Henry Peter Bosse" by Mark Neuzil**
Review by Perry Beeman....26

■ **"A Friend Of The Earth" by T.C. Boyle**
Review by David Helvarg....26

The Beat

■ Environmental news roundup....27

SEJournal submission deadlines

Winter '02	February 1, 2002
Spring '02	May 1, 2002
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SEJ's 11th Annual Conference

After 9/11, Portland meeting holds new meaning

By SAUL CHERNOS

In the wake of the air attacks in New York City and Washington and the resulting media obsession with terrorism, I, like many journalists, have had to wonder if the environment beat is destined for the endangered species list.

What perfect timing, then, for the SEJ'S 11th annual conference in Portland, Oregon. More than 600 people, nearly 300 of them SEJ members, converged on Portland State University to address the proverbial big picture and help invigorate coverage of environmental issues.

The Thursday eco-tour helped boost this environmental journalist's sagging morale. In previous years, this SEJ conference staple has introduced me to places as diverse as Catalina Island and Lake Huron. Drawn to water yet again, I toured the Columbia River Gorge and learned about the effect of dams, fish hatcheries and other developments on spawning salmon.

Of course, there was no escaping Sept. 11. The dams were under heightened security and some areas were off-limits even to journalists, leading one disgruntled scribe to remark that the Coho and Chinook salmon were probably being frisked even as they struggled upstream to procreate and die.

Witnessing this annual, ultimate rite of passage proved bittersweet. I grieved watching these magnificent creatures stubbornly leap small waterfalls, bashing their bodies against jagged rocks and disintegrating to the point that they resembled the living dead, in order to reach a destination they knew only by instinct. The salmon were so weakened that a couple of us were able to reach into the river and grab them, bear style. I couldn't help but think of another side of this story: their rotting bodies help perpetuate life in the ecosystem.

During the tour, however, we learned that this natural cycle is in peril. Salmon populations have been plunging since the 1880s, and the Northwest's increasing demand for hydro-electric power is considered a major culprit. Governments have spent an estimated $3 billion in recent years on salmon recovery efforts, yet a slight rise in fish populations this year has been attributed to changing ocean conditions, not the myriad of hatcheries and other measures put in place to alleviate the impacts of human intrusion. Representatives from the Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission told us that developments such as dams have harmed not only the natural environment but also the livelihoods of aboriginal people from the region who have depended on healthy fish stocks for thousands of years.

SEJ conference attendees on 10/18 field expedition

Visiting the Columbia River left me feeling very much like a fish out of water. I realized that I knew precious little about the salmon that live in my own neck of the woods on the eastern seaboard. Later on, I learn through a quick check of the Internet that the numbers of Atlantic salmon returning to North American rivers have been declining steadily and in 2000 reached the lowest levels on record in some rivers despite increased restrictive management measures in both ocean and river fisheries.

On Friday morning, still pondering the vast landscape that lies between an environmental problem and its resolution, I attended a plenary session addressing the question: Can technology save the planet? The speakers offered a resounding 'Yes'.

With sufficient warning and for only $2 million a year, Infoseek founder Steve Kirsch said, we could deflect asteroids. All that is needed is the political will to spend the money. Rachel Shimshak, director of the Renewable Northwest Project, described great potential for renewable energy projects. Allen Hammond, a senior scientist with the World Resources Institute, pointed out that digital technologies could help transform economic and social development in poorer countries. Jan Hauser of Sun Microsystems, who has developed computing technology to map planetary biodiversity, attributed the absence of political will to the failure of our information systems—and the fact that relatively few journalists are covering environmental issues.

While encouraged by the apparent demand for increased environmental reporting, I was ultimately disappointed. None of the panelists seriously challenged the notion of the techno-fix. How might these speakers have reacted upon visiting the Columbia River, where there is ample evidence that technology so far has failed to save the fading salmon population?

Wanting to explore more radical measures, I sat in on a panel exploring rising civil disobedience in the environmental movement. Donald Fontenot of the Cascadia Forest Alliance talked about tree-sitters who attempted to stop logging on public lands through non-violent occupation. Lamenting news coverage that goes no deeper than the hair-style and fashion sense of activists, Fontenot said movements such as his are inspired by events such as the Boston Tea Party, the Suffragette movement and the Civil Rights struggle, all of which he described as intrinsic to the American fabric. Craig Rosebraugh, who recently left the communications post with the Earth Liberation Front to

attend graduate school, pushed the envelope further, to include intentional property damage and other acts he acknowledged as clearly illegal. Such acts target the corporate bottom line, he explained, whereas less confrontational tactics have not stopped environmental degradation. Speaking from industry, Bill Pickell of the Washington Contract Loggers Association said acts of sabotage have resulted in deaths. He decried as "terrorists" people who block logging trucks, toss firebombs or otherwise cause damage or disrupt business activity. "God says there are evil men in this world, and I would contend there are evil men in this room," he said.

It was time for a plenary session with two members of his administration. Outlining measures her agency is taking to prevent "environmental terrorism," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Adminstrator Christie Whitman explained to a roomful of reporters that she had decided to remove data on chemical plants from the agency's Web site. She did it, she said, to ensure the information could only be accessed by people who need it for legitimate purposes. She suggested some may be returned, but reviews are under way.

U.S. Interior Secretary Gale Norton positioned herself as a defender of endangered species, reminding journalists that she had just participated in a news conference at the Oregon Zoo to promote a California condor captive breeding and recovery program. She suggested that opening up the Arctic to oil and gas development will reduce American dependency on oil "from a certain Middle East country." Protesters dressed as caribou, relegated to a corridor at the edge of the auditorium, quietly held signs exhorting Norton to "Leave the Arctic Refuge Holy, Wild & Free" and to "Stop Gutting America."

Perhaps an antidote to dependence on foreign energy sources is to tread more lightly upon the planet. At a panel on consumption, speakers got down to specifics, presenting a myriad of story ideas. Michelle Cole, consumption and values reporter with *The Oregonian* newspaper, said that used computers and hardware components frequently end up in landfills—a phenomenon I plan to investigate further because I also cover the high-tech industry. Peter Santucci, managing editor of *Washington CEO* magazine, recommended presenting information in ways editors and readers can easily comprehend. "Connect things to a larger trend and convince them that it's the way of the future," he urged.

The conference gained an international flavour with a panel addressing the environment in China, home to some of the world's most polluted cities and growing urban sprawl. Ray Cheung of the *South China Morning Post* talked about dramatically rising energy consumption. Use of oil in China has doubled over the past five years, and Cheung discussed international political tensions and implications arising from Persian Gulf imports.

At a panel addressing the Sept. 11 crisis, New York *Newsday* reporter Dan Fagin recounted his experiences in Manhattan at Ground Zero. He said that issues such as air quality began to emerge shortly after the attacks and that he expects more routine environmental stories will be pursued when things calm down. Michael R. Skeels of the Oregon State Public Health Laboratory and Robert Thomas of Loyola University reflected on public anxiety and discussed facts, myths and implications surrounding biological and chemical weapons.

Protestors dressed as caribou milled quietly in the hall outside a session where Gale Norton spoke on 10/19.

Saturday's formal sessions concluded with mini eco-tours. I explored two "green" buildings: a renovated 19th-century warehouse transformed into a showcase for its environmentally friendly construction and an old brewery redeveloped with environmental factors in mind. I marvelled at an enormous wooden interior, the components of which were recycled or otherwise harvested in an ecologically friendly manner, and at stormwater management systems that retain and filter rainwater on-site. Particularly helpful was advice on how to spot architectural green-washing by inquiring about adherence to particular environmental standards.

Sunday morning, we returned to the Columbia River and Bonneville Dam. Authors Craig Lesley and Richard Manning and Allen Pinkham, Nez Perce tribal liaison with the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council, discussed the impact the Lewis and Clark expedition 200 years ago has had on the people and ecology of the American West. They largely agreed that colonization has proven deleterious. Lesley pointed out that anthrax is widely considered the culprit behind the decimation of wild bison populations and may therefore have aided colonization—ironic given the current scare.

As the panel drew to a close and a chilly Oregon rain set in, conference-goers wandered the shores of the Columbia River and visited the spectacular Multnomah Falls. As we boarded buses to go home and convince our editors and readers that environmental stories continue to be urgently needed, my thoughts were with the salmon and other players in the great web of life, which face their own struggle for survival.

Saul Chernos is a freelance journalist in Toronto.

Making SEJ.ORG a daily must-see

More timely links to top stories and an archive of the all-time best

What if there were one place—a Grand Central Station of environmental journalism—where every day you could find a selection of the most interesting new stories on environmental topics in print and on the air, plus breaking-news headlines updated throughout the day and a library of prize-winning stories?

What if you could do all that from your desk?

The Internet makes it possible, and SEJ is making it a reality—with your help.

SEJ has embarked on a major expansion of its Web site, www.sej.org, by launching a free news digest service that at the click of a mouse makes the best of our profession instantly accessible to all of us, and to the rest of the world.

SEJ's new service, produced in cooperation with capitolwire.com, consists of three parts:

EJToday: an annotated selection of links, updated every weekday morning, to some of the best new environmental stories in newspapers, magazines and newsletters and on television, radio and the Internet. In addition to the story links, viewers see a brief description of each story, author contact information and a selection of links to relevant background documents. An archiving system allows users to search for past articles by subject, author and geographic area.

Breaking E-News Headlines: links to fast-breaking news stories from Washington, D.C., Ottawa, New York or wherever environmental news is happening, updated throughout the day.

The Gallery: a searchable archive of the very best major series, special projects and other extraordinary stories, including many prize-winners. It's SEJ's permanent library of the best of our profession.

Randy Edwards, longtime SEJer and former environmental reporter for the *Columbus Dispatch* who now works for capitolwire.com, is the editor of the new service, which was designed by SEJ's web guru, Russ Clemings of the *Fresno Bee.* For now, the service is accessible only through www.sej.org, but SEJ hopes soon to offer an e-mailed version of EJToday that would arrive in your mailbox five days a week.

Edwards and the capitolwire staff are already combing the Internet every day for suitable stories. The service's ultimate success, though, will depend on the active participation of SEJ members and everyone else who produces or appreciates environmental journalism. The service can only reach its potential as the go-to place for the very best environmental reporting every day if YOU are on the lookout for good stories, too. SEJ hopes that more and more people who use the service will nominate their own newly published work, their colleagues' or anyone's top-quality stories that are accessible on the web. The e-mail form for submitting stories is short and easy to use.

The news digest service is accessible to everyone, not just SEJ members. So if you've ever wanted to show off your best work to the rest of the world, this is your chance. And if you've ever wanted to find a single spot on the Internet to see what your peers are up to, well, you've found it. ❖

Regional report

Sept. conference brings respite from 9/11 events

A dozen journalists bravely traveled to Cape Cod for SEJ's regional conference at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., Sept. 20-22. The refreshing combination of first-rate speakers, mostly good weather and intriguing field trips took the writers' minds off the Sept. 11 terrorists attacks. Participants said they left with story ideas, a source list and new colleagues.

The conference, co-sponsored by SEJ and the Marine Biological Laboratory, also drew support from the Knight Fellowship program at MIT. SEJ board member Perry Beeman organized the sessions with help from Pamela Clapp Hinkle of the MBL staff and Heather Dewar of the Baltimore *Sun.*

Speakers described evidence of warming in the Arctic, the loss of eelgrass beds off Cape Cod and the proliferation of toxic algae and other problems related to fertilizer runoff worldwide. Field trips examined pollution problems at Cape Cod National Seashore and Waquiot Bay.

Lasting images include the sight of SEJ board member Peter Thomson and freelancer Sara Pratt of Nashua, N.H., donning chest waders to net fish from a stream for MBL scientist Linda Deegan's lesson on marine life at the national seashore.

Kudos to the long list of personable and helpful scientists from MBL (including last-minute sub Bruce Peterson), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the University of Rhode Island who took time to make presentations.

Plan to attend the Boston-to-Baltimore Regional Briefing, Jan. 18-19 at Rutgers University in New Jersey. Panels include sessions on emerging animal-borne diseases, cancer clusters, the next generation of environmental pollutants, the trash crisis, the fisheries crisis, an insider's look at regional EPA offices, latest developments in environmental law and the newest long-range projections for climate change effects on the Eastern Seaboard.

Speakers include author and Yale professor Stephen Kellert and Sports Illustrated investigative reporter and Riverkeeper founder Robert H. Boyle. In late September planners added a plenary on post-attack environmental journalism with Paul Brodeur, a New Yorker staff writer for three decades; Debra Callahan, president of the League of Conservation Voters; and former *Mother Jones* editor Mark Dowie.

The event culminates with field trips to Ground Zero, Manhattan's most famous green buildings and a magical tour through the New Jersey Pinelands to study shellfisheries. Watch email for details, or visit http://www.sej.org/confer/index2.htm. SEJ's co-sponsors are Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute, the Hudson River Foundation and the New Jersey Center for Environmental Indicators. ❖

SEJ Journalism Awards Program announced

The Society of Environmental Journalists announced that it will launch an annual awards program to honor the best print, broadcast and online reporting on the environment.

Each category winner will be awarded a $1,000 prize.

The first SEJ Awards for Reporting on the Environment will be presented at the next SEJ annual conference, Oct. 10-13, in Baltimore. They will honor journalism published or aired between March 1, 2001, and Feb. 28, 2002. The entry deadline for 2002 awards will be April 1, 2002.

Establishing an awards program, said Dan Fagin, SEJ's vice president for programs, is an important and essential step for the organization. Fagin announced the new awards program at the SEJ's 11th annual conference in Portland in October. Fagin detailed the new program at the SEJ annual membership meeting in Portland.

"We think this obviously will be good for SEJ," Fagin told members. "But we also think it'll be very good for environmental journalism."

For years, SEJ leaders have made attempts to start an awards program, especially for broadcast reporting. But the board had little success in winning grants or other funds to support the effort.

Finally, the SEJ board in 2001 agreed that some sort of awards program must go forward. For the time being, at least, the program could be paid for out of the current SEJ budget. But the board hoped that establishing the program might also attract new funding from foundations or journalism schools.

Board members agreed an awards program should be essential for a journalism membership organization such as SEJ. Not only might it improve SEJ membership, but it also should widen awareness—to other journalists as well as the public—of quality environmental journalism.

Contest entry forms and more details on the rules and entry requirements can be obtained at www.sej.org or you can call the SEJ office at (215) 884-8174.

The four print categories will be deadline reporting, feature reporting, series and small-market coverage for publications with less than 100,000 circulation. The four broadcast categories are deadline reporting, feature reporting, program or series and small market coverage for TV or radio stations, networks or syndicated programs serving less than 1 million households. One online reporting award will be given for stories prepared specifically for Internet viewing.

Fagin told members who suggested the need for book and other awards that new categories may be added, if needed.

The awards are not restricted to journalists who regularly cover the environment. Reporters from all beats are eligible. Entry fees are $30 for a current SEJ member and $80 for a non-member. Non-members can join SEJ and enter the contest for a $50 fee.

At its January 2002 meeting, the SEJ board will appoint the five members of the awards committee, which will be the final authority for interpreting the rules. Anyone interested in serving on this committee should contact Fagin at dfagin@sej.org.

Award-winning stories also will be archived at www.sej.org as a permanent resources for reporters, editors, journalism academics and students. ❖

Seven incumbents, two new candidates elected to SEJ board

On Friday, Oct. 19, during our recently concluded annual conference in Portland, Ore., SEJ members elected the following individual to positions on the SEJ board of directors:

Representing Academic members will be Mark Neuzil; Philip Bailey will represent Associate members. Both will serve three-year terms.

Representatives for Active members are Peter Thomson, three-year term; Tim Wheeler, three-year term; Perry Beeman, three-year term; Margie Kriz, three-year term; and Peter Lord, two-year term, which represents the balance of a three-year term vacated earlier this year

There was a tie between Peter Fairley and Jacques Rivard for the final Active member seat, a one-year term representing the balance of a three-year term vacated earlier this year.

At a meeting on Saturday, Oct. 20, the SEJ board resolved the tie, according to election guidelines and SEJ bylaws, by selecting Peter Fairley for the remaining contested one-year term. It also appointed Jacques Rivard, the next highest vote-getter, to fill an Active member seat that had been vacated on Oct. 17, with the resignation of board member Deborah Schoch. This seat was not contested in the election because Schoch's resignation came after the deadline for election matters, as previously established by the SEJ elections committee.

The board exercised its discretion under terms of SEJ bylaws to create a new director position, and appointed Carolyn Whetzel, the eighth candidate, to fill it. This position will sunset in one year, at which time Whetzel, if she wishes to remain on the board, will have to run for one of the regular openings. The board also agreed that, should a vacancy occur during the year, that seat will not be filled and the board will revert to its previous number of 13 voting members. The board took this unusual step to take advantage of Carolyn's experience in fundraising, which is a high priority for SEJ.

Margie Kriz

Tim Wheeler

The SEJ board then certified the results of the election and selected its officers for the coming year, which together make up the SEJ executive committee for 2001—2002:

Carolyn Whetzel was elected secretary; Peter Thomson was elected treasurer; Peter Fairley was elected second vice president/membership committee chair; Dan Fagin was elected first vice president/program committee chair; James Bruggers was elected president. ❖

Anthrax in their antlers

Having some fun at the 11th annual conference

By DAVID HELVARG

Mass terrorism, climate change, elections bought and stolen. With the 21st century news cycle heating up, hundreds of journalists converged on Portland, Ore., for the 11th annual SEJ conference.

They came to share stories, meet their peers and collect free pens and plastic cows from various exhibitors. Not surprisingly the conference began with a heightened sense of sobriety due in large measure to the outrageously overpriced cash bars that have become a hallmark of SEJ gatherings.

The Thursday tours included trips to the ocean, sprawl malls and a forest that featured a crane-bucket canopy ride. Unfortunately, due to heightened security the hatchery/dams tour had to cancel its water slide activity.

Everyone who went on the Mt. St. Helens tour, however, agreed it was a blast.

Friday morning's plenary "Can Technology Save the Planet" included the revelation by Allen Hammond of World Resources that the "B4B" ("Bottom Four Billion") of the world's population are being denied access to the 3PW (Palm Pilots and Potable Water).

Rich guy Steve Kirsch spoke of technology that could reveal the presence of terrorists among us by using "brain fingerprinting" caps that would fit over any potential terrorist's head. These caps could can tell if you're having true memories of terrorism-associated images such as an AK-47, the weapon's gunsights, and the editor who cut 11 graphs from your story. Apparently, such images would cause the cap's propeller to begin to rotate.

Friday's panels included one on energy deregulation in which it was acknowledged that President Bush showed real sympathy for California's rolling blackouts. After all, he used to get them himself.

The panel on "The initiative process: Is it out of control?" reached some 64 conclusions, 28 of which, while sounding the same, were actually diametrically opposed.

During the eco-terrorism panel the logging industry's Bill Pickell justified lumping the Sierra Club and Earth Liberation Front together by explaining that as a boy he'd hunted skunks with his dad and "if it smells like a skunk and looks like a skunk, it's probably a skunk." This raised the legitimate question, "Who the hell hunts skunks?"

If it's big game you're into, however, a herd of caribou protesters showed up outside the Whitman/Norton luncheon, apparently upset over Gale Norton's claim that caribou meat is a cure for anthrax.

The EPA's Whitman spoke first, insisting that no terrorist can poison America's water supply and that she's also committed to reducing the high levels of arsenic in our drinking water.

She went on to discuss the administration's commitment to cleaning up lead, those so-called brownfields, NOX, SOX, mercury, and promised that if dredging the Hudson's PCBs didn't work she'd cap it with additional standard boilerplate.

Interior Secretary Gale Norton emphasized what she calls her 4 Cs—Cooperation, Communication, Collaboration and Carbon. She claimed that drilling the arctic could provide as much oil as we import from Iraq in 80 years or the oily equivalent of 16 years of Dick Cheney's diet. She then released the major policy announcement her office had been promising—The Oregon Zoo will be the fourth to receive a breeding pair of California condors. (Or "South of Oregon condors" as the locals refer to them).

Reporters rushed to get word back to their news desks that California condors might be the next way terrorists spread biochemical agents.

The annual membership meeting was much as I last reported it. However under terms of my settlement with the American Paint Manufacturers Association I should point out that watching paint dry can be a fun and exciting activity. Beth Parke reported that this year's conference drew more than 600 participants if you counted field trip speakers, Secret Service agents and people dressed up as ungulates and salmon.

We next went to the "big tent" where eco-vendors plied us with cheap wine, offers of rides in electric golf carts, and poached fish provided by the group, "Save the Wild Salmon for the Entree."

That evening's keynote speaker, Russell Mittermeier, of Conservation International used slides, videos and charts to demonstrate the dangerous and growing gap between global conservation efforts and brevity.

Saturday was much like Friday with a bit more redundancy such as following the Wise Use panel with the Science Fiction panel. That evening we had our final reception at the World Forestry Center including visits by a live spotted owl and a turkey vulture (reminding many to save their receipts for their editors).

Inspired by Joni Mitchell's hectoring suggestion that they cut down the trees and put them in a tree museum, the center is a showcase of Oregon's cultural history, much like Butte's Berkeley Pit mine/EPA site has become for Montana. The center's centerpiece is a faux 70-foot-tall "talking tree" that can say "spotted owl tastes just like chicken" in five languages. I thought the Long-handled shovels at its base were part of a "Shoot, shovel and shut up" ESA exhibit but they turned out to be for the planting of a real (small) cloned Champion tree that will become part of the center's permanent tree farm exhibit. Hopefully the conference will leave something even more basic behind in Portland. I know those caribou did.

David Helvarg spent much of his time in Portland flogging his recent book "Blue Frontier—Saving America's Living Seas" even though he knows most journalists consider it unethical to actually pay for anything.

The Hudson River: A cybernews lesson

By DEBRA A. SCHWARTZ

Cyberjournalism may have made significant strides on the recent Hudson River dredging story.

The online coverage showed how cybernews can be transparent. But it also illustrated the importance of maintaining the journalist's role as a gatekeeper on a politically explosive issue.

I asked former reporter Stephen Farnsworth to discuss the cybernews lessons of the Hudson River story. Farnsworth teaches "Political and Cultural Implications of Cyberjournalism" at Georgetown University, and is an assistant professor of political science and international affairs at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Va. His journalism credits include a five-year stint at *The Kansas City Star & Times,* as well as national reporting for States News Service, the *Los Angeles Times'* Washington bureau and Fairchild News Service.

General Electric's massive Superfund site on the Hudson River in New York remains at the center of a highly controversial and expensive debate. Some locals think that dredging PCBs settled into the river will make things worse; some think it will make things better. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has struggled with the issue for years, and General Electric, which would be responsible for the clean-up, has lobbied actively to build opposition to the dredging: in the community, in the EPA and on Capitol Hill.

New media expert J.D. Lasica, quoted in Philip Seib's "Going Live: Getting the news right in a real-time, online world," noted that "the public needs reputable news outlets to adhere to their core values of accuracy, credibility and balance to give stories…context and perspective, a role that other media have forfeited."

I began my interview with Farnsworth with a general question about the state of cybernews today, then focused on the Hudson River dredging coverage.

SEJournal: Your research into cybernews is deep and considers many perspectives, including what people do with the Internet to satisfy their needs for information and interaction. With that in mind, what are some shifts shaping cybernews today?

Farnsworth: The most important shift in news in cyberspace is that now we, as news consumers, can obtain information from whatever news or information source we please, and go as deeply into that information as we choose. While most Web surfers still use sources with the largest reputations away from the Internet (the major daily papers, CNN, MSNBC, etc.), news consumers are not by any means limited to those sources. Readers are now their own gatekeepers—each must evaluate the credibility of all sorts of media and information sources, many of which can be quite biased.

For reporters, cybernews offers the opportunity to link to government reports, biographical information on sources, maps, and a thousand other ways to inform more fully. This is an important part of making the news product even more credible.

SEJournal: What is special about the Hudson River dredging story that makes it significant as a cyberjournalism case study?

Farnsworth: It's a great example of the challenges faced and the potentials offered for journalism on the Internet. As a case study, it is a model of how interested parties can use cyberspace to do battle over a highly salient political issue in a venue other than the newspaper or TV newscasts.

Because the stakes are so high, everyone has gotten into the act in cyberspace. And these high quality and competing websites can be a confusing mess for a consumer - the GE websites and those of some of the environmental groups have very similar names, for example. These pages are not always up front about their sponsors (e.g., Hudson Voice), and offer selective interpretations of the data. So an average information-seeking citizen may not be sure what to think.

A reporter's gatekeeping role is to evaluate the biased information we receive before we present an effectively objective picture for our readers. That responsibility is doubly important in today's world of cybernews, as these sources of information can now easily reach the citizens over our heads and present their biased information on the web without media evaluation and analysis.

SEJournal: Has the Hudson River dredging coverage broken new ground in cyberjournalism?

Farnsworth: Well, *The Albany Times-Union* has done a wonderful job in trying to sort out this situation for its readers in cyberspace. They provide the sort of umpiring that this long-running, contentious dispute so badly needs. They have a collection of answers to frequently asked questions that can help citizens get more informative and more objective information than that offered elsewhere in cyberspace. And, perhaps most importantly, the paper's homepage provides an easily located, fully indexed and accessible archive of past print stories on the topic.

Too often newspapers want to charge for access to week-old stories, but this newspaper offers all of its old stories for free (or did offer them for free earlier this semester when my class studied this topic). It is thorough and accessible, just what a harried but responsible citizen needs. What needs to be done by newspaper companies is clear: they need to provide a comprehensive, accessible collection of their stories available to web users for free.

SEJournal: Why do you feel that way?

Farnsworth: That way citizens can see how a story has evolved, and how the positions of the principal players have stayed the same or changed over time. This approach can offer an important reality check for other information sources in cyberspace, and maybe even discourage the most outrageous

(Continued on page 11)

Web sites for case study:

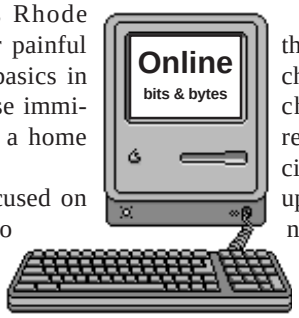
The Albany Times-Union: **http://www.timesunion.com/news/special/hudsonarchives/**
The (Glen Falls) *Post-Star:* **http://www.poststar.com**
General Electric Corp.: **http://www.ge.com**
General Electric/Hudson River: **http://www.hudsonvoice.com**
U.S. EPA: **http://www.epa.gov/hudson**
Clean Up GE: **http://www.cleanupge.org**
Hudson Watch: **http://www.hudsonwatch.net**
Scenic Hudson: **http://www.scenichudson.org**

Mapping and unmasking lead poisoning in Rhode Island

By DAVID HERZOG and PETER B. LORD

For years, the *Providence Journal* has told its readers that Rhode Island is known as "the lead poisoning capital of the United States." Thousands of children, many of the poor and living in slum housing coated with the remnants of lead paint, are poisoned annually.

In May, we published a six-part series, called "Poisoned," that showed how lead poisoning victimizes Rhode Island's children. Some are sent to hospitals for painful treatment and many struggle to learn even the basics in school. In New Hampshire, a 2-year-old Sudanese immigrant died a week and a half after moving into a home with a porch coated with flaking lead paint.



In each of the first five installments, we focused on one child victim, using narrative storytelling to show readers the personal ravages of lead poisoning. On the final day we examined possible solutions to what many have called the state's most serious environmental problem.

We bolstered the series with analysis of about a half-dozen databases from state agencies and the city of Providence. As a public service, we posted one of those databases—showing locations of housing units identified by the state Health Department as known lead hazards—on our newspaper's web site and made it searchable by street address and city. This was the first time anyone had made such information available to the public. [See figure 1 for example of search results by street.]

We also used this database of inspections from the Rhode Island Department of Health and ArcView 3.2 analytical mapping software to create a "pin map" showing the locations of all properties where inspectors found lead hazards. We knew that many of the hazards were in the city of Providence. But ArcView allowed us to see how some neighborhoods had clusters of lead hazards. First we had to bring the table of inspections into ArcView, then we used a street map file that we had obtained from the city Department of Planning and Development to pinpoint the inspection addresses. [See figure 2.]

Also, using ArcView, we were able to tell readers that in the same neighborhood where one of our story subjects was poisoned, at least 17 others had been poisoned since 1993.

We dug into the into the inspection data using SPSS, a statistical program. SPSS quickly answered questions like: What type of owner was most prevalent? What type of unit poisoned kids most? [See figure 3.]

We knew from our state Health Department that the average lead blood level of Rhode Island's children has been declining. So has the number of children poisoned. But we also knew from past reporting that lead poisoning is the worst in inner city and immigrant neighborhoods. So we obtained updated child blood lead test results (with the child's name removed) in a database from the Health Department and used ArcView to map the percentage of poisonings by census tract. Sure enough, the inner cities still had the highest percentages of poisonings. [See figure 4.]

For the day two story, focusing on abating lead hazards, we wanted to see whether homeowners were taking advantage of low-interest loan programs offered by the state and the city of Providence. The Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corp. e-mailed us an Excel spreadsheet containing detailed information about every property that got one of its HUD-backed loans. The city refused to give us the same data for its low-interest loan program, saying that divulging the information would invade the privacy of recipients. So we used ArcView again, to create a pin map of all the state agency loans to property owners across Rhode Island and matched it to the map of lead hazards. We learned that the $9.7 million in loans repaired 171 housing units where children had been lead poisoned and another 727 units where property owners acted on their own.

Along the way in our reporting, we used a couple of other databases, both from the city of Providence. One database contained all the results of housing inspections by the city Department of Inspections and Standards. We analyzed that, but

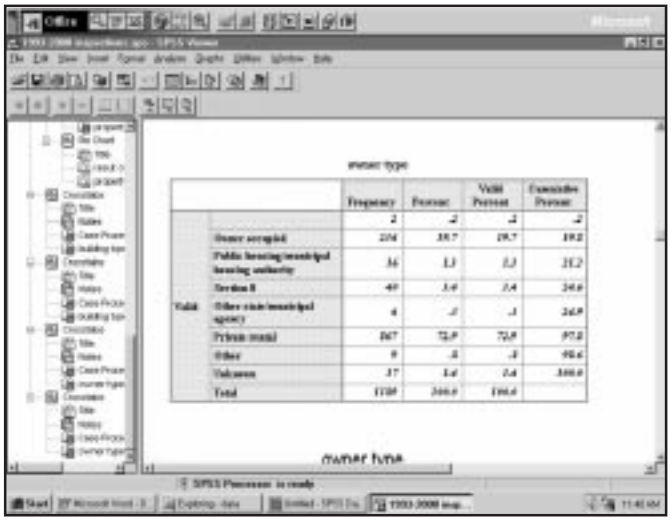


Fig. 1

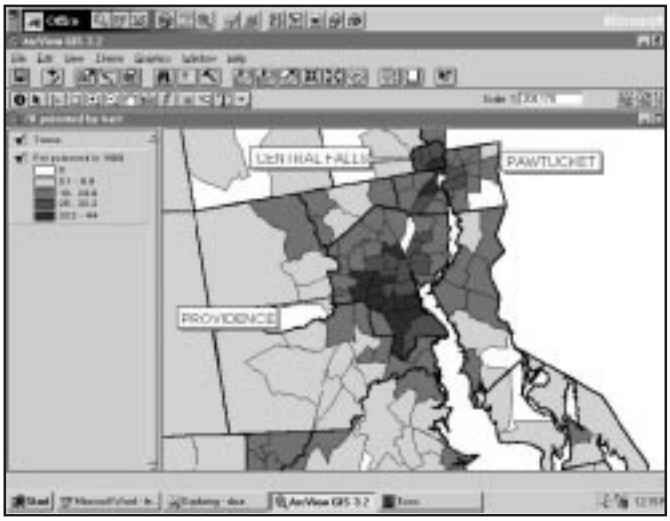


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

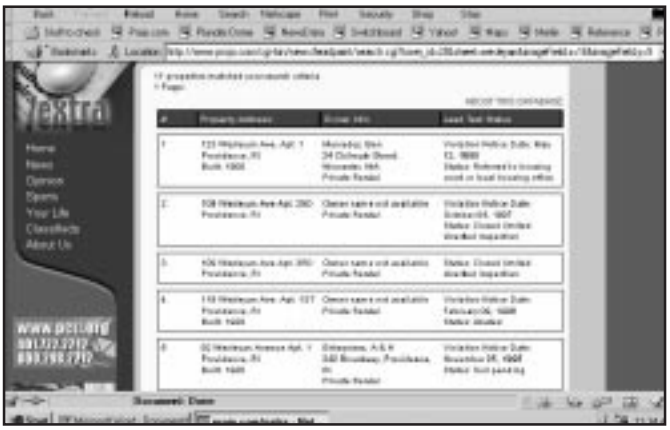


Fig. 4

it didn't tell us too much because city inspectors don't look specifically for lead hazards—but they will cite for peeling paint. The database came in handy for reporting a daily story about a nominee for housing court whose father had outstanding housing code violations.

Later, we obtained a copy of the housing court docket in computer form to check the widely held perception that lead-abatement cases drag on forever in court. Using Microsoft Access database manager, we found that the typical closed case took just a little more than four months— not so bad.

The story of child lead poisoning can be duplicated—even on a small scale—in any other urban area that has old housing. If you have slums built before the 1950s, you can bet there's lead paint there. And if the lead paint's there, kids are getting poisoned.

Peter B. Lord is the environment writer for the Providence Journal. *David Herzog is the computer-assisted reporting specialist on the newspaper's investigative team. You can read the "Poisoned" series online and search the database of lead hazard properties at http://www.projo.com/extra/lead/.*

Hudson River...(from page 9)

disinformation through fear of disclosure by media sources. This approach can also help build the newspaper's most important asset: its credibility. The newspaper web page can be, and should be, the best place to go for the most comprehensive and most objective information on controversial topics like the Hudson River dredging.

SEJournal: As environment reporters struggle to disseminate news quickly in a time when speed over accuracy is sometimes emphasized by their employers, how can environment reporters use your observations to make their coverage shine in cyberspace and improve what exists there today?

Farnsworth: Controversial stories draw news consumers to cyberspace, and these stories are where the traditional media have natural advantages—well-sourced and well-informed reporters who are also experienced writers and evaluators of information. If the work of reporters is not showcased in an attractive and as accessible a form as possible in cyberspace, then newspapers are giving away their greatest advantages in the battle for eyeballs in cyberspace.

Reporters need to press their editors for the effective allocation of resources necessary to provide the first-rate collection of information that will make consumers wanting to keep coming back for more.

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

Submissions or story ideas for "From Academe" may be sent to DebinMld@aol.com.

Are you missing out on membership benefits?

Even if you're a member, you might not have heard about all of the resources SEJ has for journalists, educators and students. Please check this list and, if you're missing out on anything, contact SEJ at (215) 884-8174 or sej@sej.org.

If you'd like to become a member, visit www.sej.org and click the "How to join" link on the left, or contact SEJ for an application. (Eligibility criteria apply.)

Member benefits include:

- The quarterly *SEJournal*, a journal written for journalists by journalists
- ***New!*** SEJ Journalism Awards for Environmental Reporting
- ***New!*** SEJ Web digest for breaking environmental news, up-to-date stories and a gallery of the best of the beat
- Online members-only directory for easy networking
- Discounts to annual conferences and regional conferences
- SEJ Web site with links, information and tips you don't want to miss
- Voluntary listservs such as
  - **TipSheet,** weekly emailing of environmental news tips listing sources and their contact information
  - **SEJ-Beat,** where you can post your stories and read about environmental coverage across the continent
  - **SEJ-Talk,** a discussion list where members can debate issues or ask for information or sources for a topic
  - **SEJ-Mail,** a paid press release distribution service that often carries useful information or job offers
  - **SEJ-Español,** for Spanish-language discussions

Obscure but promising way to clean-water stories

By ROBERT MCCLURE

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. Yet estimates are that nearly two-fifths of America's waterways still don't meet the landmark law's goals of making most American rivers, bays and lakes fit for fishing and swimming.

Chances are at least one of these water bodies is in your area, giving you a compelling local hook. Or you may want to do a piece at the state or national level revealing how environmental regulators have fallen short, and the politics behind this failure.

The most promising avenue of inquiry may be a program with the forbidding-sounding name of Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL.

The efforts of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the states to control pollution flowing from identified "point" sources of pollution, such as factories and sewage-treatment plants, have attracted the most attention. These are part of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, or NPDES. (Whether regulators are doing a good job on this is questionable; see the EPA inspector general's report of last year entitled State Enforcement of Clean Water Discharges at http://www.epa.gov/oigearth/audit/list901/finalenfor.pdf.)

REPORTER'S TOOLBOX

TMDLs are the other half of this equation and largely ignored. For years they were treated much like an eccentric uncle in the Clean Water Act basement—rarely mentioned, even though everyone knows he's there. That is beginning to change, as environmentalists increasingly file suits to spur the EPA and its state counterparts to get moving. These, in turn, have sparked political showdowns.

The Clean Water Act requires that environmental regulators—state pollution-control agencies or the EPA, depending on your state—to develop lists of water bodies that do not meet Clean Water Act goals. These lists are known as the 303(d) list of "impaired water bodies."

Getting your state's 303(d) list is a great place to start. The 30th anniversary of the Clean Water Act is Oct. 18, 2002, just a few weeks after the states' latest version of the 303(d) lists are due. But don't wait for then. Get the old version now and check it out.

This will tell you which waters the regulators knew for sure were polluted the last time they compiled the list. You'll want to compare this list to the new one when it comes out. Which water bodies were added? Why? Which ones were pulled off? Why? What percentage of your state's streams and lakes are even monitored? (That last point is covered in each state's 305(b) report, which is also worth examining.)

You will have to consider some fairly arcane data in the 303(d) report. In some cases states don't list a river or other water body because they don't have enough information. If they have only one data point—one sample—they may say they don't have enough information to determine whether the water body is "impaired" or not. They may throw out sample results they consider too old. That doesn't mean the water is clean, though.

Here you might consider doing your own lab tests. That's a whole 'nother Toolbox, but suffice it to say that you'll want to proceed carefully and with the assistance of a professional, certified laboratory—if possible, the same lab that the EPA or your state uses for its tests.

The lack of information produced by the TMDL program is a huge part of the story. The General Accounting Office reported in 2000 that only six states even had a majority of the data needed to fully assess their waters. (The report is available at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgibin/useftp.cgi?IPaddress=162.140.64.21&filename=rc00054.pdf&directory=/diskb/wais/data/gao, or by going to www.gao.gov and searching for "total maximum daily load.")

This lack of information is particularly bad for the so-called "non-point" pollution sources, where there is no discharge pipe. Non-point pollution comes off farms, ranches, logged-over forests and city streets when it rains.

TMDLs are an equally good national story. The Clinton administration attempted to require states to clean up the 20,000-plus bays, lakes, rivers and streams still listed as polluted. But critics feared that those rules would force "non-point" sources to launch cleanups.

Congress, in an emergency-spending bill just before the Independence Day 2000 recess, forbade EPA from moving forward. Farm-state Democrats joined Republicans on this.

They also instructed the National Academy of Sciences to look at TMDLs. Its report last summer (http://www.nap.edu/books/0309075793/html/) recommended procedural changes but concluded that regulators should not allow themselves to be paralyzed by uncertainties and lack of scientific information.

Right now the Bush administration is working on a revision of the never-implemented Clinton rules. It has set a deadline of April 2003, and it remains unclear what will emerge. Critics fear that the cleanups envisioned since the 1970s will again be put off. One reason is the cost. A draft EPA report last summer (http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl/draftdocs.html) pegged the cost at $900 million to $4.3 billion per year—real money, as the late Sen. Everett Dirksen might have observed.

Finding sources on this story is no problem. If you want to take a look at the national picture, a good place to start is the membership roster of the federal advisory committee that helped EPA develop the Clinton-era TMDL rule (http://www.epa.gov/owow/tmdl/members.html) The names and affiliations of committee members are listed, but not their phone numbers. The EPA press contact is Robin Woods at 202-564-7841 or woods.robin@epa.gov.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer *reporter Robert McClure covers TMDLs, NPDES, NAS and too many other acronyms for his feeble brain to recall right now.*

A Fellow's story...(from page 1)

curator of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, succeeded in establishing one of the first environmental journalism fellowships.

In the past seven years, Harvard appointed as Environmental Nieman fellows 10 reporters from across the United States and abroad. They took a year's leave from their newsrooms to study a web of environmental disciplines: policy, law, business, public health, religion, ethics, ecology, conservation biology and so on.

The program ended last year when the Kann Rasmussen funding ran out. But its goal of promoting and elevating the standards of environmental journalism lives on in a variety of other fellowships.

The number of such programs grew substantially in the mid-1990s, with most support coming from philanthropists outside the news business.

Why would charitable organizations—foundations set up by corporations selling everything from steak sauce to laptops—subsidize employee training for media companies with assets in the millions and billions of dollars?

Because many news organizations won't invest much toward environmental reporting, despite numerous surveys consistently showing high public demand for environmental coverage. One of the best explanations appeared in a 1995 *American Editor* article:

"Most environmental news doesn't 'break.' It's more of an ooze of a story," said Will Sutton, now a deputy managing editor at *The News & Observer* in Raleigh. "It's one of those stories that's a little easier to put aside because there's no one building to go to, no meeting to attend, no homicide of the day."

At least 50 percent of the newspapers and 75 percent of the television stations in the U.S. still do not have full-time environmental reporters. The figures, from a 1993 survey for the independent Foundation for American Communications (FACS), still appear to hold. And news organizations with environmental reporters generally do not invest in their continuing education in what is a highly complex, multidisciplinary beat.

"The reality is that ratings, circulation and ad revenues are not a function of quality," said Stavins, a frequent speaker at FACS journalist training seminars. "Most newspapers and certainly television and radio stations will increase markets perhaps with more coverage of sports or more color and graphics. But (not) more analytical coverage of an issue like environment?"

The supporting foundations, of course, see their interests tied to the quality of coverage.

"The laws, policies and corporate practices in the (American) West are unsustainable, and we want to get that changed," said Michael Fischer, program officer for the environment at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The nonprofit organization, established by the late Silicon Valley industrialist and his wife and son, invests about $2 million a year toward improving environmental journalism—including general support for the Society of Environmental Journalists.

"An essential ingredient to realizing change toward a sustainable future is educating and civic engagement in policy," Fischer said. "And that informed citizenry isn't going to happen without an increase in the amount and depth and salience of environmental issues.

To apply for fellowships: visit www.sej.org and click on "Careers."

"That's not an objective at the core of the missions at media chains. But the power and energy and the impact of the product of these media corporations are vehicles that we can ride."

Fischer is a big fan of the Institutes of Journalism and Natural Resources, a 6-year-old nonprofit organization that offers perhaps the most accessible and adventurous fellowships in environmental reporting.

Directed by Frank Allen, a former environment editor at *The Wall Street Journal*, IJNR takes at least a dozen journalists at a time on eight-day journeys with people of all stripes on the front lines of environmental stories.

The expeditions put newsroom-weary reporters and editors at all experience levels in some of the most scenic and resource-conflicted regions—grizzly bear and mining country in Northwestern Montana, the woodlands and islands of costal Georgia and South Carolina, the fishing villages of Maine, the sapphire waters of Lake Tahoe, logging towns in the Pacific Northwest.

IJNR fellows find that the shared intensity, fun and humor that Allen weaves into the program breaks down barriers imposed by media competition and opens the door to networking and mentoring among peers.

"This journey—this exposure to knowledge, land, people and journalistic colleagues—was one of the most valuable events of my life," said William Allen (unrelated to Frank), a veteran science and environmental reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.*

Allen went on to even bigger adventures in Nicaragua last year as a Ford Environmental Fellow. (See story, next page.) The fellowship, supported by the Ford Motor Company Fund, is one of two programs run by the International Center for Journalists that posts U.S. environmental journalists up to three months in developing countries of their choice to train colleagues overseas and report on critical environmental issues.

Allen reported on the effort by botanists to find, document and study rare plants that face extinction from encroaching development.

The Ford fellowship sprung from the success of its twin, the Senator John Heinz Fellowship, established in 1997 by ICFJ with a grant from the Teresa and H. John Heinz III Foundation.

Several SEJ members have taken a break from their beat to immerse themselves in academia and all the intellectual refreshment and wanderlust that goes with it. Much of the learning in these university fellowships takes place outside the classroom as journalists are treated to a year-long parade of intellectual stars.

As many as five journalists a year are named Ted Scripps Environmental Journalism Fellows to participate in graduate classes and weekly seminars at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Like the Nieman, the Scripps program began in 1993 and provides stipends to cover tuition and living expenses for an

(Continued next page)

academic year. Scripps Howard Foundation provides most of the funding.

Fellowships beneficial to environmental journalists are not "all-environment-all-the-time" programs. A number of SEJ members have gone to the John S. Knight Fellowships at Stanford University and the University of Michigan Journalism Fellowships, largely supported by the Knight Foundation. Both programs allow fellows to focus on environmental issues.

Fellows in such year-long university programs are encouraged to "scratch where it doesn't itch," as the *Washington Post's* late Howard Simons liked to say during his reign at the Nieman Foundation. Stanford tells journalists to "pick a wild card." How else to explain the "posture class" taken by Ed Marston, editor of *High Country News*, a bi-weekly newspaper that reports on the West's natural resources and changing communities. Too many hours slouched before a keyboard, Ed?

The battery recharging is not all self-indulgent. The University of California, Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism awards Hewlett Foundation Teaching Fellowships to accomplished environmental reporters seeking refuge from the daily news hustle. The fellows help students report and write stories for publication or broadcast.

"It's putting a megaphone in the fellow's hand, giving students something they will carry the rest of their careers," Fischer said.

Last year, Sandy Tolan, who has produced dozens of documentaries on natural resource issues, had his students produce several in-depth articles and pieces for a public radio series on environmental issues along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Other fellowship programs offer less time-consuming experiences. At the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass., journalists study everything from cell biology to nitrogen loading of Cape Cod bays. Some also are awarded the opportunities to spend two weeks or more in the MBL's long-term research stations in South America or the Alaskan Arctic.

The National Tropical Botanical Gardens, a congressionally authorized non-profit organization with locations in Hawaii and South Florida, sponsors an annual week-long fellowship for environmental journalists. Former SEJ board member and *SEJournal* editorial board member JoAnn Valenti organized the program, now in its fourth year. The curriculum offers rigorous in-the-field backgrounding with NTBG scientists and environment specialists primarily based in Hawaii.

Still other fellowships simply grant journalists the time and money to pursue big stories outside the scope and resources of their employers—even the gargantuan *Los Angeles Times.*

In 1999, *The Times'* Marla Cone snatched a multi-year Pew Fellowship in Marine Conservation to document the effects of chemical pollution from industrial countries on the most remote outpost of the Arctic.

Frank Clifford was recently named *The Times'* environment editor after a year roaming and researching the Continental Divide Trail for a book underwritten by the Alicia Patterson Foundation. His will be the 10th environmental book funded by the foundation since its was established in 1965 to honor the former *Newsday* publisher.

The most influential of those books is "Cadillac Desert," an indictment of the misuse of water in the West that inspired reform. Published in 1986, the book recently was ranked by the Modern Library among the 100 most notable nonfiction English language works of the 20th century.

The tome by the late Marc Reisner perhaps best illustrates why an increasing number of foundations find environmental journalists a good investment.

As Prof. Stavins says, it's "a tremendous way to leverage one's money."

Chris Bowman, a longtime environment writer for the Sacramento Bee, *was the first Nieman Environmental Fellow and has also been a Heinz and IJNR fellow.*

A Tale of Two Fellowships:

A journey into the jungle offers a good narrative

By WILLIAM ALLEN

The roaring rapids were just too much for the outboard motor. Paule pushed with the pole, then jumped out to pull the boat upstream. Ellyn did the same. When the woman with the infant in one arm jumped out to help. I realized I should, too. But I slipped. Suddenly I was up to my neck in the crocodile-laden river heading downstream.

That scene, in a remote region of northern Nicaragua, is from "Preserving, exploring 'Central America's Amazon,'" a long story I wrote for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch after returning from a Ford Environmental Journalism Fellowship in that poor yet beautiful country. Indiana Jones I'm not, but the spill in the river and other mishaps during the three-month fellowship provided a useful narrative tool for this and other stories I wrote.

The mishaps were the kind of spice that engages readers in stories about the environment, the kind of spice that you get from pursuing such a fellowship in a foreign land. Spice is fun, but so was interacting with people of a different culture, learning first-hand about Nicaragua and working to improve the poor state of environmental journalism there.

The Ford fellowship is awarded by the International Center for Journalists, in Washington, D.C. I applied for it in the fall of 1999, hoping to continue pursuing my long-held

Photo by RICHARD LEONARDI

Bill Allen interviews farmer Yarol Traslin along the Rio San Juan in southern Nicaragua in October 2000.

interest in Central American environmental issues. The Ford fellowship has a twofold objective: To report on the environment and to train local journalists in environmental reporting techniques.

The fellowship proposal requires you to outline a reporting project, so I proposed to follow a husband-wife team from the Missouri Botanical Garden on their scheduled plant-collecting trip in an unexplored region of northern Nicaragua. Naturally, after I was selected for the fellowship, the botanists postponed their trip. But I was able to find another story, that of St. Louis Zoo researcher Paule Gros, who is helping the indigenous Mayangna Indians conduct a biodiversity study in the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve.

Bill Allen (back, 2nd from left) with Nicaraguan environmental journalists taking his workshop, November 2000. (Far right: translator Tom Lee)

Off I went. I stayed in Nicaragua from Sept. 7 through Dec. 6, 2000, based in a decent apartment in Managua. With the help of ICFJ and my local sponsor, the Violeta B. de Chamorro Foundation, I made contacts, took day trips around Nicaragua and talked about environmental journalism with reporters and editors.

This poor but vibrant nation (only Haiti is poorer in the Western Hemisphere) has been characterized by a history of intense civil conflict and crippling natural disasters. Political corruption has sapped a populace still not recovered from a decade of U.S.-sponsored civil war in the 1980s. Yet the Nicaraguan people are friendly and love talking politics and baseball.

In my discussions with journalists, I found myself explaining a lot about why it's important for journalists to pay attention to the environment. Editors, especially, argued that in a country where most families are just trying to feed the kids, the state of the environment is a virtual non-issue. But I argued, quoting Peter Nelson, author of the ICFJ book "Ten Practical Tips for Environmental Reporting": "In developing nations, where the need for growth is particularly strong and the potential for ecological damage severe, the issue is heightened."

Thanks to my friends at the Chamorro Foundation and a newly formed group of Nicaraguan environmental journalists and advocates known as APCAN, I led a workshop in a conference center atop Mombacho Volcano, about an hour's drive south of Managua. I taught some of the basics of environmental reporting, including using the Internet to get information and broadening the source base of a story – simple lessons, but ones soaked up by grateful, information-starved intellects. It was a personally rewarding effort.

There were other wonderful experiences, but none so wonderful as following Gros into the Bosawas, a reserve that is part of the largest expanse of tropical rain forest north of the Amazon. It is still intact partly because for the decade of the 1980s it was a war zone, as Contra rebels fought with the Sandinista Army. The Bosawas region is still very much a Wild West, with mestizo Nicaraguans migrating into the territory as the nation's agricultural frontier moves northeast. They are coming into conflict with indigenous groups, like the one Gros is trying to assist through science.

On my other major field venture, which became a five-part series, I and photographer-translator Richard Leonardi followed the path taken by Mark Twain across southern Nicaragua in 1866. Twain had crossed Lake Nicaragua and steamed down the Rio San Juan, writing letters about what he saw for a San Francisco newspaper. I compared those observations with my own from 2000, adding some reporting on current environmental problems, including endangered sea turtles, deforestation, plantation pesticide runoff, proposals for a new trans-isthmus canal and the decline of Lake Nicaragua's famous bull sharks.

A final note on the Ford fellowship. Before applying, I carefully considered the originating source of the money: the Ford Motor Company Fund. I decided to proceed for many reasons. Among them: an independent panel of journalists makes the selection of fellows based on an open, competitive process; the money comes through ICFJ with no strings or restrictions from Ford (ICFJ requires that); and my newspaper has no policy forbidding such fellowships. To date, no one at Ford has asked for anything, and the good folks at ICFJ have always insisted that this is as it should be.

Hawaii fellowship

The Ford Fellowship alone was an incredible opportunity for professional development and intellectual enrichment. Indeed, for the year 2000 I would have stopped right there. But in the spring, shortly after I had persuaded my editors to grant a three-month leave for the Nicaragua trip, I received what was

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the closest I'll ever get to a call from heaven.

"The reporter selected as the 2000 Hewlett Journalist-in-Residence at Environment Hawaii has suddenly pulled out," the angel said. "Would you consider filling in and spending a month in Hawaii writing a story for the newsletter, all expenses paid, with a stipend?"

I'm not kidding. This call really happened.

For the next 0.02 seconds, here was my thought process: you goofball, you can't take this. Say no. You just got a three-month leave to go on one fellowship. You can't do another. You couldn't do it if they were a year or even two years apart. That would look bad enough. And you want to do this within the same year? You're nuts. Say no. Wait. Hawaii. Expenses paid. Stipend. Hawaii. Expenses paid. Stipend…. (repeat several times).

"Sure," I told the angel.

I took a month's vacation and told maybe one or two people in the newsroom what I was doing. I went in June, spending the month working out of the office of Environment Hawaii, a monthly public affairs newsletter based in Hilo, Hawaii (a.k.a. the Big Island). It was great, but not in the way you might think. That's because the Hawaii fellowship is not a vacation.

Pat Tummons, editor of Environment Hawaii, strongly encourages fellows to read and conduct phone interviews before arriving on the island. Once in Hawaii, I struggled to adjust to culture shock, a unique and devastated natural environment, and a truly strange political matrix. I also adapted to a new editorial style -- the newsletter's classic document-digging, corruption-exposing, devil-in-the-details writing approach.

In my off hours there was time for skin diving, hiking and fruit smoothies, but I generally stuck to a regular work routine. I produced three stories for Environment Hawaii – on a dry forest restoration project, a controversial road realignment project through a military base and endangered species habitat, and a day-in-the-life profile of Army field biologists whose work takes them through fields of unexploded ordnance.

Stunned as I was by the widespread destruction of Hawaii's natural systems, I also wrote a two-part series for my newspaper on the stunning decline of native species and habitat on the Hawaiian Islands.

Editors and readers liked the series. But the price was high in the newsroom, which brings me to my final point about the Hawaii fellowship.

It carries an unusually high envy/jealously factor among colleagues. Be ready for an enormous beating when you return. Don't bother saying how hard it was jarring your back while bouncing around in four-wheel-drives, spraining your ankles on lava or just plain working your tail off. People will only laugh and say, "Yeah, it must have been really tough … in Hawaii!"

There's nothing you can say or do to prevent the cynical laughter. My advice is to just stay low and go with the flow. And never—repeat never—sign your e-mails from Hawaii to newsroom friends "Five-0."

William Allen is an environment and science writer with the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. *His first book, "Green Phoenix: Restoring the Tropical Forests of Guanacaste, Costa Rica," was published in March 2001 by Oxford University Press.*

Coping with 9/11...(from page 1)

should heed her son's urging and go home.

David Helvarg, a freelance writer, was out to sea, trying to get news of the terrorist attacks on a satellite phone.

SEJ members across the nation scrambled to make special afternoon deadlines, cover Ground Zero, interview stranded passengers at their local airports or check on the security of the area nuclear plant in the wake of what's known today simply as "9/11."

What follows is a compilation of E-mail postings, essays to friends and reports from our members. They show not just the historic events but also the remarkable change that 9/11 has brought to journalism, the environment beat and our lives.

Immediate Reactions

Dan Fagin
Newsday

We're all fine. It was a day that defies description, and I spent most of it two blocks north of the WTC, interviewing survivors and rescuers. The police wouldn't let any of us get closer and it took a lot of arguing to get that close. When the F-15s started flying overhead, it was a sobering experience.

As you know, the survivors are all too few, and the rescuers haven't gotten to do much rescuing. Many of the people I talked to seemed to have a hard time processing what they saw, heard and felt—the planes striking the buildings, the fireballs, the people leaping hopelessly out the upper floors, the collapses, the people fleeing and then being overtaken by billowing smoke clouds—and I kind of feel the same way, even though I didn't get to the scene until about 10:15. They tended to grasp for movie analogies, as if they were subconsciously trying to relegate what happened to a fantasy world.

I was a cog in the news machine, and I did the job. But it's something I'd like to forget, if that were possible.

We have several friends who are missing, and based on what I saw today, I feel certain they are dead. There will be a handful of survivors in the debris, no more. Getting the bodies out will take many, many days.

A very bad day, but we are well.

Margie Kriz
National Journal

On the day after the recent terrorist attacks, I sat in my office five blocks from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue and digested the sobering news that the hijacked plane that hit the Pentagon was originally aimed at the White House. At the last minute, the plane made a sharp turn—why? And a second hijacked plane was apparently on its way to Washington when it crashed. What was its target?

The significance of this hit home for me after I'd turned in my contribution to our special terrorism issue. In that after-deadline quiet, I began to comprehend the reality of this frightening new world. I understood why, on the day of the attacks,

my friends and family had frantically checked up on me. Why my son had urged me to go home. And also why, as a reporter, I didn't leave. This is the biggest story that Washington has seen in many decades, one that will overshadow all other public policy priorities for months, possibly years to come.

When I first moved to Washington more than 20 years ago, area veterans who coolly observed that the Capital is ground zero for a military attack from a hostile country or terrorist group alarmed me. Over the years, however, I'd become immune to that fear, much like Los Angeles residents become desensitized to the geological fault lines that shift under their feet. But the Sept. 11 tragedy was a horrible jolt, with impacts that we're all only beginning to understand.

As I sat at my desk in the aftermath, I knew that no one would care about all of the environmental stories I'd planned to write this fall. The Sept. 15 *National Journal* was originally scheduled to feature my cover story on global warming. But who really cares about global warming at a time when this country is under siege, when the democracy and national security we take for granted are under attack?

When I came home from work on the night of the terrorist attacks, my son, who is 16, needed to talk about the nation's crisis. He has friends whose parents work at the Pentagon, so he was furious when other students cheered when school officials announced that the school was closing early because of the terrorist activities. In the dim twilight, he and I took our dogs on a long walk and talked about the different ways people deal with anger and nervous energy. About Vietnam, where his uncle (my brother) served. About a possible war. About life. We talked until we had nothing more to say.

The terrorist attack was the end of innocence for my son. And for me. And maybe for us all who have been focusing on environmental issues. I care a great deal about the planet's environment, but I'm wondering if clean water and clean air are a luxury of a free, wealthy and secure society. Today, with our security in question, it's becoming increasingly clear that, at least for the immediate future, the nation will put environmental policy on hold.

Worries About the Beat

Michael A. Rivlin
OnEarth Magazine

I'm afraid I share Margaret Kriz's dismal view of the sudden irrelevancy of this beat. Perhaps it's just being in N.Y. or D.C., and perhaps the rest of the country sees this differently. Perhaps it's the depression and accompanying malaise that are afflicting everyone around here. The air quality story is a three-graf sidebar. Maybe.

Around here, we all know people who are missing and presumed dead. Kiss ANWR goodbye. News reports say we've ordered 6,000 body bags. And though I don't think the number of deaths will be that great, air quality is a story because some of the smoke and ash are human remains.

At the SEJ regional conference in New Brunswick next January, one of the topics of one of the panels was to have been how global warming-induced catastrophic weather events afflicting the eastern seaboard infrastructure could shutter the stock exchange and paralyze the region. That hypothetical discussion is moot, eclipsed by an awful reality.

The ferry at the base of my street that I take into Manhattan mostly runs wealthy Wall Streeters to work. On Tuesday, as a line of ambulances waited to pick up overflow wounded, families gathered and waited all day, and some all night. This morning, the parking lot is all but deserted. Scattered here and there are cars seemingly parked at random, surrounded by empty spaces. No one's coming to drive them home.

Tom Meersman
Minneapolis Star-Tribune

The depression and malaise are not limited to N.Y. and D.C. There is ubiquitous sadness. I see it in Minneapolis in the eyes of those on the bus, in the street, at work.

It makes us want to be more kind and cordial. It motivates us to check in with our kids and parents and close friends. Not for advice or even for reassurance, but merely to connect with the human bonds that join us as individuals souls making our ways through life. Sort of like an occasional short tap on a tuning fork to see if it still reverberates in true pitch.

I'm not going to become frustrated that environmental topics drop in priority for awhile. Some angles will be there, such as Dan Fagin's tale of dust/asbestos, and others' suggestions about vulnerability to bioterrorism. But I'm not going to think less of myself if my byline is not as frequent or as prominent during the next few weeks.

If you've lived through a death or other family tragedy, you know that life changes forever. You don't return to normal, but you return to a changed normal. The environment will be there. It will continue to be an important beat. Take a deep breath. Give it some time.

If you've lived through tragedy, you know that life changes forever. You don't return to normal, but you return to a changed normal. The environment will be there. It will continue to be an important beat. Take a deep breath. Give it some time.

—Tom Meersman

Mark Schleifstein
Times-Picayune

Sitting in the Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, waiting for a flight to Tampa to participate in a water environmental issues seminar at Poynter Institute, I was reading a book about coastal restoration that began, in part, with concerns of the author about the poten-

(Continued next page)

tial of a terrorist attack on the Old River Control Structure causing the Mississippi River to change course.

That's when the gate attendant announced, "Because two airplanes have hit buildings in New York and another plane has hit the Pentagon, Flight 309 to Tampa has been delayed until 10 a.m." The sad fact is that terrorism and war will create their own environmental stories, and that the military actually has been a key participant in both destroying and cleaning up the environment.

I don't buy the argument that reporting on "mundane" environmental issues must take a back seat during this time. It can't.

For instance, we've got a tropical storm in the Gulf of Mexico that's expected to create some flooding and erosion along the Louisiana coast. That affects people immediately, and we'll be reporting on it. Yes, there may be a pause. Yes, there will be a realignment of issues that our editors think are important. But environmental coverage ain't going away. The image I see when someone says Gulf War is still the myriad oil well fires, and the reporting that was done on their environmental damage.

Remembering September

David Helvarg
Television Producer, Author

I was at sea for much of September reporting on the Deep East Expedition off the Atlantic coast, an attempt to discover new scientific and natural resources on America's last great wilderness frontier.

As a Washington, D.C.-based journalist I came to feel particularly out of it after Sept. 11. In the past when I've covered war zones I've had to leave home to reach them. That Tuesday morning I stood on the bridge of the RV Atlantis 150 miles off Nantucket with Captain Gary Chiljean and his chief mate, listening to the short wave, a static-filled WINS 1010 report out of New York with live descriptions of the jetliner terror attacks in New York and Washington and collapse of the world trade towers. Rebecca Cerroni, one of the expedition members, lives three blocks from the trade center. We put her on the satellite radio phone and she got through to her husband, Joe, in Connecticut who was OK. One of his co-workers was at the trade center, however, and is still missing.

Our first week at sea had seen Alvin unable to deploy three out of five days due to high winds and rolling 18- to 20-foot seas tossed up by Hurricane Erin. The plan had been to then make a transfer of scientists at sea off Staten Island but that plan got blown away along with thousands of lives by the destruction of the World Trade Center. The Navy (which owns Alvin) also canceled permission for the expedition to dive in the steepest parts of Hudson Canyon, the assumption being they were moving nuclear subs through there as backup for the aircraft carrier battle group stationed off New York.

The night after the attacks I was watching some of the video Alvin, its pilot and crew had taken 4,500 feet down in the dark, crushing depths of Oceanographer Canyon. There are beautiful branching deep sea corals in yellow, brown and white, also sponges, cutthroat eels, rattail fish, red crabs, luminescent purple shimmering squid, and other life abundant amidst the marine snow. Someone told me we now had TV reception. I went up to the lounge on the focsle deck to see, through a weak and snowy signal, our first images of the second jet hitting the towers and the towers coming down.

For the rest of my days I'll be stuck with those contrasting images of what we're capable of as a species, from exploring and discovering new life in the most remote and challenging parts of our ocean planet to using modern technology to carry out mass murder in the heart of a city.

Nine days later, diving in "shallow" 800-foot waters off the New York Bight, one of Alvin's thrusters got tangled up in lobster trap line. It surfaced at a 20-degree angle, sinking back 40 meters into dark green water and rising again before swimmers off its inflatable support boat were able to cut it free. "You can thank the Avon (boat) crew or we'd be on the bottom," the sub's relieved pilot Bob Brown told me once safely back aboard.

Just more proof, if more is needed, that despite our best efforts and illusions, life, precious and abundant, is always at risk. The only question is what causes we choose to risk it for.

Merritt Clifton
ANIMAL PEOPLE

I was just wrapping up a routine feature about an elephant aid program in Jaipur, India, when my wife came in the door in tears after taking our son Wolf to school, talking completely incoherently about "all those people killed in New York City and Washington, D.C. I responded as I usually do to any sensational report: "First off, let's find out if it's true." So Kim turned on the TV and sure as hell, it was.

ANIMAL PEOPLE covers animal protection worldwide, and I knew right off that a small army of donors, rescuers and activists who worked in or near the World Trade Center and the Pentagon might be involved. In fact, the American Humane Association annual conference was going on just three blocks from the Pentagon. So, first priority was to find out who was accounted for and who was missing.

Search-and-rescue dog teams would be involved almost immediately. Along with thousands of children, thousands of animals might be orphaned. It was easy to foresee that the stock market would crash, and that the revenue-base of charities both in the U.S. and abroad would be hugely affected. Humane societies and wildlife conservation programs could expect to take a big hit.

A major backlash against terrorism would result, and this would further impact all of the organizations which have not consistently and emphatically distanced themselves from arsons and bombings and so forth, as practiced by the self-designated "Animal Liberation Front" and "Earth Liberation Front."

Moreover, jittery corporations under attack by activist groups might be more motivated than ever to hire private security firms to infiltrate and disrupt the activism.

I had already been working on a related feature, so it was easy to back up and rewrite to include the Sept. 11 angle. This was a "stop-the-presses-and-remake-page-one" event, even for a publication 3,000 miles away that does not cover most mainstream news topics.

There was another angle I didn't see coming, though: the international response. It started only minutes after I found out that the attacks were occurred, and continued for days. We heard almost immediately from humane organizations in

Turkey, Pakistan, Egypt and even tiny Azerbaijan, all wanting to know if we were okay and deploring the violence. The Islamic people were especially anxious, and so were some Europeans who from time to time had said anti-American things in the past. They were very concerned to make sure we understood that no matter what disagreements they may have had with the U.S. or American culture, they were as appalled as anyone else at the deaths and destruction.

We ended up with two Sept. 11-related features and an editorial in our delayed September edition, and will have a ton of follow-up in our October edition. Our initial coverage emphasized the immediate aspects: ASPCA president Larry Hawk, for instance, lost his sister, who was a flight attendant aboard the first plane that hit the World Trade Center. Friends of Animals president Priscilla Feral's daughter spent the day trapped in the rubble, covered with human remains. Our follow-up will focus on the financial aftermath. Fall direct mailings for humane groups are pulling only 25 to 50 percent of their anticipated revenue, and since humane organizations typically take in about half their annual income from October through December, that spells disaster for hundreds of organizations that have been running right at the edge.

Mark Neuzil
University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota

When the attack occurred, the faculty teaching in the journalism department labs pulled down the big screen TV and switched to the live broadcast. The day was then spent watching and explaining coverage until 3:25, when the college canceled class for the rest of the day. I had group of mostly freshmen and sophomores new to journalism. I said, "We have not had time to introduce a lot of these concepts, but we're going to explain things as we see them and worry about definitions later." Eventually we collected all 27 front pages from every Minnesota daily newspaper of Sept. 12, plus the "Extras" put out by the two locals.

Newsroom Effects

Tom Henry
Toledo Blade

I have a story in the paper based on an interview with a jazz singer from New York (Aria Hendricks, daughter of Toledo's famous jazz singer, Jon Hendricks) who lives in a 35-story apartment building across the street from the World Trade Center. Debris from the World Trade Center came flying through the window of her apartment on the 33rd floor. It was a gripping interview. I ended it with her recollection of watching six people jumping from the World Trade Center, saying it was a perfectly logical thing to do given the horror of the moment and that you would have totally understood it if you were there. Said she knows many more than six people jumped, but that she turned away and told herself she couldn't watch any longer. I also did a story about a Toledo native who's in charge of the New York State National Guard and just happened to be in Washington when the Pentagon was struck. His old office in the Pentagon, which he left in 1996, was blown to pieces.

The day of the attacks, I did the regional U.S. Senator/House Rep. Roundup. One congressman from our area said he looked in his rear-view mirror on his way back from giving a breakfast speech at Georgetown and saw the Pentagon on fire. One of Ohio's senators said he immediately sent his staff home because he feared the Capitol was next in line.

Tracy Davis
Ann Arbor News

I used to cover growth and transportation, so I have been the airport, FAA, flight restrictions over Michigan stadium, etc. person. But I also cover census, so someone else is following that and I'm doing a big segregation package for our redesign launch later this month. I don't think it has changed my beat permanently in any way, but I do believe that if I didn't cover census too, the environment beat would be the first tossed in favor of a permanent terror attacks/war beat. Always is when there's big stuff. Of course, when all hell breaks loose, everyone is GA. But in my last job covering the environment, I was always the person to fill in for city/county beats when they were sick, on vacation, medical leave, whatever. After a few big fights and a couple of air pollution series that caught the governor's attention, that changed. I haven't had time to fight that battle here though.

Jim Bruggers
The Courier-Journal

I suspect many of us have become "war correspondents" in our own way, whether it's Dan Fagin reporting from Ground Zero or others, myself included, making calls to victims families. Frankly it's been very hard for me to process what's happened this week, and I've found that going into my reporter-observer mindset has been a good defense mechanism. Then, of course, something triggers the weight of loss, and pain, that we all share to one degree or another.

Today I'm quite delighted to be able to get back to something much more mundane: a story about a county's struggle over a decision to adopt its first planning and zoning. Life goes on.

Dealing with Grief

Natalie Pawelski
CNN

My heart goes out to those of you on the front lines. I can't imagine what you're going through. I've spent the last couple of days telling stories about murdered people and their survivors—the 11-year-old kid on his first flight... the mother grieving her only son.

How do you handle the part where the work ends for the day, the reporter's deadline/tunnel vision widens, and the truth of what has happened hits you?

Randy Loftis
Dallas News

Natalie asks a very good and personal question about how the impact of a catastrophic event hits a reporter at the end of the day. Staying busy and focused and on-task can hold back the emotional response, but not forever.

(Continued next page)

I had covered mass trauma before the Oklahoma City bombing, but not mass murder. In the first days after the bombing I pitched in as needed. Then I was offered a choice: stay in Dallas and help compile biographies of the victims (we did a bio of each of them) or go to OKC and take the lead daily events beat. I choose to go.

It was night when I first arrived at the bombed building. The media were kept a couple of blocks away but I could see every detail in the huge floodlights. I was most struck by the silence at night. It's something I'll never forget.

For about a week I did the main dailies from the site, writing about the body recoveries and the morgue and the firefighters. Late one night some firefighters from Tulsa came walking by, and when I heard one of them ask another where they could find a pay phone to call home, I offered them my cell phone. These guys were risking their lives crawling through the rubble for strangers—dead strangers, as everyone knew but no one wanted to admit—but they seemed amazed that someone would offer them a free phone call. Go figure.

Through binoculars I could see one upper-story office with the floor caved in. On one wall was a bookcase with books still in it. On another was a coat rack with man's suit coat. On the remaining floor along the back wall was an empty office chair.

One night the Oklahoma City Fire Department took some of us through the police lines into the shell of the building. We stood on the street, staring up into the building's skeleton and watching federal agents' search for evidence.

At Oklahoma City the Red Cross gave us food and drinks. A lady came by and gave us little hand-sewn wrist bands made of American flag-like cloth, and I don't know of any reporter who treated her gift with cynical contempt. A police chaplain from Chatsworth, Ga., gave us a card with his phone number. In case you need to talk, he said. I never called, but I still have his card.

Every day I reported during the day and then filed my story and went back to the site for a while, just standing and watching. Then every night I went back to my motel room and cried.

I'm a different person after this experience. Tuesday morning when I saw the second plane hit on live TV, everything came rushing back. I know personally what people at the scenes in N.Y. and D.C. might feel. I also know that if somebody offers them a chance to talk, they should keep the number.

Robert Braile
Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources

Since yesterday, I've been trying to explain to my 11-year-old daughter Emily and nine-year-old son Alexander why someone would abduct an airplane, take it off course, and fly it into a building, killing himself, the scores of innocent people on board, and the thousands upon thousands of innocent people in and around the building. I've been trying to explain this as the unimaginable image of this plane plunging into this building has been shown again and again on television.

This morning, Emily came downstairs a little before dawn. She sat on the couch in the living room, as she usually does, soon to leave for school. I asked her how she had slept. She said not well, because it had taken a long time to get to sleep. When I asked her why, she said "because of the attack," that word--"attack"--resonating still, resonating the way it will for the rest of my life, the first time one of my children gave expression to peril in their lives.

"There are evil people in this world," I said, beginning what I hoped would become an answer. "Evil people, mad people, who..."

"Why?" she interrupted, asking the obvious question, the greatest question, leaving me silent.

Suddenly, we both heard a flock of Canada geese flying low overhead, a dozen or so flapping and squawking in a deep vee about a hundred feet up, flying south out of the Canadian Provinces and crossing this part of New England on their way South, crossing it the way they always do at precisely this time of year, the first sign of autumn.

We turned to the window to see the flock pass by in the dim morning light, and for the first time since yesterday, I saw a smile on Emily's face, a sparkle in her eyes. That distinctive smile and sparkle I've come to know over the years had returned, as it always does when the wonder of nature enters her life.

"Listen," I whispered. "The Canada geese are back. They're flying south for the winter, just the way they always have, just the way they always will." Emily nodded, keeping her eyes on the flock as it grew distant in the sky.

"You're going to hear a lot today in school about the attack," I began, after a moment. "A lot about who might have done it, about why they might have done it, about whether we're safe anymore. You're asking all of the right questions, making all of the right points, and if you feel like participating in the conversations, I'm sure you'll continue to ask all of the right questions, and make all of the right points. If you don't feel like participating, I'm sure that'll be okay, too," I said.

"But as you hear all about the attack today, if you start getting upset, remember the geese," I said, drawing an even deeper smile from Emily, an even brighter sparkle in her eyes, as she knew without my having to say it what I was about to say. "Remember how they've always passed by at this time of year, and always will, no matter what else is going on in the world, and how upset it may make us. Remember how nature is always there, like a refuge, a place we can go that doesn't change. Remember the geese, Emily."

Calculating the Future

Tim Wheeler
Baltimore Sun

Another possible outcome of public reaction to this and possible subsequent acts of terrorism—a shunning of cities in general, giving greater impetus to sprawl? This idea is not original with me; *The Sun* actually quoted some academic in a story yesterday citing this as a possible response of people fearful for their safety.

"People are going to be paranoid about public spaces," said Kevin Lourie, a Brown University anthropologist and psychologist. Lourie predicted the disasters in NYC and Washington areas would mark the beginning of a large-scale migration from cities and a reluctance to congregate in large groups.

I think the scale of that reaction will depend on whether there are repeat attacks in major metro areas, but I can attest that my sister-in-law, who lives in Richmond, Va., is having second thoughts about going through with a long-planned trip with my wife to NYC by train in two weeks.

Carl Frankel
Author

In fact we may have just entered the Era of Inconspicuousness. If this is so, that would mean a shift at a basic evolutionary level. For millennia we've been playing the alpha-male game: bigger is better and so on. If you look at towns over the centuries, the institution with the highest building was king of the political hill. The cathedral in the Middle Ages, the corporate office-tower today. That may have ended on Tuesday.

Two Months Later

Margie Kriz
National Journal

Today, Oct. 30, 2001, I received office mail for the first time since the anthrax panic forced the U.S. Post Office to close its Capitol Hill facility. Before it reached me, our mailroom assistants, who now wear latex gloves and take regular doses of antibiotics, had screened the mail. Should any "suspicious" mail slip through that safety net, we've been directed to secure the offending envelop in a zip-lock bag, call an editor and the FBI, and take a shower. It is a very strange time.

At the SEJ conference in Portland, I realized that most of the nation has pretty much returned to normal. Reporters from around the country are still eagerly researching environmental stories, although many were frustrated that their news hole has shrunk as the defense beat has expanded. I came home from the Portland conference with a notebook-full of story ideas. Back in Washington, however, the news is still filtered through a prism of terrorism.

What's it like in Washington? We're enjoying a string of lingering, warm autumn days. The trees have taken on marvelous fall colors. But small talk at the press table inevitably turns to whether you've been swabbed for anthrax. A few normally sane friends have been mapping out escape routes and packing their cars with tents, food, and GPS equipment. Personally, I've found comfort in the normalcy of life: bugging my son to do his homework, talking to old friends, going to dinner with friends. Meanwhile, we all wait and wonder what's going to hit us next.

Dan Fagin
Newsday

We stared out the window of the elevated train, as the smudge in the sky grew larger and blacker by the minute…. I stopped in at my office to grab a police pass and glanced up at CNN and again heard someone tell me something preposterous: Both towers had collapsed, and tens of thousands of people were running uptown in a panic. I ran downtown, jumping in and out of taxis as the traffic flow dictated, and making wide detours on foot to avoid police roadblocks.

The end of the line for me was an NYPD barricade one block north of what we would later call Ground Zero. That's where I spent the first long day, interviewing soot-covered survivors and rescuers—at first a flood, then an agonizing trickle that petered out to no one. The F-15s patrolling overhead were a diversion from the reality of mass murder, and so were the office papers scattered as thickly on the streets as leaves in a November forest. But by mid-afternoon it was clear to all of the reporters sharing that barricade that this would be a disaster in which there would be no heartwarming stories of survival, no miraculous rescues. The ambulance crews waited, but there was no one to help except exhausted firefighters with scorched eyes and smoke-filled lungs. So we called our offices and dictated our notes, and then when the sun went down we went home. There was nothing else to do.

> By mid-afternoon it was clear to all of the reporters sharing that barricade that this would be a disaster in which there would be no heartwarming stories of survival, no miraculous rescues.
>
> —*Dan Fagin*

Covering the environmental aspects of the World Trade Center attack is like being assigned to write about the half-time show at the Super Bowl. It's a big deal, sure, but it's not THE big deal—not by a long shot. I spent the next few weeks writing a lot about air quality: asbestos and dioxin and especially dust. The dust was all over downtown; it still is, in fact. I wrote about the chaos and the frustration associated with restoring order to a dangerous work site where for weeks just about everyone ignored instructions from EPA and OSHA about wearing masks, hard hats and other protective gear.

Who was going to force those firefighters to wear respirators as they worked 12-hour shifts digging—mostly by hand—through 40-foot piles of smoldering rubble, searching for colleagues, friends, family? No one, as it turned out. And that's gotten many of us wondering: Is there still a place for the environment beat in a world that suddenly has more immediate worries than the incremental effects of global warming, the destruction of biologically rich habitats, or the long-term carcinogenicity of low-level asbestos exposure? Environmental issues have always come in subtle shades, but suddenly so much of the world seems to be drawn in stark black and white. Environmental risks are rarely immediate, almost never certain and always complicated. It would be foolish to pretend that their place in the news agenda is—or should be—as prominent today as on Sept. 10.

Yet I think there is reason to be optimistic about the strength of the environment beat in the long term, because this new struggle for security has also prompted a new interest in figuring out exactly what we are fighting for. With insecurity comes introspection, and an intense desire to focus on what's really important. Our stories on the environment beat speak directly to the kind of world we will leave for our children. Serious times can only be good for serious issues, and they are our stock in trade. ❖

Poison..(from page 1)

Congress and the Florida Legislature. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is considering banning the wood.

Hauserman's main story ended with a quest to obtain information the wood treatment industry and the home improvement materials sales businesses said is part of their consumer education program. When she asked one store for information on how to safely deal with the wood, she was given a telephone number to call. A company specializing in hazardous waste disposal answered the call.

SEJournal interviewed Hauserman on the inside story of "Poison in Your Backyard."

Q. How did the idea begin?

A. I had some sources in the Department of Environmental Protection I have had for a long time and they alerted me that this was an issue that was becoming important and there was some science coming out by two scientists, Tim Townsend and Helen Solo-Gabriele, of the University of Florida and the University of Miami (respectively). They were beginning to find arsenic in the waste stream and that this was really a hazardous waste problem they were dealing with initially.

Q. You mean it was a landfill problem?

A. The sugar cane companies would normally get all the cane juice out of the cane and then would burn the husks as a co-generation thing, a bio-power-type thing. After Hurricane Andrew, they began to take a lot of waste wood from Miami and then they would land-apply the ash. They found arsenic in the sugar field. So they went searching for where it came from. It was from the treated wood.

Q. How did you sell it to editors?

A. It was an evolutionary thing. I didn't really have to sell it that much. They thought it was an interesting issue. The biggest problem was getting the time to do it. At the time I was trying to do this story, I had a legislative session which lasted 60 days. I had (to cover) numerous environmental assaults, including breaking down our development controls; our land-buying program was being passed. So, there were some very major issues that I had to deal with in the legislation.

Then, I thought I would work on it in the fall after the 2000 election, and of course the biggest story in the country came right here to Tallahassee. So, I was covering the presidential election.

The first time I actually had time to sit down and really map out what I had, I had been collecting string on it for quite a while, probably, oh June, July, August, September, October, probably six months. The first time I had a chance to go through it was between Christmas and New Years, which was after the presidential election. I had agreed to work (the holiday period). That was the first time I had to look at what I had, and when I saw what I had, I tried to get moving on it. When the thing ran, I was in the middle of the next legislative session, so I had to both follow the breaking story and cover the legislature. It hit in March, when our legislature meets. This was something that had to be shoehorned in around a lot of daily coverage.

Q. What were some of the resources you used to do the story?

A. Well, we had good science here. There was a technical advisory group that had been meeting in the DEP on this issue and they had brought all the stakeholders together—the wood treatment industry, the scientists who were getting to see this pattern of arsenic leaking out of things. So, I used a lot of their research. And there was some reporting that had been done on it elsewhere. I certainly used NEXIS and LEXIS (computerized document searches).

Some lawsuits were very helpful because there was a lot of discovery about what the wood treatment industry knew, when it knew it, what the EPA had or had not done. Then I started interviewing a person here and a person there. You know how that goes.

Q. The newspaper commissioned its own tests. Was that important to the story? How did you get the editors to approve it?

A. I think that was the critical thing we did—that made the difference between just a story about a possible threat and a story to show that it was actually happening, that we could show people. The testing was so cheap—$30 a test. We made the decision that we would just go into playgrounds and take one sample. We picked public playgrounds we could get on. We picked one each for every county we circulate in. We have a very large circulation area; we have a five-country area. I started to call the parks departments and asked them if they had any of these wooden playgrounds. We took one soil sample next to the posts. The question was: Was it (arsenic) coming out or not? We were not going to get interested in a whole argument about gridding (the sampling), or doing very extensive testing. We were only interested in finding if, indeed, the arsenic was coming out. And in every single case it was.

And then, when we started going through the clips in our own libraries, it all turned out they had all been built by volunteers. It was unknown to me because I picked them randomly. And that became an even more interesting story because so many people had put in so much time and effort into making these wonderful places for kids to play and they all had arsenic in them.

Then we were able to get the volunteers on the record and talk with them. They were not aware of this. No one had made them aware of this. No one had used protective clothing while they were building these. They were understandably dismayed that something that had started as such a wonderful idea was actually polluting.

Another reason this story got so many legs here was we have hardly any background arsenic in our soil. So, the wood treatment industry could not say it was coming from somewhere else, which they had been able to say elsewhere, or that is was naturally occurring. Ours (natural background) is pretty low, so it had to be coming from that wood and we could make that case easily.

Q. Did you think you were taking a chance on testing?

A. No. Not at all.

Q Why is that?

A. Well, those test results came back in the middle of the election and I said, "Well, we went looking for it and we found it." Later on the argument was about the relative risk, as I figured it would be. But I didn't think we needed to get into that. People needed to know there was arsenic coming out of the wood.

Then there was a very large argument over the standard

because we don't have an arsenic standard per se in the soil. We only have an arsenic standard for pollution cleanup. So, I specifically did not use parts per million anywhere in my stories. I just took the residential soil cleanup target numbers and divided that into the numbers that we found. So, we could say it was 13 times what the DEP requires for a neighborhood cleanup. The wood treatment industry said, well, that wasn't realistic because a neighborhood number was not the same as a playground number. I would disagree here in Florida. We have kids who play all year round on those playgrounds.

Q. At what stage in the research did you float the idea of testing, or actually conducting your own test?

A. It was fairly early on. I think it was about three months into it. I think we did the testing in September and the package ran in March. I originally wanted to do it in two parts, but they wanted in one.

Q. Why is that?

A. I don't know.

Q. You used the wood treatment industry's own public relations and marketing tools to show they could produce a more environment-friendly wood. Where did you get that?

A. I got those from the technical advisory group meetings. By that point, there were so many scientists on that, and regulators, and they had collected so much information….There were no reporters going to those meetings. It was a real below-the-radar kind of thing. I had to slog through a lot of science.

Q. How do you slog through a lot of science?

A. I just learned everything I could. I have been an environmental writer for 15 years. I had done a lot of investigative work on the pulp and paper industry and I just learned how to make my way through regulatory documents and lawsuits.

Q. I really like the perspective of the level of arsenic being X-times higher than allowed at a Superfund site.

A. We had a very public Superfund site in our circulation area that people were familiar with. So, I called them up and asked them what was the standard they were going to use, and it made a very nice contrast. You are going to have this right next to a balance beam at a kid's playground and it is more than what they are going to make Stauffer Chemical clean up to.

Whenever I do stories about pollution, I try to find something that is going to make it make sense. How many swimming pools would if fill? How much is it compared to regulatory standards and do it in a way that it doesn't get clunked up. You know: "The state standard is 1.2 ppb. At this site the range was duh duh da duh… ." I think people glaze off at that point. Since we were trying to make this very immediate, at home, and we could show them it was not a remote risk—it was right there and we could show them how many times it was versus the state standard. I think it made it more understandable to regular people who were understandably overwhelmed by this.

Q. The end of the story was really interesting. It really hit home. How did you do that?

A. I went to one of the big box depots and I asked for the consumer information sheet. They gave me a phone number and I called it and it was a hazardous waste hotline.

Q. Why did you pick that as an ending?

A. It contrasted the difference between what the industry was saying about the wood and what the actual safety of the wood was. It failed all the tests (and should) as hazardous waste, but they (the treated wood industry) had gotten an exemption from (former EPA Administrator) Anne Gorsuch, during the Reagan years. They were able to manipulate the regulatory system so that the wood fell into one category of regulation whereas the chemical fell into another category of regulation. They were able to do what good industry lobbyists do—they obfuscate and get as many loopholes as you can get in the regulations so that you can get your product out. If they had to abide by federal hazardous waste rules, this would be a completely different story. That exemption was the key. If the EPA had been more on the ball in the beginning and not let them get way with a voluntary consumer awareness program that they never did, it would also be a different story. If it is a hazardous waste, it should be regulated as a hazardous waste. There shouldn't exemptions just based on the powerfulness of the industry.

I went to one of the big box depots and I asked for the consumer information sheet. They gave me a phone number and I called it and it was a hazardous waste hotline.

Q. The stories are pretty short. Was there a conscious decision to keep them short?

A. My editors wanted to keep them short. Some people at the *Times* are able to write voluminous things…There was a lot of stuff in there that ended up on the cutting room floor that I really wished hadn't. I had an excellent, excellent editor who was just available for projects. As a matter of fact, the day before we printed, the managing editor came in and tore out the whole top. He wanted more stuff before the jump. It about broke my heart, but he was right. It gave everybody what they needed to know up front, and then I went back (to the original top on the story).

Q. I thought it was interesting that you used a hammering style. You had the same sentence structure over and over.

A. The original (version of the) story began with these volunteers collecting pennies to build these playgrounds for kids. It had a very narrative lead. He came back and said give me an AP lead. Sit down and write it like it is an AP story, the top. And ra-ra-ra , I sat down and did it. And it was much stronger because it did hammer you. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. By the time you got to the part where the people were constructing them, the case was made. The reporting was solid; we had the information. I think at that point I think we could hit people over the head with it.

Q. You really just put a top on your narrative lead?

A. Yep. We put a headline on it "The Poison in Your Backyard." They had a discussion about this downtown. Is this too much? They made the decision, no, it is not. This is exactly

(Continued next page)

what we are talking about. It let people know this was a very serious issue they should pay attention to, and let people make decisions about it in their own lives.

Q. One of the stories dealt with people who had suffered injuries from pressure-treated wood. How did you find them?

A. There were lawsuits that had already run their course, or were in the process. I was worried about putting people in the paper with alleged cases—and I have tons of those now—cases against the wood treatment industry, but where there hadn't been settlements on them yet. (In the settled cases,) their injuries were very documented. Since the story came out, I have had dozens and dozens of people who have arsenic in their hair. They have babies with birth defects. I have all those in a file right now, trying to figure out how to handle them.

Gov. Bush didn't want the stuff in parks. There was a bill in Congress and bills in the (Florida) Legislature. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is considering a ban on the wood. The EPA called the wood treatment industry in to beef up the labels. Class action suits were brought against the industry and the retailers. Playgrounds closed all over Florida.

I found one lawyer in Indiana who had done the first three cases. Through him, I found these people. Some wouldn't talk; some would.

I am buried (in lawsuits). I have lawyers, and lawyers who want class action cases, calling me all the time, wanting information. I even had a lawyer from a chemical company call me from a company that wants to make chemical-free wood. He sort of made me a job offer, you know; go over to the other side. He must not know me very well. (laughter)

Q. This story has gotten a lot of response. Talk about that and where you think the story is going next.

A. I was stunned at the response this story got. In my career, I have uncovered a lot of bad pollution problems and egregious situations. Sometimes you write for years and nothing happens. The things that came out after this stunned me—like a week after, Gov. Bush said he didn't want to use this stuff in parks and he wanted to get the state's own wood treatment plant (run by a prison) to quit using arsenic.

A couple of months later, there was a bill in Congress and there were bills in the (Florida) Legislature. The Consumer Product Safety Commission is considering a ban on the wood. The EPA was calling the wood treatment industry in to beef up the labels. There were class action suits against the industry, against the retailers. There was a flood, a flood, of individuals who wanted this stuff out of their playgrounds. Playgrounds closed all over Florida. I have never seen anything like it.

Then the wood treatment industry went on the offensive to say really the risk wasn't all that bad. They made a giant number of missteps. First of all, they hired a toxicologist who made an error in his estimation of risk. He had to admit he had underestimated the risk by 1,000 times. We had a wood treatment industry executive on the witness stand in Atlanta saying the wood didn't contain arsenic. They ended up hiring C. Boyden Gray, general counsel to the first president Bush, in order to run interference with EPA.

The point is, this industry could have made the switch, as they have done already. They are already making environmentally benign wood in countries that have said no (to CCA-treated wood). They say we would make it here if there was a demand. But the people here didn't have the knowledge to make the demand. What I am hoping now is there will be more consumer demand.

The first arsenic-free wood treatment plant has opened in Florida. The people trying to make the market for the alternative wood are trying to get a corner on the market. The problem seems to be the retailers. They are unwilling to make the change for whatever reason.

The industry guys I talked to are willing to make the switch. They don't want the liability. It is beginning to look like a lead paint situation.

Where the EPA goes with this, I'll be interested to see. After they (treatment industry) hired C. Boyden Gray, EPA backed off a little bit. It will be interesting to see where they go with it. The critical thing here is whatever risk analysis they do for children.

A lot of people said, "What do we do—do we seal it? What do we do?" Well, there are differing studies on that. Some say if you seal it, it will help; others say no. At this point, everyone is looking at this and saying, "Is this worth it if we can have another type of pressure-treated lumber that doesn't have this problem?"

I'd like to see other reporters take this up. It is not a very hard story to do. They should tests the playgrounds. They should do wipe tests on the wood and let people know what the risk is.

Q. Well that's one reason we picked this story. It could be duplicated elsewhere.

A. It has been all over the country. Everybody did—*Time*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*. Everybody did it. It is still hanging out there. Everybody is waiting for the EPA. I don't think we should wait for the EPA. It should be more of a grassroots consumer effort. They (EPA regulators) are slow and they have obviously given industry a pass on this from the get-go."

There is a lot on the Web on this right now. There is a ton. One of the best is www.ccaresaerch.org and the EPA now has a giant CCA website with a lot of links. There's a lot more information out there now than when I started working on it. And there are more stories coming before the end of the year.

Hauserman's stories can be found at:
http://www.sptimes.com/News/webspecials/arsenic/ ❖

Book Shelf

GERMS

By Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg and William Broad.
Simon & Schuster, 382 pages

Impeccable timing aside, "Germs" could be one of the most fascinating—and disturbing—books to be released this year. Culled from an exhaustive review of government documents and interviews with top-level officials, a trio of veteran *New York Times* journalists reach the conclusion that germ weapons are the "poor man's atom bomb" and that it's only a matter of time before terrorists unleash them against the United States.

The thesis could go down in history as one of the literary world's most eerie pieces of foreshadowing: "Germs" was released on the eve of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center and Pentagon, presenting a wake-up call for the anthrax poisonings that ultimately followed. The scary thing is, the authors predict the worse is yet to come.

Their ultimate fear is that terrorists have gained access to the world's only remaining smallpox viruses—previously thought to be contained in tightly-controlled U.S. and Soviet laboratories—and that they could be ambitiously pursuing a super-deadly cocktail, perhaps a mixture of smallpox and Ebola which would be highly contagious and have no known cure.

Even if the book fails to convince you that things could go to that extreme, it's hard not to be overwhelmed by evidence the authors present which, in their words, suggests that Americans "remain woefully unprepared for a calamity that would be unlike any this country has ever experienced. "

It is important to keep reminding yourself that this is not hyperbole from some activist group or lobbyist organization pushing an agenda.

Judith Miller, one of the first journalists to receive anthrax in the mail, is a foreign correspondent who has specialized on reporting about the Middle East and former Soviet republics. Stephen Engelberg is the newspaper's investigations editor and former national security writer. William Broad, a science writer, has twice shared the industry's most prestigious award, the Pulitizer Prize.

In other words, the reader is getting a consensus among top-flight journalists employed by one of the country's most highly-regarded publications, at a time when national confidence has been shaken by the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 and subsequent anthrax poisonings.

Starting ominously enough with an attack by the followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh in 1984, when nearly 1,000 people in Oregon were infected by a strain of salmonella perpetuated by the cult, the book probes Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's fascination with biological and chemical weapons, as well as that of Osama bin Laden.

It brings attention to some little-known political and ethical questions, such as former President Bush grappling with the idea of threatening Hussein with nuclear retaliation if he deployed chemical and biological weapons against U.S. soldiers in the Persian Gulf war. Bush never did, largely because he didn't want to jeopardize his fragile support from other Middle Eastern nations. And the authors point out how General Norman Schwarzkopf was in a quandry over anthrax vaccines, knowing there wasn't enough to share with civilians and allies.

Most horrifying of all: The stockpiles amassed by the former Soviet Union, which included "hundreds of tons " of anthrax and smallpox viruses. The authors note how the current state of affairs likely boil down to the question of where thousands of unemployed Russian scientists ended up after the Soviet Union collapsed. Did they go to work for bin Laden or the United States?

"Germs" is a tour de force in terms of research, but has a drawback in that it is written at a level that assumes a certain intellectual connection with science. Some efforts are made to help readers visualize concepts, such as thinking of the relationship between viruses and bacteria like that of cell phones to cars and minivans.

Yet the prose, while definitely compelling enough to keep the layman's interest, is not quite as deliciously constructed as Richard Preston's "The Hot Zone," the bestseller about Ebola that came out a few years ago. Even so, "Germs" is as much about politics as it is about science. It is necessary meat-and-potatoes for all Americans hungry to learn why—without being too alarmist—they have every right to be concerned about their safety.

—Tom Henry, Toledo Blade

Green Phoenix

By William Allen
310pp. March 2001 publication, Oxford University Press

Perhaps the most important part of William Allen's new book "Green Phoenix: Restoring the Tropical Forests of Guanacaste, Costa Rica," is its ability to show that even when all seems lost, perseverance can triumph.

In Costa Rica, where tropical forests have been under siege for generations and dying landscapes are no longer uncommon, a dedicated group of scientists and volunteers decided to make a stand in 1988. Their mission was deceptively simple: Restore hundreds of miles of tropical dry forest.

Fires were threatening the Santa Rosa forest, which was surrounded by a sea of African jaragua grass. Each fire nibbled away at the forest, making way for the aggressive, exotic grass to spread. As habitats disappeared, plants and animals at the brink of extinction clung to the remaining islands of forest. Allen referred to those organisms as the living dead. The so-called Rosa Maria fire of 1988 also threatened the crusade to save the forest, then known as the Guanacaste National Park Project. The project aimed to reverse centuries of ecological destruction from ranching, farming, burning, logging and hunting.

The project was the brainchild of Daniel Janzen, a University of Pennsylvania professor long based at Santa Rosa, and his biologist wife, Winnie Hallwachs. During the 1970s and 1980s, the couple documented the demise of the region's forests. Building upon the work of conservation biologists Kenton Miller and Alvaro Ugalde, who spearheaded the establishment of Santa Rosa National Park, Janzen and Hallwachs sparked a mini-revolution to save 42 square miles of forest.

It was clear to many in the scientific community that by the

(Continued next page)

mid-1980s the forests of Costa Rica and those worldwide were disappearing at an alarming and ever-increasing rate. The most-oft quoted figure for global forest devastation in those days was 50 acres a minute, or 27 million acres a year, an area slightly larger than Ohio. Fueled by such knowledge, the scientists vowed to restore a tropical forest on an unprecedented scale.

In June 1986, the author, formerly a reporter with the City News Bureau and UPI in Chicago, and then a public information officer for the University of Illinois, joined his mentor and friend George Godfrey at Santa Rosa. Godfrey was an entomologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey.

Allen embraced the fledgling Guanacaste project and with it the Costa Rican people and their culture. The book outlines in detail the flowering of that relationship and, after painting a picture of the political turmoil and myriad obstacles that stood in the way of the project's success, explains how it remains a model for those seeking to undertake similar efforts in other lands.

His foray into the wilds of Costa Rica was taken with trepidation.

As he put it, "I'd read about Africanized honeybees; snakes like bushmasters and fer-de-lances; malaria; tree falls; scorpions; jaguars; caimans, a kind of small crocodilian that lives in the rivers near Santa Rosa; and crocodiles, which live in the estuaries, close to the ocean. Some of these were legitimate threats, some not, for a wide range of reasons. As Godfrey and I walked the rest of the way down the slope, no snakes charged, no bees swarmed from behind a tree. Both are exaggerated, if not silly notions, I later learned. But such are the images of the tropical forest often revealed in popular books, magazine articles, and Hollywood movies. I gradually realized that it's best to leave such baggage at the forest door."

Allen uses his journalist skills to tell a story of determination, and with it comes poetic descriptions of the country and its natural splendors.

The Guanacaste Conservation Area, which by 2000 included 463 square miles of land and another 290 miles of marine environment, is truly a "green phoenix."

Its roots and ultimate success provide a tale that threatens to make the skeptics of the world into an endangered species.

—David Liscio, The Daily Item

Views on the Mississippi: The Photographs of Henry Peter Bosse

By Mark Neuzil
253 pp. University of Minnesota Press

In a new book, Iowa native Mark Neuzil has assembled a stunning array of 19th-century photos that illustrate how locks and dams later changed the Mississippi River.

Neuzil stumbled upon the bluish cyanotype photos made by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mapmaker Henry Bosse while researching another topic. He couldn't pass up the chance to give readers a lesson in river history, biology, urban planning, engineering and industry.

"I want them to see photos of a relatively free-flowing Mississippi River, because it isn't now," said Neuzil, an Eldora native and Iowa State University graduate. "I want them to see the river that Mark Twain knew, instead of the river that Archer-Daniels-Midland knew."

Neuzil is associate professor and department chair in journalism at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., where he also teaches environmental studies.

Bosse made the images from Minnesota to Missouri during the 1880s and 1890s, just as the corps began installing bridges and locks. The massive locks and dam system of today would come decades later. Dozens of images, many printed on the blue draft paper he used for his corps work, show a largely untouched Mississippi, mostly free of flood walls, levees and modern locks.

Ironically, Neuzil considers the 84 photos by the loyal corps employee Bosse to be some of the best evidence environmental groups have that the lock-and-dam system left the river a far less natural waterway.

The corps today is embroiled in controversy over whether to enlarge the aging locks and dams to improve barge transportation. Environmental groups say the original taming of the river left it with dried-up backwaters, less natural diversity and fewer wildlife. They don't want bigger locks.

Bosse saw the earliest of bridges and minor tinkerings with the river channel. Some of Bosse's own history is sketchy, Neuzil notes. Born in 1844, Bosse was a German immigrant who began his career with the corps improving harbors on the Great Lakes beginning in 1874. Later, he settled in Rock Island, Ill. That is the regional corps headquarters.

He lived in Rock Island from 1878 until he died in 1903. He is buried in Davenport's Oakdale Cemetery.

—Perry Beeman, The Des Moines Register

A Friend Of The Earth

By T.C. Boyle
349 pp. Penguin Books.

Mass terrorism, water shortages, climate change, elections bought and stolen. The 21st century is not turning out to be a pretty thing. Now T.C. Boyle, in this novel that first appeared in hardcover last year, offers an even bleaker vision of our century amidst an emerging environmental apocalypse. Unlike Ed Abbey's "The Mokeywrench Gang" however, this activist tale is unlikely to inspire new green cadres or tactics (i.e.—monkey-wrenching).

It does however inspire peels of rueful laughter and sad recognition as we follow the adventures of 75-year-old Tyrone Tierwater living in the southern California wasteland of 2025 while remembering and reconnecting with his EF! ("Earth Forever!) wife, martyred tree-sitting daughter, and a menagerie of remnant animals, activists, rock-stars, loggers and local sheriffs you may recognize from your own reporting. It takes a good writer like Boyle however to turn such reality-based material into a story that's funny, cautionary, and highly entertaining. We can only hope he's a better novelist than he is a futurist.

— David Helvarg, SEJ Journal Bookshelf Editor

Please contact David Helvarg at helvarg@aol.com to suggest books for review or if you'd like to volunteer to review books for SEJournal.

Environmental news stories from across the continent

Please send environmental coverage to Beat editor Mike Dunne at mdunne@theadvocate.com or submit stories to SEJ's news digest. Visit www.sej.org for information on this new service.

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ARIZONA

➤ **Ecoterrorism:** Mark Sands, a 50-year-old unemployed marketing consultant, pleaded guilty in early November to extortion and the use of fire to commit a federal felony in connection with the burning of eight luxury homes in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve area in Phoenix and Scottsdale from April 9, 2000 to Jan. 18, 2001. He had been coaxed into a confession last June by a longtime friend, Warren Jerrems, when the two were hiking together in the Grand Canyon. Sands, who was trying to use the fires to prevent development from encroaching on the preserves, faces 15 to 20 years in prison and up to $3.1 million in restitution costs, reports the *Arizona Republic's* Judi Villa. Contact Villa at judi.villa@azrepublic.com or the *Republic* city desk at (602) 444-8222.

➤ **Recycling:** The *Arizona Daily Star's* Mitch Tobin wrote a blistering account of the city's troubled recycling program, which so far as diverted only 9 percent of all available trash from the landfill, compared to a 28 percent national average, and close to 50 percent for the Seattles and San Joses of the world. Tucson's percentage of recycled trash may actually decline if expected city budget cuts force authorities to trim the twice-monthly curbside recycling program, although City Manager James Keene has vowed to avoid that, saying, "I'm not interested in seeing us retreat from where we are." Contact Tobin at (520) 573-4185 or mtobin@azstarnet.com

➤ **Alternative fuels fiasco:** The State Attorney General found no laws were broken by former Arizona State House Speaker Jeff Groscost, the man whom many blamed for last year's alternative fuels fiasco. Groscost, who was ousted from office a year ago, helped push through a bill allowing thousands of buyers to save up to $18,000 off the price of a new vehicle converted to run on gasoline and alternative fuels like propane or compressed natural gas. The program threatened to cost the state more than $600 million until lawmakers went into an emergency session late last year and cut thousands of buyers out, the *Arizona Republic's* Robbie Sherwood reported. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat who is considering a run for governor, added that the alt-fuels debacle was an "extreme example of legislative malpractice. Contact Sherwood at robbie.sherwood@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-8146.

➤ **Eco-paradise?** The *Republic's* Scott Craven took a less than misty-eyed look at the futuristic village of Arcosanti, 75 miles north of metro Phoenix, 30 years after Italian architect Paolo Soleri conceived it as a city that would enhance rather than destroy the environment. Today, Craven portrays Arcosanti as "a small concrete village perched atop a rocky bluff overlooking the Agua Fria River. It looks nothing like the model at Cosanti, Soleri's home in north Scottsdale. But for the 60 Arcosanti residents who wake each day to the desert vista, breathing air only lightly tainted with the exhaust fumes of nearby Interstate 17, the vision is worth keeping." Craven can be reached at scott.craven@arizonarepublic.com or (602) 444-8773.

➤ **Whales:** In the latest of a continuing series alternative weekly *Phoenix New Times,* associate editor Patti Epler wrote about the mysterious "strandings" of hundreds of Eastern Pacific gray whales in 1999 and 2000 and the equally mysterious stoppage of that phenomenon this year. With birthrates for the grays continuing to drop, researchers point to theories about potential problems with the whales' food supply, tiny creatures called amphipods, primarily from the Bering Sea. Research efforts face a problem of abundance: with thousands of the Eastern Pacific whales still alive, little money exists to fund significant field studies, Epler reported. She can be reached at patti.epler@newtimes.com or (602)-229-8451.

In an earlier article, David Holthouse of the *New Times'* Denver affiliate Westword showed how starving Russian Far East villagers find their survival compromised because the whales that they hunt for food have been chemically contaminated. Holthouse rode along on a whale hunt with a villager crew whose captain allowed the reporter on board despite warnings from the village council of elders that bringing an outsider would spell trouble. Contact Holthouse at david.holthouse@newtimes.com or (303) 672-1261.

➤ **Water shortage:** The *Star's* Tobin also wrote about a new Pima County government report warning that while the county has enough water to make it to 2025 with minor problems at most, the future is uncertain beyond that point because of a growing population and continued demands on Colorado River water, which is expected to slowly supplant the city's diminishing ground water supplies as the major water source. "Pima County does not have enough water to satisfy the demands of a population which grows continually into the indefinite future and to provide adequate water for habitat and riparian needs unless changes are made," the report says. In a separate story, the Star's Tony Davis covered another county report warning that many of the 55 vulnerable plant and animal species slated for protection under the county's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan could face trouble if global warming continues and intensifies over the next century. Contact Tobin at mtobin@azstarnet.com or (520) 573-4185.

➤ **Air quality:** The *Republic's* Mary Jo Pitzl told of the Phoenix area's frenzied attempts to meet federal particu-

late air quality standards by a 2006 deadline by trying to pave every last dirt road and water every construction site. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is poised to approve a plan that promises local particulate levels will meet health standards by 2006, few believe the Valley will make it, writes Pitzl, who fingers "sprawling growth" and "the Valley's car culture." Contact her at maryjo.pitzl@arizonarepublic.com or (602)-444-8963.

➤ **Cell phone towers** have infiltrated the Phoenix area by the hundreds, reports the *Republic's* Charles Kelly. While many people don't like their obtrusiveness, more people are willing to tolerate them, particularly as the antennas have worked their way into the fabric of the metro area so much that some cities, such as Phoenix, don't even know how many antenna sites they harbor. The towers often are hidden in church steeples, attached to stadium light poles, or disguised as flagpoles, trees or cacti, in efforts to win over wary neighborhood activists. Kelly can be reached at charles.Kelly@arizonarepublic.com

CALIFORNIA

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **Sewage spill:** Yosemite National Park, already threatened with a statewide fishing group's lawsuit over sewage spills in the Merced River, may see a $10,000-a-day state fine the next time sewage pours into the Merced. The state has filed a cleanup and abatement order against Yosemite on the heels of a 200,000-gallon spill during sewage-line testing in late July. The park's sewage affected about 14 miles of the Merced beyond the park in Mariposa County until mid-August. The huge spill was one of a dozen since 1999 at Yosemite's western boundary near El Portal. Contact reporter Mark Grossi at the *Fresno Bee*, mgrossi@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6316, or see the story at: http://www.fresnobee.com/localnews/story/0,1724,192709,00.html

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **Fish of the day?** Some chefs are pulling endangered and threatened species from their menu's catch of the day, reports *Los Angeles Times'* Kenneth Weiss on Nov. 4th. Weiss can be reached at ken.weiss@latimes.com or (213) 237-7733. See the story at: http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-000088235nov04.story

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **Sprawl et al:** In spite of relentless urban sprawl, many natural areas in and around Los Angeles and San Francisco are being protected. Problems faced by those protected areas include administrative and physical fragmentation, invasive species, fire and pollution. Agencies recognize a need to reach out to urban residents, but performance is mixed. A new "natural park" in a poor Los Angeles neighborhood is a striking innovation. See the story at: http://www.cipahq.org/urban.htm Contact Ted Trzyna, California Institute of Public Affairs, can be reached at (916)442-2472 or TT@cipahq.org

FLORIDA

➤ **Water shortage:** *The Tallahassee Democrat* and *The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* published a seven-day series of stories on the competing water needs from the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint river system. Alabama, Florida and Georgia officials have been trying to develop a water-sharing agreement for the past three years. Officials were scheduled to meet Nov. 13 in Atlanta to possibly receive a proposal from any of the states for an agreement. Contact Bruce Ritchie, growth and environment reporter, *The Tallahassee Democrat*, britchie@taldem.com, (850)-599-2253. Stories can be found at : http://web.tallahasseedemocrat.com/content/tallahassee/2001/11/05/home/ (or www.tdo.com) or http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/content/columbus/home/ (or www.ledger-enquirer.com)

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GEORGIA

➤ **Land use:** For the past two years, the Georgia Greenspace Program has allocated $30 million annually to help the state's fastest-growing counties purchase undeveloped land. The goal is to have 20 percent of each county's area permanently protected. In the program's first year, 40 counties qualified. But based on growth data from Census 2000, 89 counties are now eligible. That means each county gets a smaller piece of the $30 million pie. With the price of land skyrocketing, these greenspace grants are a drop in the bucket. Debbie Gilbert reported this story Aug. 30 in Gainesville's *The Times.* In a three-story follow-up package Oct. 28, she looked at the different ways Georgia counties are trying to raise their own greenspace money, through special sales taxes, millage increases, bond issues, or impact fees. Debbie can be reached at (770) 532-1234, ext. 254, or dgilbert@gainesvilletimes.com.

➤ **ATVs:** The U.S. Forest Service is trying to figure out what to do about all-terrain vehicles in the 750,000-acre Chattahoochee National Forest in North Georgia. The state's Motor Vehicle Division has decided that the popular three- and four-wheelers are not "street-legal," which means ATVs can't be driven on any public road—even a gravel Forest Service road. Environmentalists welcome the change, saying ATV riders use these roads to gain access to wilderness areas. But forest officials, trying to placate riders, say they may close some roads and declare them "trails" so it will be legal for ATVs to ride on them. No matter what they decide, they admit they don't have enough rangers to enforce the rules anyway. Debbie Gilbert reported this story in *The Times* Sept. 25. Contact her at at (770) 532-1234, ext. 254, or dgilbert@gainesvilletimes.com.

HAWAII

➤ **Mosquito-borne disease:** The Hawaiian Islands, already hit hard by plummeting tourism in the wake of the events of September 11, has suffered another blow with an outbreak of dengue fever. Cases of dengue fever have been most numerous in East Maui, Kauai, and windward Oahu. The mosquito-borne disease seems to have been brought to the islands by residents who had recently visited islands in the South Pacific where dengue fever is at epidemic levels. In its November edition, *Environment Hawaii* looks at the environmental effects of vector control, possible new vectors of disease, and the all-but-certain arrival of additional mosquito-borne disease, including the westward-bound West Nile Virus. Contact Pat Tummons at pattum@aloha.net or for copies, call the newsletter at (877) 934-0130. See the story at www.environment-hawaii.org.

IDAHO

➤ **Mining waste:** Federal officials proposed one of the most expensive and extensive environmental cleanup jobs in the nation's history to stanch the flow of North Idaho mining wastes that have spread far enough to taint the Spokane River in Eastern Washington. The story ran in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* Oct. 25. Contact *P-I* reporter Robert McClure at robertmcclure@seattlepi.com or 206-448-8092

LOUISIANA

➤ **Toxics pilots:** *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* published a four-day series on one of the ultimate good-old-boy clubs in Louisiana—river boat pilots. The pilots must be hired to navigate the Mississippi River and they often steer tankers and other ocean-going ships containing oil, gasoline, other petroleum products and toxic materials. The series is entitled "River Barons,'' and can be found at http://www.nola.com/. For more information, contact Jeffrey Meitrodt, special projects editor, *The Times-Picayune,* at (504) 826-3497 or jmeitrodt@times-picayune.com.

➤ **Global climate change:** *The Baton Rouge Advocate* took a look at the issue of global climate change, how it may impact Louisiana, and how the state's energy-intensive industries contribute to greenhouse gases. Contact Mike Dunne, mdunne@theadvocate.com, (225) 388-0301. See the stories at: http://theadvocate.com/news/global_warming.asp.

NEW HAMPSHIRE-MAINE

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **Endangered species:** On Nov. 5, the *Foster's Sunday Citizen* reported that more than 100 plants and animals, including two species found in New Hampshire and Maine, will have to wait more than a year for the government to decide if they deserve endangered species protection, a delay environmentalists say could spell extinction for some rare species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has told environmental groups it will not review any endangered species petitions this fiscal year, an announcement likely to spark an explosion of new lawsuits against the agency's already beleaguered endangered species division. See the story at http://www.fosters.com/news2000/nov%5F00/05/su1105c.htm or contact Robert Emro at (603)742-4455, ext. 5395 or remro@fosters.com.

New Mexico

➤ **Bears:** *The Albuquerque Journal* and other New Mexico media spent much of the summer reporting on black bears coming out of the forests in search of food. The bears broke into kitchens, rummaged through garbage bins and even killed an elderly woman in her home in northern New Mexico. Joseph Ditzler followed the news developments and also talked to biologists for a profile of your average unpredictable bruin. He can be reached at (505) 988-8881 or jditzler@abqjournal.com.

Ollie Reed Jr. of the *Albuquerque Tribune* reported that relocating black bears, a common tactic of game officials in New Mexico, may not do much good. Bears moved to new territory are likely to be chased away or killed by resident bears. Bears also are known to travel a long way to get back home and can get into trouble in new locations. Reed can be reached at oreed@abqtribune.com or (505) 823-3619.

➤ **Grazing:** The *High Country News* reported that a stretch of the San Francisco River in southwest New Mexico is now covered with young cottonwoods and willows, tall grasses, sedges, cattails and other riparian vegetation, three years after an environmentalist

lawsuit led to an legal agreement between environmentalists and the Forest Service to boot up to 15,000 head of cattle from 230 miles of stream in the Gila River basin of Arizona and New Mexico. It was one of the largest, if not the largest, single removal of cattle from a crucial segment of public lands riparian areas since the federal Taylor Grazing Act in 1934 began full-scale regulation of the industry. The article looks at the history of the area's grazing, the causes and effects of the cattle removal and the future of grazing in Southwestern riparian areas. Contact Tony Davis, an *HCN* freelancer, at (520) 807-7790 or at tdavis@dakotacom.net.

New York

➤ **Electric auto delay:** Aides to Gov. George Pataki, who often tout his support of electric cars, have quietly negotiated a deal with automakers that would delay for another three years rules requiring their sale in New York, Dan Fagin reported in the Nov. 6 edition of Newsday. New York's tentative decision to push back the rules until the 2007 model year, which state officials denied would worsen air quality, was revealed in documents released by the state of Vermont. Fagin can be reached at fagin@newsday.com.

➤ **9/11 effects:** The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 and the ensuing war in Afghanistan have shuffled statewide environmental priorities and cast further doubt on whether critical green programs will be funded this year, Dina Cappiello reported in the Albany *Times Union* on Oct. 25. In New York, the economic and political fallout from the collapse of the World Trade Center could lead to an abandonment of cleanup efforts at toxic waste sites, leave landmark land purchases in limbo, and make a $460 million plan to dredge PCBs from the Hudson River, already delayed because of the attacks, more susceptible to back-door negotiations. Cappiello can be reached at dcappiello@timesunion.com

Before the terrorist attacks on the U.S., environmental groups were often critical of the Bush Administration's policies. But since Sept. 11th, most of the environmental organizations have erased all traces of criticism of the White House, Lester Graham of The Great Lakes Radio Consortium reported Oct. 1. Some politicians, though, see opportunities to push through energy policies in the name of national security—policies that could damage the environment. Contract Graham at graham@glrc.org

State health departments, emergency management agencies and doctors throughout the Great Lakes region are reexamining their emergency plans after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, reported Tom Scheck of The Great Lake Radio Consortium Oct. 1. Officials say they need to increase their planning to prepare for a bioterrorist attack. Such an attack could mean the release of deadly diseases into a general population and officials say there's no way the public health structure could handle such an outbreak right now. Contact Scheck at tscheck@glrc.org

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **More 9/11:** Federal safety agencies—EPA and OSHA—have been little more than bystanders at one of the largest toxic work sites in recent U.S. history: Ground Zero in lower Manhattan's World Trade Centers. Delays, chaos, jurisdictional disputes, and the relentless drive to find survivors and bodies have all conspired to make the World Trade Centers a place where even the most basic worker safety precautions—such as respirators and washing stations—have been widely ignored. This is despite evidence of benzene, asbestos and freon, among other toxics, in the air and in dust. The situation has frustrated, among others, Christie Whitman, who has seen her agency assailed for being slow to publicly release its monitoring data from Ground Zero. For more information contact Dan Fagin at fagin@newsday.com or (631) 843-3658. See the story at: http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/newyork/ny-nyair042447746nov04.story

From SEJ-BEAT

➤ **PCBs:** *The Journal News*, Westchester, NY, has been running a continuing series on the effects of PCB contamination of the Hudson River. A special report on the impact of PCB contamination on a Mohawk reservation on the St. Lawrence River explains how the contamination has altered the land, the water, and the lifestyle of the 8,000 St. Regis Mohawks. The series included stories on the health impacts of PCBs. The story was written by Roger Witherspoon, (914) 696-8566, RWithers@thejournalnews.gannett.com and Leah Rae, (914) 694-3526 LRae@thejournalnews.gannett.com. Stories can be found http://www.thejournalnews.com/pcb/.

Oregon

➤ **Klamath ecosystem:** For thousands of years, the complex ecological system that linked the Klamath Basin—ponderosas to the redwoods and the desert to the Pacific Ocean—was filled with abundant salmon and suckers, a winter haven to eagles and migratory birds. In the past 100 years the U.S. government and the settlers it encouraged rewired the system. They drained the lakes for farmland, eroded the uplands through logging and grazing, dammed the river and drew its water for irrigation. Two salmon species are now extinct. Bald eagles and coho salmon are threatened; Lost River and shortnose suckers are endangered. The perfect aquamarine water upstream kills fish just a few miles downstream. In many years, including this one, the river doesn't punch through the gravel bar across its mouth until fall. The issue came to a head in the summer of 2001 during one of the worst droughts on record, as farmers protested to turn on the irrigation water that the US Fish and Wildlife Service said had to go to the endangered and threatened species. This is the story that didn't make much news: the story of native fish, birds and people that went from abundance to scarcity in a century. Contact Orna Izakson at (541) 726-1578 or oiz@aol.com. See the story at http://www.eugeneweekly.com/coverstory.html

➤ **Coastal issues:** Findings of a Pew Oceans Commission study released in Portland show that when paved areas near ocean shores exceed 10 percent of the land area, coastal ecosystems degenerate rapidly. Rainwater flows off impervious surfaces quickly, instead of seeping into the ground. Stream banks erode, the water gets warmer and pollution from

cars and homes washes into estuaries and marshes. Contact Jonathan Brinckman at (503) 221-8190 or jbrinckman@news.oregonian.com.

TENNESSEE

➤ **TDOT pollution:** On Aug. 19, Tom Charlier of Memphis' *The Commercial Appeal* published a lengthy exposé of the Tennessee Department of Transportation, which has built a reputation as "the most profligate water polluter" in the state. TDOT isn't held accountable to other agencies and has no civilian board overseeing it. Charlier documented numerous cases in which TDOT failed to control erosion in its road-building projects, which on two occasions damaged public drinking-water systems. A map and box accompanying the story highlighted five egregious instances, listing both the amount of penalties sought by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the actual amount of fines collected. When TDOT fouled streams in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park while constructing the Foothills Parkway, the state asked for up to $100,000 in penalties, but TDOT paid nothing. For more information, Charlier can be reached at (901) 529-2572 or charlier@gomemphis.com.

VIRGINIA

➤ **Cleanup woes:** Virginia has spent 13 years and $28 million on a Chesapeake Bay cleanup program that regulators do not enforce, developers easily sidestep and many local governments openly flout, according to a series published July 29-30 by *The Virginian-Pilot.* Jennifer Peter and Scott Harper reported that the state Legislature had passed the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act in 1988 to protect shoreline forests and wetlands from development. But local officials, especially in water-laced South Hampton Roads, have allowed hundreds of projects to skirt the law. Subdivisions, shops and mansions continue to spring from the fragile fringes of the Bay and its tributaries, with few legal repercussions and little public input. These concrete and asphalt intrusions can send oil, grease, pesticides, animal feces, lawn fertilizer and sewage coursing into the Bay after rainstorms. For more information, contact Peter at (757) 446-2288 or jpeter@pilotonline.com, or Harper at (757) 446-2340 or sharper@pilotonline.com. The stories are online at http://www.pilotonline.com/special/bay/.

➤ **Bird-kill:** Virginia highway officials will remove shrubs that have lured more than 1,000 birds to their deaths in the Richmond and Williamsburg areas, Rex Springston of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported Oct. 2. The shrub, called thorny elaeagnus, is planted in medians across much of Virginia. In spring, its juicy red berries attract flocks of birds. Many get killed by cars and trucks. "We want to correct the problem and get rid of what's attracting the birds," said Donald West, a biologist with the Virginia Department of Transportation. Highway officials said they will remove the shrubs this winter from two spots that have been particularly deadly—one in Richmond, the other east of Williamsburg. For more information, contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

➤ **River cleanup:** After four years of study, federal scientists are recommending a $13 million first strike in a government cleanup of the Elizabeth River, one of the most contaminated waterways on the East Coast, Scott Harper of *The Virginian-Pilot* reported Aug. 9. The money from local, state and federal agencies would pay for the creation of 18 acres of shoreline wetlands at eight sites in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake and Portsmouth, and for the removal of bottom sediments laden with toxic compounds in Chesapeake. The river's bottom is its biggest environmental problem. Muddy sediments contain some of the highest levels of cancer-causing pollutants in the nation, stemming mostly from two centuries of heavy industry and shipbuilding. Officials estimate that it could take decades and hundreds of millions of dollars to fully purge the Elizabeth of its filthy past. For more information, contact Harper at (757) 446-2340 or sharper@pilotonline.com.

➤ **Disappearing lake:** Mountain Lake, a beloved and mysterious natural wonder in Southwest Virginia, is drying up. Since 1998, the lake has lost nearly half its surface area - from 47 acres down to about 25. Scientists say the lake is losing water through a hole in its bottom. Once or twice a century, the half-mile-long lake shrinks, sometimes becoming just a small, wet hole. Years later, because of conditions caused by local earthquakes, the lake fills back up. Over the past 250 years, some settlers would find a lake, then others would find no lake. Each side basically thought the other was crazy. "It turns out that sometimes there is a lake there and sometimes there is not," said Dr. Jon C. Cawley, a Roanoke College biologist and geologist. Contact Springston at (804) 649-6453 or rspringston@timesdispatch.com.

WASHINGTON

➤ **Hatcheries:** Can hatcheries that were built primarily to augment fishing be tweaked to help struggling wild runs, rather than hurt them? Some suspect not. In one of the more thorough looks to date at the issue of hatchery fish, the *Seattle Post-Intlligencer* reported Nov. 12 that scientists have compiled years of evidence suggesting that the presence of hatchery-bred fish can be harmful to wild fish and that hatchery-bred fish are less able to survive in the long run than wild ones. But increasingly, property-rights advocates, Indian tribes and timber, farming and construction interests are questioning the conventional scientific wisdom. Tribes, in particular, want to experiment with reforming hatchery practices to help struggling wild runs recover. As a result of a hatchery-related lawsuit, the National Marine Fisheries Service is launching a 10-month review of its policy on hatchery fish, to be followed by reassessment of most of the West Coast salmon and steelhead stocks. It could lead to widespread de-listing of fish under the Endangered Species Act, environmentalists fear. The take-out is at http://seattlep-i.nwsource.com/local/46319_salmon12.shtml and a related news story is at http://seattlep-i. nwsource.com/local/46190_salmon 10.shtml. Contract Robert McClure, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer, at* (206) 448-8092 or RobertMcClure@seattlepi.com

➤ **Mining on public lands:** The

Bush administration yesterday proposed revision of a 129-year-old law governing mining on public lands that has angered environmentalists and taxpayer-protection groups that say the law shortchanges public coffers and scars Western landscapes. The mining industry offered cautious support for the overhaul, but environmentalists reacted suspiciously, predicting that Interior Secretary Gale Norton's initiative would result in "sham reform," said the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Contact *P-I* reporter Robert McClure at robertmcclure@seattlepi.com or (206) 448-8092.

WISCONSIN

➤ **Recycled paper:** Wisconsin newspapers are attempting to reduce the amount of post-consumer recycled paper that they have to use in their newsprint. Wisconsin law requires the recycled content of newsprint to rise to 40 percent by 2003. Violators would have to pay a state fine. But the Wisconsin Newspaper Association is seeking to cap the recycled content at 33 percent, arguing cost and availability concerns. Environmental groups say the average recycled content of state newsprint is already at 43 percent. A decision by the Wisconsin Legislature is expected by late winter. For more information, contact the Wisconsin Newspaper Association at (608)- 238-7171.

WEST VIRGINIA

➤ **Coal-truck hazard:** In the wake of several fatal accidents involving coal trucks, public and press interest in overweight trucks was renewed in West Virginia. State highway officials say that they know coal trucks routinely violate weight limits, but that they can do little about it. Several *Charleston Gazette* reporters published stories about the issue. Contact Ken Ward Jr. at (304) 348-1702 or kward@wvgazette.com.

➤ **Abandoned coal mines:** The *Gazette's* Ken Ward Jr. published a detailed look at the state program to clean up abandoned coal mines. Over the years, the program has continued to be underfunded, leaving thousands of acres of land unreclaimed and hundreds of streams polluted. The story is still available online at http://wvgazette.com/news/Mining/200108121/.

➤ **Floods:** Media in West Virginia continued to focus on the effects of flooding last summer. In October, the *Gazette's* Robert J. Byers and Tara Tuckwiller published a series of articles about state spending on flood cleanup and prevention. Earlier, Ward published several articles that focused on flood damage from strip mining, including a look at lax state enforcement that made flooding problems worse. Contact Ward at kward@wvgazette.com or (304) 348-1702 for information.

➤ **Coal waste dam safety:** The release of several reports on coal waste dam safety and the October 2000 slurry spill from a dam in Eastern Kentucky, along the W.Va. border, also got lots of attention in West Virginia. The *Gazette* broke several of these stories, obtaining copies of government reports before they were officially released. Contact Ward at kward@wvgazette.com or (304) 348-1702 for information. ❖

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