

SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

Vol. 6 No. 1

In this issue

SEJ NEWS

- SEJ works to increase visibility of environmental reportingpage 2
- 1996 conference update.....page 4
- Media on the Movepage 5

ONLINE BITS & BYTES

- Miguel Llanos describes the ins and outs of the Internet.....page 12

SCIENCE SURVEY

- Sara Thurin Rollin offers pointers on covering pesticidespage 15

VIEWPOINTS

- A look at the insurance industry's interest in global warmingpage 16
- Eugene Lecomte questions whether it's weatherpage 17

FEATURES

- Environmental devastation left in apartheid's wakepage 18
- EPA online databases to facilitate info-gatheringpage 19

CALENDAR

- Upcoming events.....page 21

NEW MEMBERS

- Through April 15.....page 22

THE BOOK SHELF

- Sludge, spin doctors and spray paint: a book about the PR industry reviewed by Amy Gahrnpage 23

THE GREEN BEAT

- Contact list of Green Beat correspondents, by state.....page 24
- State-by-state news roundup of major storiespage 25

Teaching the beat

Rising interest in e-journalism reflected in academic options

By SHARON M. FRIEDMAN

Interest in environmental journalism and communication education has been growing steadily at universities for the past several years, despite fluctuations in interest in environmental coverage among editors at mainstream news organizations. New courses and programs are being developed, and most older ones continue to thrive despite academic downsizing.

This is not to imply that the growth has occurred overnight or that the field has exploded. Rather, the growth has been moderate, but steady. Currently, there are more than 30 courses in environmental journalism or communication being taught in the U.S. at both the undergraduate and graduate level. This is a significant increase over the six undergraduate environmental journalism courses and one graduate program listed in the 1978 edi-

(Continued on page 7)

Science writing offers a model for critical thinking

By SHARON DUNWOODY

I have spent my life as a teacher on the margins of the discipline. . . at least, that's how I suspect I am viewed by many of my journalism and mass communication colleagues. I teach science writing, a palette of skills fit only (if prevailing folklore is to be believed) for physics geeks or the foolhardy.

I would contend however, that classes like the one I teach each semester are harbingers of the future of journalism education. It's not because these courses train students to cover science. It's because they help students acquire critical thinking skills. A well-crafted science writing course is designed to train students to distinguish good evidence from bad, to make tough decisions about how to

(Continued on page 10)

What to make of Our Stolen Future

By JANET RALOFF

News reports on environmental threats to human reproduction abound these days. Most feature interviews with World Wildlife Fund zoologist Theo Colborn or focus on the March debut of her latest book, *Our Stolen Future* (Dutton, 1996). Through their compelling, enviro-drama narrative, Colborn and her co-authors—Dianne Dumanoski, an environmental reporter for the *Boston Globe*, and John Peterson Myers, director of the W. Alton Jones Foundation—take us on an insider's view of how biologists and toxicologists stumbled into a developing nightmare.

There are pollution-tainted wildlife

populations losing their ability to reproduce; laboratory animals born with a related range of reproductive abnormalities when exposed fetally to natural and synthetic estrogens; and, finally, provocative though spotty data suggesting men and boys throughout the world may be suffering unusual rates of penile malformations, an unexplained rise in testicular cancer, and falling rates of sperm production.

For the past four years, Colborn has been on a soapbox arguing that when taken together, these and related unfolding trends suggest the possibility of an environmental pandemic in the mak-

(Continued on page 11)

SEJ reaches out to editors

Board implements mission to increase visibility of enviro beat

Journalists have an unusual, uncomfortable relationship with power. Few of us wear pinstriped blue suits. Yet in our scruffy way, we are powerful nonetheless.

Through our words and images, we have the power to topple unscrupulous public officials. We have the power to influence the way many people think and behave, to direct the course of public debate. Sometimes we have the power to carelessly hurt the subjects of our stories.

As environmental journalists, however, few of us are high in the food chain in our newsroom. In fact, we like to get together and complain about the powers that be—the editors and producers who rarely give us the time or space to cover this beat the way we'd really like.

The Society of Environmental Journalists' board wants to change this. Part of SEJ's newly adopted mission is to increase the visibility of environmental journalism. That means building bridges to powerful people in our profession. Our agenda is to persuade them that the environment truly is an important subject, not a fad. We want our bosses to think it's smart to throw more resources into covering our beat well.

Towards this end, SEJ's leaders have been reaching out recently to the powerful people who used to be the subject of our complaints. As president of SEJ, I represent us all before an excellent group with a rather pretentious name, the Council of Presidents. This coalition of presidents of journalism organizations meets twice a year. Through contacts made at these meetings, SEJ recently was invited to write a package of stories for *American Editor*, the magazine of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

A team of us put together our dream list of tips for editors who supervise environment reporters. They ranged from, "Try to dedicate someone to the environment beat, even if it's only part-time" to "Change the definition of front-page news in your paper."

We also gathered opinions on environmental journalism from editors around the country. Several were very supportive of our quest to increase the quality and

visibility of environmental news.

• Sandy Rowe, Editor of *The (Portland) Oregonian*: "Environment is an issue that affects everything—from how we manage our houses to how we run multibillion-dollar businesses and government agencies. I think environment coverage is seriously lacking in many of our newspapers....It's a huge issue and it's going to get bigger. It's not just tree-huggers who care."

Report from the society's president

By
Emilia
Askari

• Tom McNamara, Associate Editor at *USA Today*: "Environmental issues have very strong and broad reader interest....The environment is one of the real hot-button issues."

• Mei-Mei Chan, Executive Editor of the Idaho Falls *Post Register*: "When you consider that the environment is our neighborhood, backyard, kitchen, and living room, there's no question about its importance to all of us."

• Gregory Favre, Executive Editor of *The Sacramento Bee*: "At least 50 percent of our newspapers and 75 percent of our television stations do not have full-time environment reporters, and that is a shame...Many of us have written about the wonders and the tragedies of our natural resources, but there is much more for us to do, especially as our population increases and becomes more diverse."

• Will Sutton, Editor of *The Gary (Ind.) Post-Tribune*: "Most environment news doesn't break. It's more of an 'ooze'

of a story....It's something that editors think is important, yet gets short shrift because of the pressures of getting other news into the paper."

SEJ's board followed up on the *American Editor* package by lunching in March with *Detroit News* publisher and ASNE president Robert Giles. Over the course of a two-hour discussion during the latest SEJ board meeting, Giles talked about fund raising, increasing organizational clout, and developing stronger ties with newsroom decision-makers.

SEJ is sending a small delegation to ASNE's April convention. Eventually, we hope to solidify plans for some type of joint project with ASNE. For example, this could include dispatching experienced environmental journalists to newsrooms across the country to give brief seminars. We hope to make similar overtures soon to groups of broadcast leaders.

SEJ has many editors and producers among its members, including vice president Rae Tyson of *USA Today* and ABC News' Bob Aglow. In addition, we are moving forward with plans to invite more journalism luminaries to join our advisory council. Current members are *New York Times* managing editor Gene Roberts and former *Boston Globe* editor Tom Winship.

Within our work as environmental journalists, we treasure our skepticism of news sources and institutions. We see ourselves as a counterbalance to power, though incidentally we are quite powerful ourselves. To our detriment, we sometimes carry this disdain for power into our relationships with key players in our newsrooms. As a group, SEJ's board is committed to breaking this habit. For the good of environmental journalism, we are trying to forge stronger relationships with the people who make the calls on how and when to play environmental stories.

I hope that in time more SEJ members may join the ranks of newsroom decision-makers. Volunteering to run an SEJ regional activity or other project might be an excellent way to start. Members who are interested in volunteering for SEJ

(Continued on page 4)

SEJournal (ISSN: 1053-7082) is published quarterly by the Society of Environmental Journalists, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118. Membership \$35 per year (student rate \$30). Subscription fee \$50; \$30 library rate. © 1996 by the Society of Environmental Journalists.

Co-editors

Kevin Carmody and Amy Gahrn

Design Editor

Chris Rigel

Section Editors

Viewpoints	Craig LaMay
On-line Bits & Bytes	Russ Clemings
Science Survey	Sara Thurin Rollin
New Members List	Chris Rigel
Calendar	Janet Raloff
Greenbeat	Kevin Carmody

SEJournal will accept unsolicited manuscripts. Send story ideas, articles, news briefs, tips and letters-to-the-editor to Chris Rigel, SEJ office, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118, Ph. (215) 247-9710, e-mail rigel@voicenet.com. Send calendar items to Janet Raloff, *Science News*, 1719 N Street N.W., Washington, DC 20036. For Greenbeat, contact Kevin Carmody at 1447 1/2 W. Fletcher Street, Chicago, IL 60657; (312) 229-2814; e-mail KPCarmody@aol.com.

For inquiries regarding the SEJ, please contact executive director Beth Parke at the SEJ office, P.O. Box 27280, Philadelphia, PA 19118; Ph:(215) 247-9710; Fax: (215) 247-9712. Via Internet: SEJOffice@aol.com



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

SEJournal is published electronically on Compuserve's Journalism Forum and on the World Wide Web: <http://www.sej.org>

SEJ Board of Directors: President, Emilia Askari, (810) 546-5783; vice president, Rae Tyson, *USA Today*, (703) 276-3424; vice president, Tom Meersman, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, (612) 673-4414; secretary, Kevin Carmody, *Chicago Daily Southtown*, (312) 229-2814; treasurer, Steve Curwood, NPR's *Living On Earth*, (617) 868-8810; Russell Clemings, *Fresno Bee*, (209) 441-6371; Marla Cone, *The Los Angeles Times*, (800) 528-4637, ext. 73497; Amy Gahrn, E Source, (303) 440-8500; Erin Hayes, ABC News, (312) 899-4015; Randy Lee Loftis, *Dallas Morning News*, (313) 761-6927; Mike Mansur, *Kansas City Star*, (816) 234-4433; David Ropeik, WCVB-TV, Boston, (617) 449-0400; Angela Swafford, *The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald*, (305) 376-2168. Representative for academic members: JoAnn Valenti, Brigham Young University, (801) 378-7020; Representative for associate members: Adlai Amor, International Center for Journalists, (202) 737-3700; Jim Detjen, ex officio board member: (517) 353-9479, Michigan State University.

SEJournal is printed on recycled paper

SEJ News

SEJ saves for a rainy day

Many SEJ members volunteer a lot of time, energy and talent to help the organization reach its goals of increasing the quality, accuracy, and visibility of environmental journalism. SEJ's leaders value those contributions immensely. Without them, SEJ could not be half as successful as it is.

Nevertheless, the board now is asking members to consider giving something more: money.

Members of the board reached into their own pockets in March to establish an SEJ endowment fund. In the coming months, SEJ will be asking its members and other journalists for tax deductible contributions which will earmarked at year's end for the endowment fund. Donations can be as small as \$1 or as big as Fort Knox.

The money will not be spent on day-to-day operations. Instead, these funds will be set aside to earn interest. The group's leaders hope that building an endowment will eventually buffer SEJ from the potential vagaries of foundation funding.

"The notion over the long haul is to have some flexibility," SEJ Treasurer Steve Curwood said. "Money is magnetic. If we start saving for ourselves, we'll be able to build a fund that will support generations of environmental journalists to come. It's a small gesture now that will have a big effect in the years to come. Not unlike planting a seed."

Larger donations can be made in someone's name. In addition, SEJ will be encouraging people to name the organization in wills and as a contingent recipient for pension funds.

SEJ's founding father and honorary member, David Stolberg, recently made a \$100 contribution in memory of Anne B. Stolberg. "When the inevitable happens, it's a great way to remember a loved one or colleague," Curwood said.

SEJ's dues and conference fees do not begin to cover the costs of running the organization. Much of that is funded by grants from foundations, universities, and journalistic enterprises. SEJ does not accept donations from non-media companies or from advocacy groups.

SEJ would like to thank the following institutions for their financial support over the past few months:

- The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, with grant of \$25,000 for SEJ's 1996 programs including national and regional conferences and outreach to editors.
- The C. S. Mott Foundation, matching the grant from the Dodge Foundation with an additional \$25,000.
- Washington University in St. Louis, with a pledge of \$25,000 for events and travel fellowships associated with SEJ's Sixth National Conference.
- The Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, for underwriting budget of \$10,000 for SEJ's Mid-Atlantic regional conference on June 15-16.
- The Udall Foundation, with a \$5,000 grant for travel fellowships which enabled six journalists to attend a conference on environmental health issues in the U.S.-Mexico border region, March 29—30, at the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, University of Arizona, Tucson.

(Continued on page 5)

Conference planners look for large turnout

You should make plans quickly to attend the Society of Environmental Journalists 6th National Conference, October 17–20, in St. Louis.

“I know how journalists are about deadlines,” said Mike Mansur, the conference’s co-chairman. “But you should really register quickly to make sure you get the best room rates and your choice of our Thursday tours.”

If you haven’t received it already, a conference brochure should soon arrive in the mailboxes of SEJ members. This year you can register for the conference and your hotel on the same form.

Mansur, an environment writer at the *Kansas City Star*, and *Chicago Daily Southtown’s* Kevin Carmody, are this year’s conference co-chairs. The prestigious Washington University is our host. Northwest-based freelancer Jay Letto once again is the conference coordinator.

Thursday’s tours are designed, Mansur said, to allow conference attendees to take home an important environmental story. “Our tours will not only take you to the site,” he said, “but they’ll bring all the primary sources involved in the story out to the site with you.”

On Friday and Saturday, panels will

address more than 20 issues—from the basics of reporting on pesticides to the latest scientific insights on how chemicals may disrupt human endocrine and immune systems. Among the invited speakers: Peter Raven, one of the world’s foremost biodiversity experts; Congressmen Newt Gingrich and Dick Gephardt; authors Wendell Berry and William Least Heat-Moon; and agriculture expert Wes Jackson.

On Friday, the plenary—titled “It’s 2010: Do You Know Where Your Job Is?”—promises to be a must-see event, Carmody said. It will address how the revolution in communications technology and the new trends in media ownership will affect serious environmental journalism.

Conference planners said the conference will be a great opportunity to meet and mingle with the nation’s leading environmental journalists as well as some of the top scientists and political leaders. Receptions are planned on Thursday at the Missouri Botanical Garden, on Friday at the St. Louis Gateway Arch, and on Saturday at the St. Louis Science Center.

In addition, this conference will feature the expertise of a number of important journalism organizations—The

Poynter Institute, The National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting and the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation.

“We are expanding our sessions on writing and reporting throughout the weekend,” Mansur said. “The writing sessions have been especially popular in the past.”

A large turnout is expected this year because of St. Louis’ central location and the low airfares to Lambert Airport in St. Louis. Once there, the conference hotel—the Hyatt at Union Station—is just a \$1 light-rail ride away. Rates at the Hyatt are \$99 for a single, double, triple or quad. Nearby, SEJ has reserved rooms at the Hampton Inn for \$75, single or double.

Don’t leave too early. Sunday will be a day in Forest Park, with sessions at the renowned St. Louis Zoo and the St. Louis Art Museum. As has become tradition, SEJ will once again present popular panels on environmental history and writers on writing.

And here’s an inside tip: SEJ may bring back one of the nation’s original environmental reporters—none other than the late-Rachel Carson—for a special appearance. Expect updates soon on this.

Surveys uphold membership standards

By RAE TYSON

One of the continuing concerns of the SEJ Board involves membership eligibility. We scrutinize new applications carefully and are now instituting a formal procedure for reviewing the status of current members.

You will see the results of that scrutiny in the form of a survey that will accompany your annual membership renewal invoice.

The survey is one of several changes recommended by the Membership Committee and adopted by the SEJ board at its recent meeting in Ann Arbor. While annual surveys have been sent to members routinely for the last five years, completion of these surveys has been voluntary. Now, however, completing the survey is mandatory. We also hope that you will fill out the form honestly and completely.

For many of you, it will simply require an indication that your job status hasn’t changed in the past year. For some, it may mean reclassification of your membership from one category to another. For others, it may mean that a career change makes you ineligible for SEJ membership.

Even if you are ineligible, you would be able to subscribe to the *SEJournal* and attend our national conferences.

Though it may take you a few extra

minutes to fill out this survey form, we hope you realize that the effort is in the best interests of SEJ.

For your benefit alone, we stand committed to enforcing the membership eligibility standards of SEJ.

Rae Tyson is environment editor for USA Today, vice president of the SEJ Board and chair of the Membership Committee.

Editors...from page 2

duties are encouraged to contact the staff or any board member or to drop by any board meeting. They’re all open.

The next one is scheduled for July 26–28 in Boulder, CO. The final board meeting of the year will be at the national conference, Oct. 17–20, in St. Louis.

For highlights of the last two board meetings, please consult SEJ’s listserv (contact Amy Gahrn for information about subscribing to the listserv at mtn@indra.com) or check the annual report that SEJ staff soon will be mailing out to all members.

Tom Byrne was still clutching a reporter's notebook when they fished his body out of the toxic waste vat. A week later, police ruled it an accident. They reached the same conclusion when Roger Preston was electrocuted by his news station's video camera. The 'accident' fried both the ace environmental reporter and his video of the new water treatment plant.

Too many accidents make my stomach queasy and I was out of antacids. So I decided to delve into the mystery...

Pretty cool, huh? Maybe I can convince, *Family Circle's* **Kathy Sagan** she needs an environmental sleuth in her new creation, *Mary Higgins Mystery Magazine*. Sagan is happy to be getting back to fiction. "I'd forgotten how much I enjoy that stuff," she said. Sagan will remain book editor at *Family Circle*. At first, the new mystery magazine will be published only once or twice a year. That will give her bosses (the same ones who publish FC) time to see how well it sells.

The *Mobile Register* has created a new "Growth and the Environment" department to coordinate coverage of issues along the Alabama Coast. At the helm is editor **Bill Finch**, assisted by reporter **Michael Hardy**. Hardy says the goal is "more thorough and consistent coverage" of development issues in the rapidly growing region. Recent development in Mobile and surrounding counties has outstripped infrastructure, and has had a huge effect on the environment.

Karl Lief Bates' beat is much broader now. The former environment writer for the *Ann Arbor News* now surveys all of Michigan and all of science as the new science writer for the *Detroit Free Press*. Although most of his recent work has been astronomical, Bates says he will occasionally poach stories from the paper's environment desk.

Two changes were announced at the business monthly, *Environmental Solutions*. Lawyer **Michael Hill** now will cover the Hill as Contributing Editor of a new department, "DC Briefing." His beat also will include the EPA, OSHA, and the Department of Transportation. Also, **Jim Bishop**, founder of ES's predecessor publication, returns as editor of a new column, "FYI." A big part of that beat will be leading readers to the best World Wide Web sites and other online resources.

At February's AAAS convention in Baltimore, **JoAnn Valenti**, SEJ's academic board member, was inducted as an Association Fellow. Valenti, a professor of communications at Brigham Young University, was honored for her efforts to keep the journalistic and academic communities communicating. "It's nice when they recognize public-interest people, not just scientists," Valenti says.

Media on the Move

Compiled by **George Homsy**

Some movers are tangled up in the Internet...

Leadernet. Former editor and reporter **Jim Van Nostrand** now goes by the title Electronic Information Manager. He is in charge of *The Times Leader's* (Wilkes-Barre, PA) new Internet push—which is more than just putting stories online. The paper has started an Internet access service, which is one of the many income streams Van Nostrand feels is needed to make *Leadernet* pay for itself. Once things settle down, Van Nostrand pledges to get back to reporting, but his stories will appear only online.

Americasnet is getting a facelift and the plastic surgeon is former Austin, Texas-based freelancer **Ron Mader**. Wielding a virtual scalpel is just part of his new job description as public affairs coordinator for the Summit of the Americas Center at Florida International University, Miami. He also edits the center's quarterly newsletter. The focus of this work will be to publicize sustainable development strategies. He also will continue publishing the ecotourism newsletter *El Planeta Plactica*.

Tomorrownet? Well, not yet. But *Tomorrow Magazine's* new editor-in-chief **Kim Loughran** says it is on the horizon. For now, he is concentrating on getting the business glossy out on its new

semimonthly schedule. (Ever ambitious, Loughran hopes to publish 12 times a year soon.) He has been editing *Tomorrow Magazine* with founder **Claes Sjoberg**, who is stepping aside to pursue other environmental projects in Sweden. Loughran plans to print more current news; better pictures, and more "in-your-face reporting" about the progress made by business in the environment.

I had to conduct an e-mail interview with **Philip Burgert**. That's because the former New York-based news editor of the trade weekly, *American Metal Market*, is now the paper's news editor for Europe. Burgert jumped at the overseas assignment and hopes to expand the paper's international coverage. He's now stationed in Germany.

Computer-assisted reporting "is where the frontier is," according to SEJ board member **Russ Clemings**. He first used computer analysis to write an endangered species story in 1992. Today his new computer-assisted reporting beat has him examining issues from police response times to campaign contributions. He taught himself the ins and outs of spreadsheet and database management which, he says, previously made the whole process "four or five times more difficult than it should have been." He pledges to bring other reporters at *The Fresno Bee* up to speed much quicker.

Picking up the environmental duties at the *Bee* will be a trio of reporters, according to Clemings. **Mark Grossi** has been easing his way over from the agriculture post. **Angela Valdivia** and **Barbara DeLollis** also will cover green issues as part of the *Bee's* Growth and Development Team.

Where are you? Change jobs? Win an award? Start a fellowship? Send any news about you or your colleagues to George Homsy at *Living On Earth*, PO Box 380639, Cambridge, MA., 02238-0639; ph: (617) 868-8810; fax: (617) 868-8659; e-mail: (ghomsy@world.std.com).

Rainy day...from page 3

- The George Gund Foundation, with a \$4,000 grant for an Ohio regional conference and river tour on June 29.
- The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, with a pledge of in-kind support to print the 1996 national conference program.

- Turner Broadcasting, Inc. and its subsidiaries, with \$1,000 in support of the 1996 national conference.
- The *Kansas City Star*, with a \$650 gift for organizational and national conference planning.

Training institute for enviro journalists planned

A three-and-a-half-day training institute for journalists on Great Lakes environmental issues is being organized by Michigan State University's Environmental Journalism Program.

The institute, which will be held June 5 to 8, 1996, will train 25 fellowship winners from the Great Lakes states and Ontario. Participants will delve into some of the most important environmental issues facing the Great Lakes (the largest body of fresh water in the world). Some of the topics to be covered are air and water pollution, invasion of exotic species, effects of pesticides and other chemicals on wildlife, Superfund and cleanup of chemical dumps in the region, forestry, global climate change, and energy.

The institute will consist of lectures, critiques of articles, hands-on exercises, computer-assisted reporting training, tours, and other educational programs. The lectures will be held on the campus of Michigan State University, the nation's pioneer land-grant university and the home of one of the nation's oldest and largest journalism programs.

Among the leading journalists who

will lecture at the institute are Rae Tyson, an environmental reporter for *USA Today* and SEJ's vice president; Erin Hayes, an award-winning broadcast journalist with ABC-TV in Chicago; Casey Bukro, an environmental and business writer for *The Chicago Tribune*; Russell Clemings, a journalist at *The Fresno (Calif.) Bee* and one of the nation's leading experts on computer-assisted reporting; Emilia Askari, SEJ President; and Detjen. Other speakers will include some of the region's leading scientists and educators on Great Lakes environmental issues. All instructors have been selected because of their ability to explain complicated environmental issues clearly.

The institute is being organized by Jim Detjen, a former award-winning reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and the founding president of SEJ. Since January 1995, Detjen has been the Knight Professor of Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. The Knight Professorship, which was established with a \$1 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, is the nation's only endowed chair in environ-

mental journalism. SEJ and the MSU Institute for Environmental Toxicology are assisting Detjen in organizing this event. The institute is being sponsored by the George Gund, Knight and Dart Foundations and by a grant from the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences.

Deadline for applications was April 15. Journalists from the Great Lakes states (New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota) and the province of Ontario were invited to apply for a fellowship.

Although there is a \$75 registration fee, the fellowship covers for room and board, reading materials, computer training, tours, and tuition. The program is open to journalists working in all media. A special effort is being made to identify and train promising journalists with little formal background in environmental journalism.

For further information, contact Barb Miller at MSU's Environmental Journalism Program at (517) 432-1415 or Jim Detjen at (517) 353-9479; e-mail: DETJEN@pilot.msu.edu.

To subscribe to the SEJournal, please complete this form and mail with your payment of \$50 (\$30 library rate) to:

**Society of Environmental Journalists
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 27280
Philadelphia, PA 19118**

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip/postal code _____ Country _____

Payment Information:

Please make your check or money order out to the *Society of Environmental Journalists*

Check Enclosed

Receipt requested



For credit payment, fill in the information below

Account Number _____ Expiration date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Rising interest...(from page 1)

tion of the *Directory of Science Communication Courses and Programs*.

While some university departments offer a lone course in environmental journalism, others offer complete degree-granting or certificate programs at the graduate or undergraduate level. Many programs combine environmental journalism and science communication, and have both journalism and science students enrolled. A number also are interdisciplinary, requiring training beyond journalism in science or science policy.

For example, the University of Missouri—Columbia is offering a new M.A. program in environmental reporting within its schools of journalism and natural resources. This program requires a sequence of courses in basic journalism, science writing, investigative reporting, and environmental writing—as well as natural resources science. The goal is to provide students with a background in both the science that underlies environmental issues and in news media studies, writing, and reporting. The combined program gives students the option to do an M.A. thesis or a professional project. All students also receive commercial daily newspaper or television experience. (Contact Robert Logan, ph 314-882-4514, or e-mail journal@muccmail.missouri.edu.)

Michigan State University, home of the endowed Knight Chair in Environmental Journalism, is developing environmental journalism programs for undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students. Currently, MSU offers courses in environmental reporting, science and medical writing, and computer-assisted reporting, as well as seminars on specialized environmental and scientific topics. In the future, MSU will offer a specialized masters program in environmental studies and environmental journalism, in conjunction with several other departments. (Contact: Jim Detjen, ph. 517-353-9479, e-mail detjen@pilot.msu.edu.)

In Fall 1996, Texas A&M University will begin a new M.S. program in Science and Technology Journalism. This program will blend journalism with science courses, including one in “Risk and Crisis Reporting.” Barbara Gastel, the program’s

adviser, said “By helping students develop journalistic skills, scientific knowledge, and understanding of social issues, we hope to prepare them well for careers in fields such as environmental reporting.” (Contact: Barbara Gastel, ph. 409-854-6887.)

Antioch New England Graduate School has developed a curriculum in environmental communications, which resides in the Environmental Studies Department. It prepares students along two tracks: one for writers, and one for organizational communicators. (Contact: Ty Minton.)

In addition to these newer programs, there are older, established efforts at the graduate level. In 1992, the Center for Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado—Boulder began an interdisciplinary graduate program. This program allows students to obtain an M.S. in journalism with an emphasis in environmental journalism, and also an interdisciplinary graduate certificate in environmental policy. In the journalism segment, students can pursue either mass communication research or newsgathering, and they must complete 18 hours in environmental policy and science. This program collaborates closely with the university’s Global Change and Environment Policy program, which was instrumental in establishing a new environmental journalism faculty position starting in Fall 1996. (Contact: Len Ackland, ph 303-492-5007, e-mail: ackland@spot.colorado.edu.)

New York University offers an even older graduate program that has recently experienced increased interest in environmental reporting. NYU has offered a three-semester program in science and environmental reporting for a number of years, primarily to undergraduate science students. Graduates receive an M.A. in journalism and a certificate in science and environmental writing. (Contact: William Burrows, ph 212-998-7990.)

At the undergraduate level, Lehigh University has offered a B.A. degree in Science and Environmental Writing since 1978. This program also is interdisciplinary, requiring a minimum of six courses in science or engineering plus a core set of

journalism courses and four courses in science and environmental journalism. Students in the program cover scientific meetings on site, and write and edit a weekly Science and Environmental section for Lehigh’s student newspaper. (Contact: Sharon Friedman, ph. 610-758-4179, e-mail smf6@lehigh.edu.)

Cornell University offers opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in environmental communication through several courses. Jim Shanahan, who teaches Environmental Communication and Mass Media, said “The Department of Communication at Cornell looks at environmental issues from a variety of perspectives. Our approach emphasizes a theoretical grounding in communication theory, applied to practical problem solving for environmental and scientific issues.” A future environmental concentration will include courses in the communication process, applications, science and environmental communication, and introductory and advanced environmental science and policy. (Contact: Jim Shanahan, ph. 607-255-8058.)

Despite the advent of new programs, two older ones appear to be out of business, at least temporarily. An extensive undergraduate environmental journalism program at Western Washington University is in limbo because the program’s director retired. The communication department at the University of Michigan (and its environmental writing efforts) were discontinued by university restructuring. The Scripps Environmental Fellows program, which was housed there, currently is on hold while trustees investigate a new site for the program.

Some universities, while not offering complete programs, have taught environmental journalism courses for some time. One of these is Marquette University, which has offered a course to graduate students for more than 15 years. The Environmental Communications graduate seminar at Brigham Young University is newer, having been taught since the early 1990s to both journalism and science/engineering majors in almost equal numbers. The University of Montana has been teaching one graduate

Continued on page 8)

environmental journalism course per year for the past four or five years, and hopes to develop a sequence of several courses in the future. A new course is being planned in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.

Other universities that have recently offered courses in environmental journalism or communication include: University of California—Berkeley, Central Michigan, Colorado State University, Columbia University, Indiana, Middle Tennessee State, University of Nevada—Las Vegas, Northern Arizona, Ohio State University, University of Oregon, and University of Wisconsin—Madison.

Increased Student Interest

Many of the new efforts in environmental journalism education count on increased student interest to ensure their success. In a survey of environmental journalism faculty that I conducted in late 1993, 24 out of 25 faculty agreed that students were either much more or somewhat more interested in environmental journalism at that time than they had been five years earlier. The majority of these educa-

tors believed that this increased interest was driven by students' growing awareness of (and education about) environmental issues, as well as increased media coverage of the environment. (The educators who received this questionnaire were those on the JournE mailing list, academic faculty members of SEJ, or those listed as teaching environmental journalism courses in the 1991 *Directory of Science Communication Courses and Programs* in the U.S. Although 25 responses may appear few in number, this was more of a census than a sample, including responses from faculty teaching most of the environmental journalism courses in the nation.)

Journalism students weren't the only students showing increased interest in this field. Science students also were taking environmental journalism courses in larger numbers, particularly those majoring in environmental sciences or environmental studies. Others enrolling included students majoring in the social sciences, natural resource programs, and health sciences.

Increased student interest affected environmental journalism courses in several ways. About half the educators said their courses had larger enrollments than

ever before, and one fourth said they were offering more courses in environmental journalism. In all, 19 people indicated that over the past five years they (or colleagues) had added courses or segments to courses about environmental journalism. Several even received support for developing new programs in environmental communication.

Fourteen educators said they offered one or more courses in which environmental journalism was the main topic, for a total of 26 courses as of 1993. (More have been added since then.) Of these courses, 13 were for undergraduates, six for graduate students, six included both, and one was unspecified. These courses were usually between three and five credits, and the predominant majors of students enrolled were either journalism or communication, or some form of environmental sciences or studies.

Sixteen educators said that they or departmental colleagues offered a total of 41 courses where environmental journalism was included, but not the main topic. Of these, 21 courses were in journalism or communication, 12 in science writing, three in environmental studies, and five in

Continuing Education Opportunities

Workshops, seminars and year-long fellowships offer varied mid-career educational avenues for environmental reporters in the U.S. and abroad.

Short-term continuing education to help environmental journalists report on complex issues consists mainly of workshops or seminars that usually last from one to three days. Major U.S. efforts (besides SEJ's national and regional conferences) have been led by the Environmental Journalism Program of the Foundation for American Communications (FACS) and by the Environmental Journalism Center, which is sponsored by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF).

Originally funded by a \$1 million, three-year grant, FACS has offered workshops including "The Future of the Endangered Species Act," "Oceans and the Environment," "Reporting on Water Resources," and "Global Environmental Issues."

The Environmental Journalism Center has presented several seminars beamed by satellite to broadcasters around the country. These are available as hour-long videos and include "Beyond the Spotted Owl: How to Cover the Environment in the 90s," "Risk Reporting: How to Cover Today's Top Environmental Health Stories," and "Covering Environmental Risk Stories." The Center's goal "is to put the tools needed to understand environmental issues in the hands of as many radio and television news people as possible."

A number of universities also have sponsored professional workshops. The Knight Center for Specialized Journalism at the

University of Maryland held a two-week seminar on "The Environmental Story" in 1992.

Taking a slightly different tack, Lehigh University, with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency, developed presentations in 1992—93 for three different journalism society meetings to help reporters better understand the risk assessment process. The Center for Environmental Journalism at the University of Colorado has sponsored an annual three-day professional workshop since 1993 called "Charting the Environmental Journalism Frontier," with funding from the James M. Cox Foundation.

In 1995, the University of Montana offered a two-week summer program on forestry issues for 16 journalists, primarily sponsored by the American Forestry Foundation. It plans to offer similar programs regularly and will run a eight-day institute on forestry and mining issues in July 1996. Michigan State University will offer a Great Lakes Environmental Training Institute June 5—8, 1996, for journalists from the eight Great Lakes states and Canada, and also plans to hold similar events in the future.

For longer periods of training, there are the Nieman Fellowships for Environmental Journalists at Harvard University and the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Both fellowships offer an academic year's worth of scholarly roaming through classrooms to increase reporters' knowledge about a variety of issues. (See *SEJournal*, Summer 1995, for descriptions by SEJ members who held these fellowships.) Several SEJ members

English. The majority were three-credit courses for undergraduates majoring in journalism/communication or science.

Problems Faced by Educators

Growth in courses and programs does not mean that environmental journalism education is without problems. From a teaching perspective, the faculty answering the survey had two overriding concerns: lack of effective textbooks, and differing skills among the wide variety of students in environmental journalism courses. Most educators felt that current texts were either too narrow or too general. They said they had to use a variety of books to cover the major segments of their courses. Some people noted, however, that there were other resources available for the classroom—including reporting guides on various environmental issues and videotapes (see sidebar below).

The mixed backgrounds of students taking environmental journalism courses was considered both good and bad. While students from different fields brought various viewpoints to courses that enriched discussions, they also brought varying abilities. Journalism students generally

had poor science backgrounds, while science students lacked media training. Said one educator, "Teaching a course in environmental reporting is tough because you have to bring students up to speed in a number of areas without boring those who already have a skill or know a field. This makes it harder to cover the wide range of subjects you need to include." To cope with this problem, some educators suggested requiring science minors for environmental journalism students.

Other student-based concerns among the educators included students' lack of statistical background and critical questioning skills. The educators called for more internships and more sophistication in teaching students about complicated environmental risks. A few people indicated that there was just too much to teach in one course—they needed more time to deal with the science, technology, and law involved in environmental issues.

In the two years since the survey, educators who have developed new programs appear to have dealt with these problems in at least two ways. First, they offer several courses so that the many

aspects involved in environmental journalism do not have to be jammed into one course. Second, they are requiring both science and science policy courses for their students.

Most administrative problems affecting environmental journalism courses cited in the survey centered around limited departmental budgets, restricted university funding, and a shortage of faculty members. Such hurdles did not allow these courses to be offered as frequently as they should have been. Several faculty noted that the number of students enrolling in environmental journalism classes had to be high if they were to be taught at all. Downsizing efforts at many universities cause pressure to teach larger, general journalism classes rather than smaller, specialized environmental writing courses.

Despite these problems (which have not gone away and perhaps have gotten worse at some universities recently), new programs have been developing, indicating the strength of the interest in environmental journalism education and its growing importance. Most of the surveyed edu-

(Continued on page 10)

also have been Michigan Journalism Fellows, pursuing educational opportunities for an academic year on the campus of the University of Michigan. Although there is no specific environmental journalism slot yet in this program, efforts are being made to develop one.

On the international scene, there also has been extensive educational activity. The International Center for Journalists (formerly the Center for Foreign Journalists) has sponsored training programs in environmental journalism in various countries and in the United States, including a three-week effort for Asian journalists that was held in Washington, at Lehigh University, and the University of Colorado. It also co-sponsored environmental journalism workshops by two U.S. educators for reporters in Thailand, Nepal, and Bangladesh in 1994.

The Environmental Health Center has trained environmental journalists from Central and Eastern Europe for four years in the U.S. and abroad, with funding from the German Marshall Fund. This year, it brought four journalists from Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic to the U.S. for three weeks. Besides sponsoring a clearinghouse activity for Central European journalists, the center has established a joint training program for journalism students at Moscow State University.

The Freedom Forum sent two U.S. environmental journalism educators to Southeast Asia in 1995 to give workshops on environmental reporting issues and techniques to reporters from Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. In 1994, it brought a team of environmental journalists and educators to Indonesia for an environmental journalism workshop.

A number of handbooks and videotapes to help reporters from the U.S. and abroad cover environmental topics also are available. In the U.S., publications from the Environmental Health Center include *Reporting on Municipal Solid Waste: A Local Issue*, *Covering the Coasts: A Reporter's Guide to Coastal and Marine Resources*, and *Chemicals, the Press, and the Public*. The Media Institute has published the second edition of *Environmental Issues for the '90s: A Handbook for Journalists, Health Risks and the Press*, and *Reporting on Risk*. Island Press has published *Media and the Environment*. Rutgers University Press has updated the *Reporter's Environmental Handbook*. RTNDF has prepared materials on endocrine disrupters, population, and alternative-fuel vehicles.

In Asia, the Asian-Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists has just finished a second edition of *Reporting on the Environment: A Handbook for Journalists*. The first edition was translated into eight Asian languages and widely distributed. The Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists recently prepared *Playing with Poison*, a handbook for reporters on pesticide use in that part of the world.

Even with all of these efforts, a number of environmental journalists and educators interviewed felt a need for more programs. They said that seminars and workshops help reporters better understand the science behind complex environmental issues, provide greater context for in-depth reporting, and allow them to write more thoughtful and thought-provoking articles. Continuing education is a way for all reporters to keep up to date and well informed.

— Sharon M. Friedman

cators felt that the field was indeed increasing in importance, and they credited it to the importance of environmental concerns as an issue for the nation and the world, and people's need to know more about these concerns.

Queried to provide advice for educators, 15 SEJ active members suggested that an ideal education for future environmental journalists would be an undergraduate program with a combination of journalism and science courses and some

background in economics and politics. They suggested that students need to know more about the complexities of risk and risk assessment, ecological relationships, and environmental law. They specifically pointed out the need for training in investigative techniques, computer-aided reporting, and database use. The journalists also urged educators to teach students to be skeptical and objective, and to establish a high standard for truth.

While such requests might be a tall order for all environmental journalism educators, many of these elements are already in place at various universities. More can be expected as environmental journalism education continues to mature.

Sharon M. Friedman is Iacocca Professor and Director of the Science and Environmental Writing Program at Lehigh University.

Science writing...from page 1

represent that evidence to others, and to explain things that are difficult to understand. Those are essential skills for most communicators—and indeed, for most people.

Why are these skills emphasized in the science writing classroom? Our content domain gives us license. The world of science is full of complicated concepts and processes, full of contentious scientific characters, and brazenly dependent on the quality of evidence. Students easily buy into the need to develop commensurate coping skills.

My point is not that all journalism and mass communication departments need to begin offering science writing training. Rather, it is that we teachers should be willing to instill such training outside of these specialized courses. Issues of evidence and of presentation need to be a part of our basic communication curriculum. Let me briefly reflect on what I mean by these two competencies:

Evidence

We humans specialize in taking judgmental shortcuts rather than systematically evaluating evidence. Journalists, certainly, have raised heuristic decision-making to an art form. Our students are equally adept at reasoning on the basis of mere shreds of information. Learning about what constitutes evidence, and then exploring ways to separate the good stuff from the bad, will be a novel experience for many of our young colleagues.

This domain fascinates me. I spend increasing amounts of classroom time discussing the kinds of cognitive strategies that lead us (all of us) to privilege the anecdotal over the systematic, the vivid over the pallid—and that send us on a frantic search for cause and effect when chance will do just fine, thank you.

Books that help me make these points include Victor Cohn, *News & Numbers* (Iowa University Press, 1989); Thomas Gilovich, *How We Know What Isn't So* (Free Press, 1991); and S. Holly Stocking and Paget H. Gross, *How Do Journalists Think?* (ERIC, 1989).

I also rely on the occasional powerful videotape. My current favorite is *Frontline's* "Prisoners of Silence," which documents the rise and fall of facilitated communication as a therapy for autistic children. It's a stunning display of how we see what we want to see, and of how dysfunctional that common pattern of reasoning can be.

Videotapes such as this one are now available commercially to educators, and they are good catalysts for discussion.

Presentation

Most of our skills courses focus on presentation, of course. We rarely teach our students how to explain things, however. Yet explanation is crucial to disseminating evidence. If anything, professional communicators (particularly journalists) are punished for explaining, as the effort requires time or space.

Even when we make an effort to teach explanatory skills, we operationalize them superficially. We tell students to use everyday words and short sentences, or to speak in "word pictures" through the use of active verbs, analogies, and short sentences. This advice is good, of course—but it is not deep. Explaining something well requires the active involvement of the reader, listener, or viewer, and we are spectacularly unprepared to handle that dimension.

For example, communicators often don't cope well with their audiences' beliefs. If a reader eschews chance as an explanation for a cluster of rare events (cancer cases, for instance), then I'll guarantee you that she will resist your assertion that such a cluster in the community is indeed a chance encounter rather than the result of another (probably invidious) force.

My explanatory guru is Katherine Rowan, a communication professor at Purdue University. She has published articles in *Written Communication* and *Journalism Educator* that draw on a body of research in science education to suggest a number of novel ways to explain complicated things with the audience firmly in mind.

Many of us are working to embed critical thinking skills in our communication classrooms, and I make no claim that the issues discussed above are unique or even rare. Still, they loom for me as a major curricular challenge. Students can become prickly about learning "generic" things—yet these generalized skills are among some of the most important tools we can provide them.

Sharon Dunwoody is professor in the school of Journalism and Mass Communication at University of Wisconsin-Madison

This article is reprinted with permission from CT&M Concepts, the newsletter of the Communication, Theory and Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Stolen Future...from page 1

ing—a subtle and malign reproductive impairment throughout the length and breadth of Earth’s animal kingdom.

Initially, she ascended that soapbox only in the supportive company of fellow biologists. Gradually, Colborn became more outspoken about these fears, catching the attention of Congress, U.S. regulatory agencies, and captains of industry. Now, in *Our Stolen Future*—and the news blitz it’s evoked throughout respected major media—she carries her chilling concerns to the general public, much as Paul Brodeur’s *Zapping of*

America brought the formerly arcane subject of electromagnetic fields to the public’s attention.

For journalists, Colborn’s new book offers solid background. Its subject—the secret life of our bodies’ endocrine system—makes for surprisingly good drama. Anecdotes and personality profiles humanize the science of our environment’s hormonal threats to wildlife and its stewards. And throughout, Dumanoski has done a yeoman’s job of finding analogies to render the book’s complicated concepts reader friendly.

But as with any book, events portrayed in *Our Stolen Future* are dated. Moreover, much of the research that it describes may ultimately prove misleading. Indeed, that’s the nature of science.

The research field it depicts is in its infancy. Portrayed trends are sketched from a remarkably small number of data points. Such a paucity of data leaves reporters or book authors free to extrapolate broadly on what the few, early findings suggest. As a field develops, however, it traditionally constrains the boundaries of what is real—or realistic.

So where today we are questioning to what effect estrogen-mimicking pollutants may reduce sperm counts in men, we might one day learn that only three of the dozens of “man-made” estrogens to which we are exposed employ a mechanism that can affect human sperm production. Or we might find out that any of these agents can affect sperm, but only if a man’s mother had been exposed to

them on day 17 of her pregnancy. Or only if the fetally exposed man smoked during his teen years. Or faced exposure to these “hormones” through the skin. Or...

You get the point; any serious problems may be highly circumscribed in their impacts.

Which is why it’s exciting to write about these issues today—while they’re

Data gaps, and the hazards of offering speculations to bridge them, plague every fledgling field of science. But the initial trends that sparse data suggest can be bolstered or responsibly discredited only by additional studies.

still so deliciously appalling, and nobody has proven that even the most outlandish prospects are categorically impossible.

A few individuals have begun suggesting that they might be, however. Gina Kolata in a March 19 *New York Times* piece, for instance, quotes scientists who argue that concerns about hormone mimics are premature, pending follow-up data that demonstrate not only how pervasive and potent such agents are, but also whether initial studies in this field were conducted appropriately. A related March 31 story in the *Washington Post* by Rick Weiss and Gary Lee picks up the skepticism, noting that science “is better at scaring people than reassuring them.” Indeed, they contend that the mix of science, politics and public relations associated with *Our Stolen Future* “smells undeniably of spin but is nevertheless difficult to ignore.”

Anxious to contribute to that spin are several chemical industry groups that have begun funding a few scientists to challenge the concerns that Colborn and her co-authors write about. To date these critics have largely pointed to those gaps in the data supporting the frightening trends and to the potentially countervailing effects of chemicals in the environment that may serve as hormone-blocking agents.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute, based in Washington D.C., took up the latter crusade in a report it issued at a press conference two days before the release of Colborn’s new book. It noted

that Mother Nature had imbued some 173 plants (at last count) with hormone mimicking constituents—many of which we’ve eaten without harm for millennia. As such, it argued, the hormonal alter ego of many pesticides and other synthetic chemicals is nothing new or unusual—and for *Our Stolen Future* to even infer otherwise represents “scare tactics” that “hit below the belt.”

Data gaps, and the hazards of offering speculations to bridge them, plague every fledgling field of science. But the initial trends that sparse data suggest can be bol-

stered or responsibly discredited only by additional studies.

That’s why we will do our audience a big favor by dogging this subject over the next five or more years—to tease out the caveats and circumstances that clarify actual risks from today’s mountain of theoretical possibilities.

For instance, neurological effects associated with hormone mimics may end up proving most significant. Emerging data suggest certain of these pollutants trigger subtle behavioral and intellectual abnormalities in humans, perhaps by perturbing thyroid hormones (as chronicled in chapter 10 of *Our Stolen Future*). Furthermore, the average loss of even a few IQ points can constitute a huge economic and productivity toll if extrapolated across a population.

Tracking new developments on this and other aspects of environmental hormones requires scanning journals that regularly publish peer-reviewed studies on this topic. Keeping abreast is aided, however, by two journals that host more than their fair share of the research. One, *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology*, offered five such articles in its March issue alone. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, the other, routinely offers papers on endocrine effects of an even broader range of pollutants. Its March issue reported the leaching into saliva of an estrogenic constituent of dental sealants and non-mercury-based tooth fillings.

Many other journals tackle such top-
(Continued on page 12)

Online connections

By MIGUEL LLANOS

OK, so you've heard the hype over the Internet—but have you checked it out for yourself? If you have, are you sure you're using the on-ramp that best suits you? After all, you can pay as much as \$500 a month or as little as nothing, depending on your needs and circumstances. You want to make sure you're getting your money's worth.

Why Get Online?

Think of the Net as the world's largest documents library as well as the world's largest information watering hole, where you'll find experts and the curious exchanging ideas and debate. Forget the hype about it replacing other media, about it creating cyber-communities. No, you won't find best sellers or top-secret data, but you can usually find documents and/or expert analysis for just about any story. Here's what I mean:

- **Government:** The Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, National Parks Service, and Fish & Wildlife Service are among the many federal agencies online. So too is Congress, with keyword searching of legislation and the Congressional Record. Also, the Federal Register is just key-strokes away through GPO Access. Some states, counties, and cities also provide documents online. The key here is to search for the region or topic that interests you.

- **Corporations:** Securities & Exchange Commission documents are online for publicly traded firms that file these informative reports electronically. Thousands of companies also have their own World Wide Web sites. The Royal Dutch/Shell site, for example, has dozens of files on its position regarding the execution of Nigerian activists.

- **Organizations:** Hundreds of think tanks and special-interest groups have Web sites with analysis and press releases. Some even sponsor e-mail lists to discuss particular topics.

- **Academia:** Many academic journals are online, providing full text or abstracts, and sometimes even searchable archives. Moreover, many scientists hang out on e-mail lists or Usenet groups to discuss the latest trends.

Online access costs

Leading proprietary online services (as of 3/15/96). You can call any national proprietary service to request free startup software and 10 free trial hours.

- **America Online** (800 827-6364) \$10 for five hours per month, then \$3 for each additional hour. DOS, Windows, and Macintosh starter disks/CDs available.

- **CompuServe** (800 524-3388) \$10 for five hours per month, then \$3 for each additional hour. Or \$25 for 20 hours per month, then \$2 for each additional hour. (In your first month, you get 10 free hours.)

Much of the specialized information on CompuServe costs extra to access. The new consumer-oriented CompuServe Wow! service (launched in March) costs \$17.95 per month for unlimited access, including the Internet. Windows and Macintosh starter disks and CDs available.

- **Prodigy** (800 776-3449) \$10 for five hours per month, or \$30 for 30 hours per month. Under both payment plans, additional hours are \$3 each. DOS/Windows/Mac starter disks/CDs available.

- **Microsoft Network** (800 386-5550) \$5 for three hours per month, then \$2.50 for each additional hour. Or \$20 for 20 hours per month, then \$2 for each additional hour. Windows 95 only.

Leading national Internet service providers (as of 3/15/96). For some, on/off-peak rates apply.

- **GNN** (800 819-6112) \$15 for 20 per month, then \$2 for each additional hour. Windows only (Macintosh available in the future).

- **Netcom** (800 501-8649) \$20 for 40 prime-time hours (9 am to midnight, local time), unlimited usage during other hours. Windows/Macintosh.

- **Pipeline** (800 453-7474) \$20 per month unlimited usage. Windows/Macintosh.

Stolen future...from page 11

ics periodically. *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry's* March issue, for instance, offered data on the estrogenicity of a class of ingredients in many soaps and consumer products—chemicals that show up in streams and drinking water supplies. And a Feb. 24 letter to *The Lancet*, a British medical journal, presented data challenging recent scientific claims that DDT may contribute to increased rates of testicular cancer and certain other male reproductive abnormalities.

Harvesting news nuggets from these journals can prove challenging to the best of us. But for clues on easing the burden, see *SEJournal* Volume 5, number 2 (Summer 1995) Reporter's Toolbox "Overcoming science anxiety—Homing in on the right journals to supplement sources."

Our Stolen Future offers perspective on individual issues addressed in these and related new research papers. So does a roughly 50-page media guide on hormone-mimicking pollutants prepared by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (202-659-6510). Not only is RTNDF's primer available free to members of the news media, but an updated version should be available at the SEJ annual meeting in October.

Janet Raloff, a founding board member of SEJ, is senior editor of Science News. She has reported on the environment for this magazine since 1977— including some 20 stories on hormone mimics since April 1993.

• **Individuals:** If it's public opinion you want, you can always find citizens debating on a Usenet group. (Here in Seattle, for example, check Seattle.general or Seattle.politics.)

How to Get Online

Options vary from place to place, but here's an overview. One or more of these on-ramps should be available in your area.

• **Employers:** Many organizations can give you access at work, or even by dialing in from home to the office. Even if you're a freelancer, it's worth checking to see if you can get access that way.

Advantages: No cost to you.

Drawbacks: It's the organization's account, not yours. That means there will be restrictions on what you can say online and how you use your account. If you want to be yourself, you should have a personal account.

• **Community networks:** Several dozen such networks, often called Free-Nets, exist nationwide and are run by volunteers. These offer PBS-style support.

Advantages: Free or small donation. Generally includes an e-mail address, a "shell" account that allows text-only access to the Internet, and work space on the service's computer.

Disadvantages: Due to limited resources, most community networks don't offer access to the images/audio on the Internet's World Wide Web.

Who might use: Infrequent user, person on tight budget.

Getting connected: Check your local computer user publications, ask your public library, search local newspaper archives for "community network Internet" or "Free-Net," or call me (206-464-8263) and I'll search an online list.

• **Public Libraries:** Many public libraries provide access to the Internet free of charge, sometimes even letting you dial in via modem from home or the office.

Advantages: free, and you don't need a PC or modem—you can just walk into a branch. Some branches may even provide terminals with access to the images and audio of the Web.

Drawbacks: Due to limited resources, most libraries cannot provide e-mail accounts or access to the images/audio on the Web. If e-mail is not provided, though, you may be able to connect via the library to a community network (see above) and establish an e-mail account there. Also due to limited resources, some libraries are experimenting with charging for some services which previously had been free. This may affect Internet access through libraries in the future.

Who might use: Infrequent user, person who does not have access to a personal computer, person on a tight budget.

Getting connected: Call your local library and ask if it pro-

vides Internet access. If so, ask whether it has any terminals with access to the images and audio of the Web.

• **Cybercafes:** These are usually coffee shops, bars, or restaurants that offer Internet access as entertainment. They are appearing in many cities around the world. In most cases, you pay by the hour (typically \$5 per hour).

Advantages: You don't need to own a PC or modem. Many offer state-of-the-art equipment and informal help on navigating the Net.

Disadvantages: May not be close to where you live or work.

Who might use: Infrequent user, or someone who wants to test the Internet ocean before jumping in.

Getting connected: Check your local computer user monthly, ask your public library, search local newspaper archives for "cybercafe," or call me and I'll search an online list.

• **National proprietary online services:** Think of these as information country clubs which provide exclusive data that only members can get, as well as access to the public Internet. Examples are CompuServe and America Online (see Online Access Costs sidebar). However, more and more content providers (such as companies and nonprofits) are bypassing these services and publishing their information directly on the Internet. The vast majority of government data online is on the Net, not on proprietary online services. In most cases, you pay by the hour.

Advantages: Easy to install software and access the Internet. Local dial-in access numbers available across the U.S. (and for some, in other countries as well).

Disadvantages: If you use more than 10 hours a month, your bill can exceed \$30. Exclusive data sometimes costs extra. Also, in sparsely populated regions, the only access available may be through long-distance numbers. Though many services offer "toll-free" 800 access numbers, these entail significantly higher hourly usage rates.

Who might use: Moderate user, probably new to the online world, willing to pay by the hour in exchange for easy setup.

• **National Internet service providers:** These companies simply connect you to the Internet—they do not provide exclusive content. (Examples are Pipeline and Netcom.) Think of these as a hybrid between the national proprietary online services and local Internet providers. They combine the ease of installation of the former with the lower cost of the latter. Most charge a flat (or nearly flat) monthly or annual fee (see Online Access Costs sidebar). Most also allow customers to have web pages or other presences on the Net, often for additional fees.

Advantages: Usually easy to install software and access the Internet. Many access numbers available all over the country.

Disadvantages: Pipeline and Netcom (the two largest such

What is the Internet? Here's a glimpse...

• More than 15,000 e-mail lists (also called "listservs"). You'll find anywhere from two to 20,000 people on a given list. Some are open to the public, but others have limited access. Many allow discussion, others simply distribute information. Beware, though: large public lists often contain lots of "noise" (idle chatter or irrelevant information). Information about SEJ's members-only listserv appears in the front of the 1996 membership directory (or contact Amy Gahran at mtn@indra.com).

• More than 18 million World Wide Web pages. The Web

is easy to navigate and allows you to see images and text and hear audio files. Each Web site contains one or more "pages." The main access page for a particular site is called its "home page." SEJ's home page is at <http://www.sej.org>.

• More than 15,000 Usenet groups. Think of these as public bulletin boards, where anyone can post or comment. Along with some valuable insight, you'll find useless banter. This area is where much of the current Internet censorship controversy lies, since several hundred groups contain files with images and/or content that some would argue violate community standards.

services) require you to call long-distance if you need to talk to a human for support.

Who might use: Moderate to heavy users.

• **Local Internet service providers:**

These companies offer various types of accounts. Individuals seeking full audiovisual access to the Web should request a SLIP or PPP account. (An example is Indra's Net, which supports the SEJ listserv.) Typically flat fee (\$20 to \$30 per month, though many also have hourly charges). Most also offer web pages and additional services.

Advantages: Usually the lowest-cost option, with most Internet navigational tools thrown in.

Disadvantages: Few local providers have starter disks, which can make setup more challenging.

Who might use: Power users, or those who are technically savvy, or who are willing to learn.

Getting connected: Check your local computer user publications, ask your public library, search local newspaper archives for "Internet service providers," or call me and I'll search an online list. Or, if you already can get on the web, search it yourself (<http://www.thelist.com/>).

• **Colleges or Universities:** Most higher-education institutions offer Internet access to their students, faculty, and (sometimes) staff. In most cases you can get an e-mail address, shell account, and SLIP or PPP account. Some also support user's web pages. Generally, universities offer direct connection to the Internet (as opposed to dial-up modem access) over their computer networks, which can be accessed by computers at the school (such as in computer labs). However, many also let you dial into the university's network, and access the Internet from there.

Advantages: Generally free to those who qualify. Where available, a direct connection to the Net is many times faster than a modem connection. Also, you don't need to own a computer or modem.

Disadvantages: Some universities place restrictions on types or hours of usage. University online help staff are not always available or particularly helpful (there are exceptions). These accounts are not available to the general public.

Who can use: Students, faculty, and (sometimes) staff of most colleges or universities. Part-timers are often eligible.

Getting connected: You can check university newspaper or magazines, local computer user publications, or contact

your university's computer services department or library.

Other Considerations

• **The phone factor:** If you plan to get online via your own personal computer and modem, the first step is to make sure that the service you're considering is a local call. The best way is to check your phone book to see which exchanges (the three digits in a phone number following the area code) are local calls for you. Then, find out the modem access numbers of services you're considering and check their exchanges to see which really are local. With so many options (library, community network, commercial access) chances are good one or more will be a toll-free call.

• **Hardware/software needs:** If you connect to the Net through a library or community network with text-only access, all you'll need is basic communications software (such as ProComm) and any speed of modem (though 9600 bps or higher is recommended).

If you want full audiovisual access, you'll need at least: A 386 PC or any color Mac, a 14.400 bps modem, four megabytes of RAM (computer memory),

(Continued on page 22)

Policy protects listserv privacy

The SEJ online committee has refined the policies for SEJ's listserv. Most of the changes and clarifications are very minor. The most significant policy change is that, as of March 1996, members will no longer be allowed to subscribe shared e-mail addresses to the listserv. These are e-mail addresses which more than one person use, such as general corporate/organizational addresses or newsroom addresses. This policy change means that a handful of SEJ members (less than 10 of the more than 200 currently subscribed) will have to either switch their subscription to personal addresses, or be dropped from the list until they get a personal address.

The reason for this new policy is that some non-members (including public relations professionals and media analysis consultants) have gained access to SEJ's listserv through shared e-mail accounts. This contradicts SEJ's intent to make this a members-only listserv, in which members can feel free to speak openly with their colleagues. SEJ listserv manager Amy Gahran is implementing this policy.

This policy change, and others, are reflected in an updated listserv policy statement, which was e-mailed to all listserv subscribers in March, and which all new subscribers receive automatically. This statement supercedes information on the listserv included in the 1996 member directory. If you're not on the list-

serv but would like to see this statement, e-mail Amy Gahran. For information, contact Amy at mtn@indra.com.

Farewell to SEJ's AOL forum

The SEJ online committee has closed SEJ's members-only forum on America Online (AOL) in the near future. This forum, which was begun in 1992 by SEJ member Don Rittner, was the organization's first online effort. Many thanks to Rittner for this contribution to SEJ.

The AOL forum has served SEJ well through the years. However, it is a service limited to SEJ members with AOL accounts—which is a small portion of all SEJ members who have online access. In the last year the functions of this forum have been largely supplanted by SEJ's Internet listserv, which can serve far more of our members. Until contents of the listserv were cross-posted to the forum late March, the forum had experienced almost no use for several months. Before discontinuing the forum, board member Amy Gahran will move some of the file libraries currently on the forum to SEJ's web page (www.sej.org).

Members who have requested access to the forum who are not already on the listserv have been notified of the forum's closure, and have been invited to subscribe to the listserv.

Covering Pesticides

Topic can be juicy, but watch out for the pits

By SARA THURIN ROLLIN

There is a lot more to writing about pesticides besides Alar. Almost anyone who was in a newsroom in 1987 remembers the Alar-and-apples story with its Hollywood-splash in Congress.

Few people, however, remember that the scientific debate was whether UMDH, a breakdown product from Alar, posed a significant cancer threat. The notion that children might be made sick from this pesticide made getting column inches and air time easy.

Other intriguing pesticide stories remain to be done—even though there have been no recent Alar-style episodes to help you get inches or air time.

Potential pesticide stories are every-

where. Use of chemical substances in homes, schools, golf courses, open space/right-of-ways, hospitals, and dentists' offices may be controlled in some

the Misuse of Pesticides. It is important for reporters to tell readers there are pieces of information that are not known, such as whether a product poses threats to infants and children, he said.

He also noted another example of an unanswered scientific question—that EPA does not evaluate and protect against potential cumulative effects from pesticide use, or the effect of multiple exposures to carcinogens.

Jay Vroom, executive director of the pesticide maker's trade group, the American Crop Protection Association (ACPA), suggests that journalists should take time to learn more about biotechnology as it becomes integrated into conventional farming. Genetically altered seeds that contain certain pesticides and genetically-engineered chemical pesticides are beginning to be used, industry and EPA officials say.

One big challenge that is coming—not only for reporters, but for government scientists and managers as well—is EPA's planned shift in how chemicals are classified as carcinogens, according to EPA science adviser Dick Hill. The new approach will involve more professional judgment on the part of EPA scientists and managers, so journalists will have to develop new ways of explaining the government's conclusions, he said.

In response to environmental concerns of the past 10 years, new technologies have emerged which allow production of pesticide products that biodegrade rapidly and that are less toxic to animals, Vroom said. While these may look like "technology" articles, the use of safer pesticides is an environmental story too, officials said.

EPA's job is to balance the potential hazards of using pesticides with the benefits of their use, according to the second-in-charge at EPA's pesticide office. If EPA does its job right (meaning the agency takes appropriate action to ensure that pesticide use yields a nutritious, safe food stock of great quality), potential

(Continued on page 20)

Science Survey

offers a review of selected environmental science and policy issues in the news

aspects by EPA because they are designed to kill some unwanted organism. For instance, household cleaners and soaps claiming anti-bacterial properties contain an EPA-registered pesticide product.

Many informative and interesting articles are waiting to be done, pesticide observers say. To find them, reporters need to dig into the scientific issues associated with particular uses of pesticides. Scientists from the Environmental Protection Agency, advocates on pesticide issues, and people who handle press inquiries about pesticides daily were asked to identify emerging pesticide stories and offer tips for avoiding common mistakes.

Look for unresolved scientific questions about pesticides currently in use, they suggested. Several government scientists and advocates predicted that whether (and how) pesticide products mimic hormones will be an emerging area of coverage. (See *Our Stolen Future*, page 1.)

Multiple chemical sensitivity—and whether it is linked to pesticide use—is an unresolved issue, according to Penny Fenner-Crisp, deputy director of EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. "The medical and scientific communities can't make up their minds about claims that once a pesticide was sprayed, some people could no longer tolerate exposure to a variety of chemicals," she said.

For most pesticides, subgroups of the population fall outside the government's approach to determining safe pesticide use, according to Jay Feldman, executive director of the National Coalition Against

Resources

People interviewed for this article suggested a variety of resources that may be useful for journalists covering pesticides.

People and places

- Agricultural extension services. County-based resource about current uses and research on pesticides, often found at a nearby land-grant university.
- EPA's 10 regional offices.
- Poison control centers. Contact the American Association Poison Control Centers for a referral at (202) 362-7217.
- National Pesticide Telecommunications Network provides information about pesticides, including health effects and emergency information. It can be reached 24 hours a day at (800) 858-7378.

Books

- Crop Protection Chemicals Reference. This is similar to desk references used by physicians. Published by C & P Press, (212) 621-4600.
- Farm Chemicals Handbook. Contains lists of active ingredients and commercial names of pesticides. Published annually by Mister Publishing Co. (216) 942-2000.

Whether or weather?

Global warming studied as a possible threat to insurance industry

Law of averages for weather-related coverage scrutinized

By CHRISTOPHER FLAVIN

For several years, much of the news media have felt obliged to keep coverage of global warming "balanced" by dutifully reporting "both sides" of the issue. But what issue? Implicitly, the story has been framed as whether the world is warming. Fossil fuel interests have managed to keep the issue defined in this way, even in the face of mounting evidence that this particular question already has been settled.

Scientific developments of recent months have decisively clarified the picture. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded late last year that "a pattern of climatic response to human activities is identifiable in the climatological record,"—the most definitive scientific statement so far.

Meanwhile, journalists faced an even greater challenge in reporting diverse industry responses to global climate change. Until recently, for example, the Global Climate Coalition (which mainly represents fossil fuel interests) seemed to speak for all industries on the issue of climate change.

However, during the past year the insurance industry has emerged as a vocal business interest with a dramatically different perspective on climate change. Industry leaders (such as Germany's Munich Re and Lloyd's of London) participated in the First Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention of Climate Change in Berlin, Germany, in March and April 1995.

The insurance industry has a long tradition of spurring important policy changes to help reduce society's risks, and here the risks are huge: A warmer world will be one in which climate "extremes" are more common, including increases in the incidence of floods, droughts, fires, and heat waves. The insurance industry insures much of the property that is likely to be devastated by such extremes. A scientific assessment conducted for Munich Re notes, "A warmer atmosphere and warmer seas result in greater exchange of energy

and add momentum to the vertical exchange processes so crucial to the development of tropical cyclones, tornadoes, thunderstorms, and hailstorms."

Meteorologist Kerry Emanuel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimates that a rise in sea temperatures of three to four degrees (C) projected by atmospheric models could increase the destructive potential of hurricanes by 50 percent, and also cause sustained winds as high as 350 kilometers (220 miles) per hour. Donald Friedman, former director of the Natural Hazards Research Program for the Travelers Insurance Company, calculates that such a warming would lengthen the current hurricane season in North America by two months or more, and allow the storms to move further north before petering out—striking major urban areas such as New York. Other scientists dispute these numbers, however, noting that tropical storms require a complex brew of forces, and that some features of a warmer world could make it more difficult for hurricanes to form.

The past five years have witnessed unprecedented damage from weather-related disasters. In May 1991, for example, a cyclone with winds of 270 kilometers per hour hit Bangladesh, flooding vast areas of that country's flat coastal plain. An estimated 139,000 people were killed, more than a million homes were damaged or destroyed, and financial losses were put at \$3 billion—more than 10 percent of Bangladesh's annual economic output. Within the next year, at least five devastating tropical storms caused losses of \$1 billion or more from Pakistan to Hawaii.

After two decades of relative calm, the southeastern United States has been struck by a number of serious hurricanes in recent years—including 1995, which had the most active Atlantic hurricane season since the 1930s. Although sophisticated warning systems have limited loss of life, economic damage has been unprecedented because of burgeoning coastal development.

South Florida's vulnerability was demonstrated on August 24, 1992, when Hurricane Andrew came ashore with sus-

tained winds of 235 kilometers per hour—the third most powerful hurricane to make landfall in the U.S. in the 20th century. Andrew virtually flattened 430 square kilometers of Dade County, Florida, destroying 85,000 homes and leaving almost 300,000 people homeless. Total losses were estimated at \$25 billion—equivalent to the combined losses of the three most costly previous U.S. storms. Robert Sheets, then director of the National Hurricane Center, estimated that if Andrew had moved just 30 kilometers further north, it would have caused damages of \$100 billion and covered New Orleans in six meters of water.

Although hurricane severity is not definitively linked to climatic warming, it is clear that hurricane losses could be multiplied by another feature of a warming world: rising seas. Water expands as it warms, and higher temperatures also tend to melt the glacial ice found near the world's poles. During the past century, sea levels already have risen 20 to 40 centimeters, and scientists believe that by 2100 the sea level in some localities will rise between 10 and 120 centimeters above current levels.

Such increases would threaten coastal communities as well as the estuaries and aquifers on which societies depend. According to the IPCC, increases could flood many deltas and make parts of some cities uninhabitable. The IPCC's mid-range projections indicate that most of the beaches on the east coast of the U.S. will disappear during the next 25 years.

Such projections, together with mounting disaster claims in the early 1990s, alerted many insurance companies to their vulnerability to global warming. H.R. Kaufman, General Manager of Swiss Re, one of Europe's largest insurance companies, says: "There is a significant body of scientific evidence indicating that last year's record insured loss from natural catastrophes was not a random occurrence. Failure to act would leave the [insurance] industry and its policyholders vulnerable to truly disastrous consequences."

The dilemma is that companies' rates and coverage policies have always been

based on the law of averages. In the case of weather-related coverage, they look to past climate trends and assume that, over time, the frequency of catastrophes will stay the same. But a representative for the U.S.-based Allstate company says: "We purchased our catastrophe protection based on the company's historical loss record before Andrew happened. We're reassessing that protection now."

Since 1990, the worldwide insurance industry has paid out \$48 billion for weather-related losses, compared to losses of \$14 billion for all of the 1980s. Some analysts believe that another "bad year," or even a single catastrophic storm, could force some major companies out of business. Franklin Nutter, President of the Reinsurance Association of America, sums up the dilemma: "The insurance business is first in line to be affected by climate change. It could bankrupt the industry."

Christopher Flavin is vice president for research at the Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C.

Poor land-use management riskier than climate change?

By EUGENE L. LECOMTE

I think it's time for us to step back from the "He says—she says—they say!" of climate change, and focus on the real problem behind the controversy: too many people are living in harm's way.

Between 1980 and 1993, for example, the population of the East and Gulf Coasts grew 15 percent, to more than 36 million. In that same period, insured commercial exposures increased from \$3.5 trillion to over \$11 trillion (190 percent), while residential exposures rose from \$4.2 trillion to \$10.4 trillion (145 percent). By 2010, there will be more than 73 million people along the hurricane-prone coasts. It's anybody's guess as to what the insured value of the properties will be by 2010. However, the decisions we make and the measures we institute now will not only affect the dollar value of coastal properties, but the quality of the lives and lifestyles of coastal inhabitants.

Increases in both population and property values in the "Sunbelt" are a given. Acknowledging this, responsible land-use management decisions must be

made to protect people and property. Confusing the issue is climate change. Is it "real"? Is it the result of natural climatic variability, or the byproduct of modern industrial society? If a dramatic shift in climatic conditions is occurring, all the implications, including those relating to

Viewpoints

is a regular feature of SEJournal, offering a forum to non-journalists who deal with environmental issues and the media

the frequency and severity of wind events, must be understood and anticipated by all the stakeholders.

The insurance industry is an important segment of and principal stakeholder in a healthy society. As such, insurers must be aware of the issues facing the nation. They also must be part of the problem-solving process. I emphasize "problem-solving process" because, regarding climate change, the problem has not been defined. Every "position" has its champion, and until the problem has been defined better, few (if any) constructive collective efforts will take place. Defining the problem is not a job for the insurance industry or any single stakeholder or, for that matter, for any "industry." This is a task that government must undertake and, in so doing, involve all of the stakeholders.

Insurers should, however, be aware of the issues and be ready to work with all the stakeholders to respond to and resolve problems that may arise. This task has been assigned to the Insurance Institute for Property Loss Reduction (IIPLR). By pursuing our "mission"—to reduce deaths, injuries, and property damage caused by natural hazard events—IIPLR is responding to the impacts a change in climatic conditions might bring. We do that by working to strengthen building codes; by supporting improved code enforcement; by encouraging the development of new materials, technology, and innovative building techniques; and by becoming a credible public education resource on the issues accompanying climate change, regardless of its cause.

A change in weather patterns would have significant implications for the insurance mechanism, so IIPLR has taken an active role in discussions at the nation-

al level on the topic of climate change. Beginning in February 1995, with the assistance of the Office of Environmental Quality and others in the Executive Branch, IIPLR held a series of meetings that focused on the current level of scientific knowledge about the climate and climate change. We have convened scientists from NOAA, the Office of Science and Technology Policy, and various representatives from academia. Other meetings have involved the scientific advisor to a group of international insurers that has focused on the relationship between climate change and insured property exposure. Additionally, we have reviewed the economic consequences surrounding climate change, the role business plays in the issue, and the potential economic impact of the issue on society. Finally, we have examined various ways of reducing exposure to climate change.

As the insurance industry-supported organization charged with mitigating loss from natural-hazard events, IIPLR is the natural choice as the insurance-industry focal point for interaction with the federal government on these matters. In the pursuit of its responsibilities, IIPLR (on behalf of its member companies) will continue to monitor climate-change issues; to keep member insurers apprised of significant developments and opinions; to provide insurance industry input, data, and assistance to Vice President Gore and the Executive Office; and to serve as a catalyst in bringing together various stakeholders.

Regarding this final point, we must not lose sight of the fact that the insurance industry is not the sole stakeholder in this issue. Once the problems have been defined and the process set for their resolution, all players must be involved. This includes federal, state, and local government; consumer groups; the banking industry; the mortgage loan industry; homebuilders; academia; and researchers—to name a few. Problems that affect all levels and facets of society cannot be resolved in a vacuum. The task requires active, informed participation from all the players.

Eugene L. Lecomte is president and CEO of the Insurance Institute for Property Loss Reduction in Boston.

Apartheid's legacy

Racist policy devastated environment as well as people

By Jim Detjen

When I arrived in Cape Town, South Africa last December the wind howled and a torrential rain blew in from the South Atlantic. I stumbled through the storm—fierce winds of 50 miles per hour—and arrived at my hotel room, drenched to the bone.

For the next three days the storm raged. Shutters banged and walls groaned. At times it sounded as if the roof of my hotel would collapse and the windows would shatter, so great was the ferocity of the storm. On the fourth day, though, the sky miraculously cleared and the views of Cape Town's harbor and nearby Table Mountain were magnificent. The air smelled of the fragrances of spring.

"We call these storms the Cape Doctor," said John Burns, one of the hosts during my visit. "It's named that because it clears away all of the city's air pollution. It's one reason Cape Town has such clean air."

South Africa is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and some quirky natural phenomena—such as the Cape Doctor—that keep some of its pollution at bay. These were obvious during a week-long visit I made to this nation of 45 million last December. However, it's also a nation that has squandered and abused many of its natural treasures during the past 50 years because of a misguided (and now abandoned) national policy known as apartheid. The scars of that policy still abound two years after Nelson Mandela was elected president and assumed power in April 1994.

I was invited to the University of Cape Town to speak about environmental journalism at a seminar for 25 journalists from eight countries in southern Africa. During my visit I met journalists from newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations from Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. The seminar was organized by the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank

and the Republic of South Africa. It included specialists from universities, government, and the media.

"Now, for the first time, we have a chance to try to do things right," said Bantu Holomisa, deputy minister of South Africa's Ministry for Environmental Affairs and Tourism. "Our goal is to provide electricity and safe drinking water to all of our people. But we want to do it in

Apartheid has polluted the air and water, pillaged the bedrock, and torn the earth away like flesh. In much of the country, the soil indeed cannot keep the people any more.

—Alan Durning

an environmentally responsible manner."

While most people are familiar with the political and economic injustice of the apartheid policies, much less has been written about the environmental degradation caused by them.

In fact, the impact has been severe.

"Institutionalized racism has been as devastating for South Africa's environment as for its people," notes Alan Durning, the author of *Apartheid's Environmental Toll*. "Apartheid has polluted the air and water, pillaged the bedrock, and torn the earth away like flesh. In much of the country, the soil indeed cannot keep the people any more."

By forcing black Africans to live in segregated areas, known as "homelands" or "bantustans," millions were crowded onto poor, fragile lands. These policies caused serious soil erosion, overgrazing, and the destruction of forests (because of the need for firewood).

"Many of the homelands bear more resemblance to the face of the moon than to the commercial farms and game preserves that cover the rest of the country," notes Susan Fine of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Economic sanctions against South Africa (because of its apartheid policies) also caused the nation's energy-use pat-

terns to be seriously distorted. The government created the world's largest coal-to-oil synthetic fuels program, and relied on coal for 85 percent of its commercial energy. That's because of South Africa's difficulties in importing oil. This overwhelming reliance upon coal has caused serious strip mining abuses, high levels of air pollution, and acid rain. It is also contributing to global climate change. "On a per-person basis, white South Africans are the world's worst greenhouse offenders," writes Durning.

This nation relies heavily on gold, diamonds, uranium, and coal as exports, so the apartheid government did little to clamp down on pollution caused by the mining industry. As a result, streams and groundwater have become contaminated with toxic metals such as arsenic, cadmium, and lead.

Compared to the United States, there are far fewer environmental writers in South Africa or other African nations. Many African journalists, however, expressed a hunger to learn more about environmental reporting techniques and said they wanted to become involved in organizations such as IFEJ and SEJ.

"American journalists talk a lot about the importance of using the Internet," said Linette Smit, the chief television reporter for the Namibian Broadcasting Corp. "But you have to realize that many journalists here are still struggling to get manual typewriters. Computers are still a luxury for most people."

In Angola, environmental concerns such as air and water pollution have taken a back seat to the more immediate dangers of being blown up by one of the 9 million land mines left over from a devastating civil war. "Our farmers are afraid to plow their fields and our children are afraid to walk in the woods because of these land mines," said Humberto Eduardo Pacavira, a journalist with the Angola News Agency in Luanda.

Throughout southern Africa, water
(Continued on page 20)

The right-to-know tug-of-war

EPA's online database simplifies information-gathering

By PAUL OREM

If you have ever tried to compile an environmental profile of a company's emissions, accidents, and regulatory history, it probably wasn't easy—and doing so quickly may have been impossible.

After a serious industrial accident, a reporter may want to compile information on the facility's previous accidents, chemical processes, inspection reports, and hazards to fire fighters. However, getting a firm's complete regulatory history out of government files is a formidable task. To help solve this problem, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is linking its data so that people can quickly locate information reported by companies under various federal environmental laws.

At the same time, other trends may reduce environmental information available to the public.

Each year, more than 500,000 industrial facilities send one or more environmental reports to the government. These reports detail emergency releases; track emissions and waste shipments; disclose chemical inventories; and record inspections. Getting this data, however, requires the tenacity of Sherlock Holmes.

After Napp Technologies of Lodi, NJ., exploded and burned in April, *Bergen Record* reporter Michael Moore said that assembling a regulatory history "was basically a nightmare. At every corner you turn, there's a roadblock."

Reports are submitted in different formats, scattered in different databases,

connect its fragmented databases. If successful, the initiative will enable any person, sitting at a computer, to learn in minutes which local firms generate hazardous waste, or whether a company has a history of safety violations. Industry benefits as well—a more cohesive system reduces paperwork, provides clearer view of requirements, and helps EPA simplify permitting and develop "one-stop" reporting.

The initiative will link EPA databases through front-end reporting changes. Firms will submit basic "key identifiers," the common-sense elements that people use to organize information (such as by facility, company, industry, or geographic area). Information now reported under separate laws will refer to this core report—much as schedules attach to a master tax form. These seemingly mundane changes should make it much easier to obtain information. One step forward, two steps back

Ironically, the ability to readily profile a facility's environmental activities is threatened by a trend in state legislatures to establish broad new secrecy rights for businesses. In addition, industries are lobbying Congress to weaken basic pollution reporting under the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI).

Some 14 states have passed "audit privilege" laws that allow companies that break environmental laws to keep information in environmental self-audits permanently secret—even from the state—and inadmissible in court. Several states grant blanket legal immunity if companies correct violations. This approach "has enough carrot to choke a rabbit and far too little stick," editorialized *The News & Observer* (Raleigh, NC).

Furthermore, under proposals modeled after a Colorado law, anyone who discloses privileged information could be fined \$10,000 and jailed for a year—even if they didn't know the information was privileged. Information in audits is "secret," so workers, citizens, and journalists may fear that they are violating the

Some 14 states have passed "audit privilege" laws that allow companies that break environmental laws to keep information in environmental self-audits permanently secret—even from the state—and inadmissible in court. Several states grant blanket legal immunity if companies correct violations.

housed in different places, and subject to different disclosure rules and procedures. After a large pink cloud of lethal nitrogen tetroxide escaped from a rail car in Bogalusa, LA., in 1995, "we were literally running from place to place and agency to agency looking for information," said Mark Schleifstein of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*.

Also, Freedom of Information Act requests (required by many agencies) cause delay. "If a company has an accident today, getting a (timely) compliance history from EPA is next to impossible," said Ken Ward of the *Charleston (WV) Gazette*.

Reports may turn to the computer, but searching online is also difficult. "The problem is that each database is separate—and right now, they are rather user-hostile," explained Columbia University Journalism Professor Steve Ross. Previous efforts to link separate databases have not solved the problem.

EPA created a Facility Index System, (FINDS) to locate facility-specific information contained in EPA databases. This system is available online at no cost through RTK-NET (see sidebar). Although FINDS is frequently helpful, it suffers from duplicate records and incomplete linkages.

EPA therefore is launching an ambitious "key identifiers" initiative to con-

RTK-NET info

The Right-to-Know Network (RTK-NET) is a free computer network that contains more than a dozen EPA environmental databases, EPA's Facility Index System (FINDS), and civil litigation records. It also contains other fact sheets, census data, campaign finance reports, and more.

New commands let you search across all of the environmental databases at once. There are no online costs to use this network.

Contact RTK-NET, a project of OMB Watch and the Unison Institute, ph. (202) 234-8494, modem (202) 234-8570, or visit its web site at <http://rtk.net>.

law by conveying information. This chills discussion of environmental problems. (Further information on audit secrecy is available from the Good Neighbor Project. Contact Michael Fogelberg, ph. (617) 354-1030.)

Documents that companies want to keep secret may identify serious problems. For example, on March 12, 1991, a major explosion rocked Union Carbide's Seadrift, TX plant, killing one worker and injuring 32. At least three internal audits

had warned of the conditions that lead to the accident.

Last December, EPA announced a new policy giving a break on penalties to companies that promptly disclose and correct violations (60 FR 66706). Nonetheless, expect activity in the states around more sweeping proposals: two dozen states considered audit secrecy bills without passage in 1995.

In addition, both regulatory "reform" introduced by U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-

KS), and EPA's budget authorization, (vetoed by President Clinton) propose to limit the Toxics Release Inventory. If the budget standoff persist, which is likely, the "know nothing" measures may remain unresolved through the November elections.

Paul Orem is coordinator on the Community Right-To-Know for U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

Apartheid...from page 13

shortages are seen as the most critical environmental issue in the coming years. "Water will continue to be one of the greatest sources of conflict in the region," said Robert Clement-Jones, a senior environmental economist with the Southern Africa Department of the World Bank. "Global climate change could increase the incidence of drought and heighten instability throughout the region."

Some of the African journalists strongly criticized policies of the World Bank, which has in the past supported the construction of environmentally-damaging dams and other massive development

projects in Africa and Asia. Andrew Steer, director of the environment department at the World Bank, acknowledged that the institution has made serious mistakes. "There is no doubt that some of the projects we have supported have had negative impacts on the environment," he said. "But since 1985, the size of our environmental staff has increased 10 times. We now have 250 to 300 people specializing in environmental issues."

Alfredo Sfeir-Younis, a Chilean economist on the staff of the World Bank, said one of the reasons his institution is training journalists is because of the close

connection between economic and environmental issues. "High-quality economic development depends upon sound natural resource development," he said. "The world lives in a state of environmental denial. I believe that journalists are the most important source of change in educating people about these issues."

Jim Detjen, founding president of SEJ, holds the Knight Chair in Environmental Journalism at Michigan State University. He is the president of the International Federation of Environmental Journalists.

Pesticides...from page 13

health effects and risks also will be minimized, Fenner-Crisp said.

People interviewed for this article agreed there will always be the periodic article to do about a pesticide misuse incident. The trick to getting those event stories "right," they said, is to include an explanation about the legal uses and limits of the product, as well as the improper use that made the news. Accident stories are a source of common reporting errors, several observers commented.

Too many reporters assume when there are residues of a pesticide somewhere that it is a poison and is not allowed, says Al Heir, a long-time EPA spokesman on pesticide issues. "This is a very common, very simple mistake," he said.

One common mistake is running with what turns out to be half a story, said Vroom of the ACPA. While this kind of "lopsided" reporting is not as common as it use to be, the industry leader suggested

reporters and editors be "on the lookout" for risk numbers taken out of context. Vroom suggested weaving the business perspective (such as the benefits of using a pesticide) throughout the article, instead of putting it at the end—which is a common practice, he contended.

"Don't presume you can write about science in the absolute. Almost nothing exists at extremes," Fenner-Crisp said. "I know too much about uncertainty in scientists' statements" to believe articles with such comments, she said. Push back and challenge any scientist you hear making such statements, the EPA official said.

Similarly, EPA's Hill advised, "don't always go to people on the extremes." Journalists should work to try to get a sense of where the scientific community is on an issue, he said. Contacting only scientists with polar-opposite views tends to keep issues alive that many scientists would have "put to bed," Hill said.

Too many reporters are looking for

solutions to add to their pesticide in food stories, said Feldman (the pesticide-control advocate). The reality is that pesticides are contact poisons, and some of the substance is absorbed and is on the inside of the crop—so no amount of washing will remove it, he claimed.

Reporters should ask what is in a pesticide—such as active ingredients, inert chemicals, and contaminants, said Feldman (the spokesman for the coalition against pesticide misuse). Then ask which substances are formed as a product degrades. He cautioned journalists to remember that the largest portion of any pesticide product (such as the solution in which the active ingredient is housed) is an "inert." Most inerts are claimed as trade secrets, so "we don't know what products they are in," he said.

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

MAY

1-3. Colloquium on Particulate Air Pollution and Health. (Sponsored by Univ. of California-Irvine and the Univ. of Utah, it will include sessions on epidemiological findings, extrapolation of effects from animal studies, indoor exposures, and biological plausibility of claimed effects). Park City, UT. Contact: RMCOEH, Bldg. 512, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. Ph: (801) 581-4055; Fax: (801) 585-5275.

6-8. Managing Irrigation-Induced Erosion and Infiltration with Polyacrylamide. (Sponsored by USDA and University of Idaho.) Contact: R. Sojka, USDA-ARS, 3793 N. 3600 E, Kimberly, ID 83341. Ph: (208) 423-6562; Fax: (208) 423-6555; E-mail: sojka@kimberly.ars.pn.usbr.gov

6-10. International Conference on Incineration and Thermal Treatment Technologies. (Sessions cover treatment for radioactive materials, hazardous chemicals, explosives, chemical munitions, and chemical/pharmaceutical wastes.) Savannah, Ga. Contact: Lori Barnow, Office of Environment, Health and Safety, Univ. of California, Irvine, CA 92717-2725. Ph: (714) 824-5859; Fax: (714) 824-8539.

7-10. Fire in Ecosystem Management: Shifting the Paradigm from Suppression to Prescription. Boise, ID. Contact: Leonard A. Brennan. Ph: (904) 893-4153; Fax: (904) 668-7781.

8-10. Phytoremediation. (An international summit on using plants to clean up environmental contaminants.) Arlington, VA. Contact: International Business Communications. Ph: (508) 481-6400; Fax: (508) 481-7911.

12-16. Mountain Logging: Addressing Today's Social and Environmental Issues. Cambell River, British Columbia, Canada. Contact: Ray Krag. Ph: (604) 228-1555; Fax: (604) 228-0999; E-mail: mountain.log@vcr.feric.ca

20-21. Harmonization of State/Federal Approaches to Environmental Risk. East Lansing. Contact: Michael Kamrin, Institute for Environmental Toxicology, Michigan State University, C- 231 Holden Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824. Ph: (517) 353-6469; Fax: (517) 355-4603

19-23. American Society for Microbiology annual meeting. (Sessions cover emerging infectious diseases, water quality, bioremediation of environmental pollutants, and effects of microbes on global climate change.) New Orleans. Contact: Jim Skiwa, ASM, 1325 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20005-4171. Ph: (202) 942-9297; Fax: (202) 942- 9367; E-mail: communications@asmusa.org

21-23. Superfund/HazWaste West. (Featuring sessions on new technologies, including bioremediation of chlorinated organics.) Las Vegas, NV. Contact: E.J. Krause and Assoc., 7315 Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 450N, Bethesda, MD 20814. Ph: (301) 986-7800; Fax: (301) 986-4538.

29. Acceptability of Risk from Radiation—application to manned space flight. Arlington, VA. Contact: Roger Ney, National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste. 800, Bethesda, MD 20814-3095. Ph: (301) 657- 2652; Fax: (301) 907-8768.

JUNE

11-14. AgBiotech: Foundation for the Future. (Sessions cover topics ranging from genetically modified plants tolerant of fungal pathogens and herbicide, to aquaculture and plant-growth-promoting root-zone bacteria.) Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. Contact: ABIC '96 , c/o The Signature Group, 608 Duchess St., Saskatoon Sk, Canada S7K 0R1. Ph: (306) 934-1772; Fax: (306) 664-6615; E-mail: signatur@eagle.wbm.ca

16-19. Urban Wet Weather Pollution from the Stream's Perspective. Quebec City, Canada. Contact: Water Environment Federation, 601 Wythe St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1994. Ph: (703) 684-2400.

22-28. North American Water and Environment Congress. (Sponsored by American Society of Civil Engineers.) Anaheim, CA. Contact: Michael Ports, Parsons Brinckerhoff, 301 N. Charles St., Suite 200, Baltimore, MD 21230. Ph: 410-727-5050.

JULY

7-10. Soil and Water Conservation Society annual meeting. (Sessions cover pesticides, erosion, urban/suburban runoff, environmental stewardship, and comprehensive farm/ranch planning.) Keystone Resort, CO. Contact: Timothy J. Kautza, SWCS, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021-9764. Ph: (515) 289-2331, ext. 12.

14-17. Watershed Restoration Management. (Sponsored by the American Water Resources Association.) Syracuse. Contact: Peter E. Black, SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry, Syracuse, NY 13210. Ph: (315) 470-6571; Fax: (315) 470-6956.

14-17. Coastal Society annual meeting. (Sessions cover topics such as fisheries habitat restoration, rivers, and salmon, "who's in charge;" ocean governance; transboundary environmental cooperation; environmental justice; and pollution politics). Seattle. Contact: Megan Bailiff, Washington Sea Grant Program, University of Washington, 3716 Brooklyn Ave., NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Ph: (206) 543-6600; Fax: (206) 685-0380; E-mail: mbailiff@u.washington.edu

AUGUST

12-17. Integrated Management and Sustainable Development in Coastal Zones. (Sponsored by the University of Quebec and Coastal Zone Canada Association.) Rimouski, Quebec, Canada. Contact: Mohammed El-Sabh, CZC '96 Conference Secretariat, Group de recherche en environnement cotier (CREDC), Université du Québec, 310 allée des Ursulines, Rimouski, Québec, Canada G5L 3A1. Ph: (418) 724-1701; Fax: (418) 724-1842; E-mail: mohammed_el-sabh@uqar.quebec.ca

JOURNALISM WORKSHOPS

June 15—20, Santa Fe, NM; "Writing Today's Science," is offered by six science writers. The \$355 fee does not include accommodations (at Plaza Resolana) or meals. Contact: SouthWest Literary Center, 826 Camino de Monte Rey, A-3, Santa Fe, NM 87505. Ph: (505) 982-9301; Fx: (505) 989-8608.

New Members

The following list represents new SEJ members recorded from December 15 through February 29. Memberships recorded after February 29 will appear in *SEJournal* Volume 6, Number 2.

ALABAMA

- Val Walton (active), *Birmingham News*, Birmingham

CALIFORNIA

- Jeff Phillips (active), Sunset Publishing Corporation *Sunset Magazine*, Palo Alto

COLORADO

- Todd Hartman (active), *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, Colorado Springs
- Sabine Kortals (academic), University of Colorado-Boulder School of Journalism & Mass Communication, Boulder

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- Heather Boyer (associate), Island Press
- John Mitchell (active), *National Geographic*

FLORIDA

- Stephen Roberts (academic), University of Florida, Center for Environmental & Human Toxicology, Alachua
- Christian Wagley (academic), University of West Florida, *The Voyager*, Pensacola

MAINE

- Susan Seager (active), Cape Elizabeth

MARYLAND

- Erik Nelson (active), Odenton
- Pat Phibbs (active), Business Publishers, Inc., *Environmental Health Letter*, Silver Spring

MASSACHUSETTS

- Orli Bahcall (academic), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge
- Robert Leavitt (academic), New York University Center for War, Peace, and the News Media, Cambridge
- Yawu Miller (active), *Bay State Banner*, Boston

MICHIGAN

- Elaine Wolff (academic), Michigan State University, East Lansing

MINNESOTA

- Ruth Denny (associate), NAJA, Minneapolis

MISSOURI

- Carmel Carrillo (active), *St. Louis Daily Records*, *St. Louis Countian*, *Courier Post*, St. Louis
- Don Corrigan (academic), Webster University, St. Louis
- Tom Uhlenbrock (active), *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, St. Louis
- Dale Willman (active), CBS Radio, Silver Spring

NEBRASKA

- Julie Anderson (active), *Omaha World-Herald*, Omaha

NEW JERSEY

- Ludmilla Lelis (active), Asbury Park Press, Manahawkin
- Bill Paul (active), *Earth Preservers*, Westfield

NEW MEXICO

- Charles Little (active), Placitas

NEW YORK

- Jane Kinney (active), Van Nostrand Reinhold, *Environmental Sciences*, New York
- Carola Lott (associate), Marion Foundation, *Earth News*, Millbrook
- Robin Nagle (academic), New York University Dept. of Anthropology
- Roddy Scheer (associate), New York

OREGON

- Ron Steffens (academic), Southwestern Oregon Community College, Journalism Department, Coos Bay

VERMONT

- Ginger Miller (academic), Antioch New England, Environmental Studies-Communications, Ripton

CANADA

- Craig Saunders (academic), University of Regina, *Carillon*, Regina, SK

INDONESIA

- Harry Surjadi (active), Pt Kompas Media *Nusantara Kompas Daily*, Jakarta

NORWAY

- Inger Kolstadbraten (active), Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, Trondheim

ZAMBIA

- Bright Mwape (active), *The Post*, Lusaka

ZIMBABWE

- Wilf Mbanga (active), Community Newspapers Group, Harare
- Lupi Mushayakarara (active), *Every Home Magazine*, Editorial Dept., Harare

Online connections...from page 14

and 10 to 15 free megabytes on your hard drive. You'll also need special software. For national online services or national Internet providers, this will be on the starter disk. For local Internet providers, you'll need TCP/IP software (so your computer can "talk the language" of the Internet), a browser, other Internet tools (such as software for e-mail or ftp). Some local providers help you collect this software, others make you do it—though there are many handy and extensive online collections of Net tools.

• **Browsers and Netscape** explained: Netscape is a big buzzword that often is confused with the Internet. There's a huge difference: The Internet is the network itself; Netscape is simply software (a

"browser" in Net jargon) that lets you see images and text and hear audio files on the Internet's World Wide Web. Netscape is not the only software that does this, but it's considered the best.

Local Internet service providers let you use any browser software, but national proprietary online services and Internet service providers may require that you use specific software, or their own browser.

Netscape can be downloaded from the Net for free (<http://home.netscape.com/>). Computer stores sell Netscape Navigator Personal Edition (\$40), which includes the software but requires you to use one of four national Internet providers.

• **Moving expenses:** It's tempting to move from service to service as you see

prices fall. But beware: each time you move your e-mail address changes and you have to notify folks you want to keep in touch with. Moreover, changing services means changes in your software configuration, and that can lead to technical headaches.

Miguel Llanos is Special Projects Editor for national/international news at The Seattle Times. He can be reached weekday mornings at (206) 464-8263 or via e-mail at mlla-new@seattimes.com. In a future issue, Miguel will detail some of the environmental resources on the Net, as well as how to use "search engines" to find what you're looking for.

Sludge, spin doctors, and spray paint

Toxic Sludge is Good for You!
(*Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry*)

John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton
Common Courage Press (1995)
\$16.95, 235 pages

Reviewed by AMY GAHRAN

Like it or not, journalism and public relations are inextricably entwined. However, most people (journalists included) know far too little about how PR works, and how pervasive it is in the news and in our lives.

In their book, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You!*, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton explore and expose the history, machinations, and motivations of this powerful industry. The authors have considerable experience critiquing the public relations industry. Stauber is the founder and director of the Center for Media & Democracy (Madison, WI). He and Rampton edit the quarterly newsletter *PR Watch*, which contains public interest reporting on the PR industry.

Although the book is rather unflattering toward the PR industry, this does not invalidate its purpose or contents. Also, to be fair to the many PR people I've dealt with, there is a place for public relations in the spectrum of communications, and many practitioners of PR are highly ethical. (This can be confirmed by monitoring the discussions on the PRforum Internet mailing list). Still, a book like this has been needed.

Why should journalists read *Toxic Sludge*? **Self defense and education.**

In today's media, journalists often serve as conduits for paid persuasion—even if unwittingly. This is no accident. PR professionals lately have become highly adept at co-opting or manufacturing “objective” sources of information (for instance, by funding and promoting “friendly” scientific research or think tanks). They also have developed specialized skills for scuttling or minimizing the impact of certain kinds of stories which may prove inconvenient for their clients or employers (such as pressuring reporters or editors, or waging confusing disinformation campaigns). With decoys and traps like these littering the field, it is

now more difficult for journalists to know whose information to trust, and also to pursue investigative stories.

Toxic Sludge provides a “heads up” on many PR strategies, tactics, and goals—both obvious and disguised. While particularly useful for new journalists, veterans also could benefit from this refresher/update. Persuasion and propaganda are most effective when they are not easily identified as such. As the authors point out, the PR industry is in many ways like *The Invisible Man* (a film in which the villain had power only while he remained unseen). “We like to think of this book as the literary equivalent of a nice, big can of fluorescent orange spray paint,” write Stauber and Rampton.

Toxic Sludge also points out some common media shortcomings that are exploited by the public relations industry. For instance, Stauber and Rampton claim that many local TV news programs at least occasionally run video news releases as news, without disclosing the source of the footage. All media professionals should consider such points carefully.

Why else should journalists read *Toxic Sludge*? **News.**

People like to know when they're being manipulated, whether individually or en masse. Therefore, covering PR campaigns can yield interesting stories. This is particularly true when it comes to “astroturf” (the increasingly common PR practice of discreetly setting up, funding, and directing grassroots or advocacy groups to exaggerate or create the illusion of public support for an issue), and “protest management,” such as that addressed in TJFR's *Corporate Protest Monitor* (a newsletter for corporate PR professionals).

Toxic Sludge is not without flaws, however. Most examples of deceptive or ethically questionable PR practices in this book are related to corporate communications on environmental issues (such as Ketchum Communication's strategy to sabotage publicity for the book *Diet for a Poisoned Planet* on behalf of the California Raisin Advisory Board). From this, one might think either that most corporate environmental PR is deceptive or unethical, or that most

shady PR revolves around the environment. However, in an interview, Stauber noted that the preponderance of negative examples of corporate environmental PR in *Toxic Sludge* reflects his own familiarity and experience with environmental issues, and may not necessarily be representative of PR as a whole (a point that is not made clear in the book).

Also, while this book contains thought-provoking information, there has been some controversy over its accuracy. Don Behm, an environmental reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal*, pointed out in a book review some factual inaccuracies in *Toxic Sludge* related to regulatory approval of Milorganite (a fertilizer made from Milwaukee's sewage sludge). Although this specific example is fairly minor, other inaccuracies may exist.

There is a larger reason why journalists should read this book and consider the issues it raises: **the role of the press in society.** A free, inquisitive press that provides a spectrum of viewpoints and well-researched information is vital to any functioning democracy.

In the last few decades, public opinion has become a commodity to be bought, sold, and—above all—manipulated and controlled by those who can afford to do so. PR has mushroomed into a multi-billion-dollar industry. Any businessperson knows that you don't spend that kind of money on something that doesn't matter. In a democracy, public opinion matters a great deal, because ultimate power (the right to vote) rests with the citizenry.

Also, in a market economy, public opinion matters because consumers can choose not to buy certain products or services, or to support a strike or protest. Excessive or unethical manipulation of public opinion can effectively usurp these powers from the public. Fortunately, journalists can call attention to such attempted theft where it exists.

SEJ board member Amy Gahrn is the editor of E Source, an energy-related technical publishing/information services company in Boulder, CO. She also co-edits the SEJournal.

Green Beat Correspondents

Contribute to Green Beat

The Green Beat is designed as an idea exchange for environmental journalists and educators. It relies on information submitted by reporters about important issues, outstanding coverage, and developments in environmental education and the communications profession on a state-by-state basis.

To submit ideas or copies of series for possible mention in The Green Beat, consult the following list and contact the SEJ correspondent for the appropriate state(s). They are:

Alabama — Sean Reilly, *Anniston Star* Montgomery Bureau, 1621 Deatsville Hwy., Millbrook, AL 36054, (205) 264-8711.

Alaska — Vacant.

Arizona and New Mexico — Vacant

Arkansas — Vacant

California:

Northern California — Laura Mahoney, BNA, 770 L St., Suite 910, Sacramento, CA 95814, (916) 552-6502.

Bay Area/San Jose — Jane Kay at the *San Francisco Examiner*, Box 7260, San Francisco, CA 94120, (415) 777-8704.

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

Colorado — Ronald Baird, *Colorado Daily*, 839 Pearl St., Boulder, CO, 80302, (303) 443-6272.

Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts — Bob Wyss at the *Providence Journal*, 75 Fountain St., Providence, RI 02902, (401) 737-3000.

District of Columbia — Cheryl Hogue, BNA, *Daily Environment Report*, 1231 25th St., N.W., Room 361-S, Wash., DC 20037, (202) 452-4625, fax (202) 452-4150.

Florida:

North Florida — Bruce Ritchie at the *Gainesville Sun*, P.O. Box 147147, Gainesville, FL 32614, (904) 374-5087.

South Florida — William Howard at the *Palm Beach Post*, 2751 S. Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach FL, 33405, (407) 820-4417.

Georgia and South Carolina — Ron Chepsiuk, 782 Wofford St., Rock Hill, SC 29730, (803) 366-5440.

Hawaii — Joan Conrow at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Kawai Bureau, P.O. Box 3404, Lihue, HI, 96776, (808) 828-0620.

Idaho — Rocky Barker of the *Post-Register*, 1020 11th St., Idaho Falls, ID, 83404, (208) 529-8508 or Julie Titone of the *Spokesman Review & Chronicle*, (509) 459-5431

Illinois — John Wasik at *Consumers Digest*, P.O. Box 51, Wauconda, IL, 60684, (302) 275-3590.

Iowa — Perry Beeman at the *Des Moines Register*, P.O. Box 957, Des Moines, IA 50304, (515) 284-8538.

Kansas — Mike Mansur at the *Kansas City Star*, 1729 Grand Ave., Kansas City, MO 64108. (816) 234-4433.

Kentucky — Vacant.

Louisiana — Bob Anderson at *The Morning Advocate*, Box 588, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, (504) 383-1111.

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

Maryland and Delaware — Tim Wheeler, *The Sun*, 501 N. Calvert St., Baltimore, MD 21278, (301) 332-6564.

Michigan — John A. Palen, at Central Michigan University, Journalism Dept. Anspach 36, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859, (517) 774-7110.

Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota — Tom Meersman at the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 425 Portland Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55488, (612) 673-4414.

Missouri — Bill Allen, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 900 N. Tucker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63101, (314) 340-8127.

Montana — Mike Millstein of the *Billings Gazette*, P.O. Box 821, Cody WY 82414, (307) 527-7250.

Nebraska — Al J. Laukaitis at the *Lincoln Journal*, 926 P Street, Lincoln, NE 68501, (402) 473-7257.

New Jersey — Peter Page at the *Trenton Times*, 513 Berwyn Road, Morrisville, PA, 19067, (609) 989-5701.

New York — Carol Kaplan at WGRZ-TV, 259 Delaware Ave., Buffalo, NY, 14202, (716) 849-5756, Fax: (716) 849-5706.

Nevada — Mary Manning at the *Las Vegas Sun*, 800 S. Valley View Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89107, (702) 259-4065 or Jon Christiansen of *Great Basin News*, 6185 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704, (702) 882-3990.

Ohio, Indiana — Charlie Prince at *Ohio*

Environmental Reporter, 516 Ludlow Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45220, (513) 221-0954.

Oregon — Terry Novak at the *Salem Statesman-Journal*, 280 Church St. N.E. Salem, OR 97309, (503) 399-6737.

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

Puerto Rico/Caribbean Islands — Albi Ferre at *El Nuevo Dia*, Box 297, San Juan, PR 00902, (809) 793-7070, ext. 2165.

Tennessee and Mississippi — Debbie Gilbert at *The Memphis Flyer*, 460 Tennessee St., Memphis, TN 38103, (901) 521-9000.

Texas and Oklahoma:

North Texas and Oklahoma — Randy Loftis at *The Dallas Morning News*, 508 Young St., Dallas, TX 75202, (800) 431-0010.

Central and West Texas — Robert Bryce at *The Austin Chronicle*, 3812 Brookview, Austin, TX 78722, (512) 454-5766

East and Coastal Texas — Bill Dawson at *The Houston Chronicle*, Box 4260, Houston, TX 77210, (713) 220-7171.

Utah and Wyoming — Rod C. Jackson, KTVX-TV, 1760 S. Fremont Dr., Salt Lake City, UT 84103, (801) 975-4418.

Virginia and North Carolina — Mark Divincenzo at *The Daily Press*, 7505 Warwick Blvd., Newport News, VA 23607, (804) 247-4719.

Washington State — Rob Taylor of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* at 18719 S.E. 58th St., Issaquah, WA 98027, (206) 488-8337 and Julie Titone of the *Spokesman Review & Chronicle*, Box 2160, Spokane, WA 99210-1615, (509) 459-5431.

West Virginia — Ken Ward at the *Charleston Gazette*, 1001 Virginia St. East, Charleston, WV 25301, (304) 348-1702.

Wisconsin — Chuck Quirnbach of Wisconsin Public Radio, 111 E. Kilbourn Ave., #1060, Milwaukee, WI 53202, (414) 271-8686 or (608) 263-7985.

Greenbeat correspondents needed

Please note openings for correspondents in several states. If you are interested in filling one of these volunteer positions, please contact Kevin Carmody at (312) 229-2814. Positions are open to any SEJ member, though preference will be given to working journalists or educators.

CALIFORNIA

► California growers, with the help of Gov. Pete Wilson, won a fight to overturn an impending ban on the manufacture of the toxic fumigant methyl bromide. The *San Francisco Chronicle* on Feb. 2 told about the big fight in the fields and Legislature over the pesticide. Call Alex Barum (415) 777-7184.

► In the five-part “Last Stand: Fighting for the Tall Tree,” the *San Francisco Examiner* looked at the fate of the last privately held virgin redwood forest in the world. Owned by Texas tycoon Charles Hurwitz’s Maxxam Inc., parent of Pacific Lumber Co., this largest grove of craggy, dusky, old-growth redwoods anywhere in the world could be logged, bought by the public or taken in an unconventional debt-for-nature swap in payment for Maxxam’s alleged role in a Texas S&L collapse. The series ran Dec. 17–21. Call Jane Kay at (415) 777-8704 or view it at <http://www.sfgate.com/special/redwoods/>

► A vast parcel of oceanfront land along Highway 1—with five miles of beaches, rolling meadows, rocky bluffs and redwood canyons on the Santa Cruz coast—could become public under a proposed swap for desert land north of Las Vegas, revealed the *San Jose Mercury News* on Feb. 29. In a story on March 16, the paper told of a plan to avert San Francisco Bay oil spills by blasting or chipping away five jagged rocks. On March 20, the paper exposed a new campaign by the cash-strapped state parks department to recruit business sponsorship to help pay for everything from rangers’ trucks to hiking trails at 265 parks. Call Paul Rogers at (408) 920-5045 or check <http://www.sjmercury.com>.

CONNECTICUT

► *Time Magazine*’s cover story in its March 4 edition centered on claims by two whistle blowers that Northeast Utilities and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission had routinely waived safety rules. Their complaints focused on four nuclear power plants in Connecticut run by Northeast Utilities, but the problems they cited affect plants elsewhere in the

nation. Most of their allegations involved shortcuts taken when a plant was down for refueling. Liberties were allowed by both the utility and NRC in order to keep costs down and to get the plant up and running as rapidly as possible. Embarrassed NRC Chairwoman Shirley Jackson ordered an investigation. Northeast Utilities was also challenged to show why its nuclear plants should not be shut down until safety concerns were satisfied. The author of the *Time* article is Eric Pooley.

► In the 1950s and 1960s Combustion Engineering in Windsor, Ct. did top secret work for the government using highly enriched uranium. In the process the company contaminated drainpipes, sewer lines, several buildings, a waste storage area, and a pit where barrels were buried. Now traces of the radioactive waste have been found in the Farmington River. Residents were not aware of the contamination until the *Hartford Courant*’s story Feb. 25 about a 1994 report from the U.S. Department of Energy on this situation. Experts continue to disagree about the degree of the health risk. For further information, contact Dan Jones, *Hartford Courant*, (860) 241-6200.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► Ailing infrastructure and fiscal crises often go hand in hand. Here’s a new twist—the District of Columbia’s financial woes are endangering a plant that treats sewage from suburban Maryland and the drinking water supply for parts of Northern Virginia. Teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, the District of Columbia is under the direction of a financial control board, a situation closely covered by *The Washington Post*’s Metro staff. In recent months, D.C. officials acknowledged that they diverted millions of dollars from the maintenance fund for the city’s sewage treatment plant to pay for other municipal programs. The money was intended for preventive upkeep on the now-ailing Blue Plains plant, which serves two suburban Maryland counties as well as D.C. In its prime, the plant was credited with cleaning up the southern end of the Potomac River. Maryland officials were outraged at this disclosure

since their constituents contributed to the maintenance fund through their sewer bills. The U.S. Congress, which has the last say in District fiscal issues, is considering a plan to create a new regional sewer authority with representatives from Maryland and D.C. to run the plant. City officials are reluctant, though, to share control of the facility. Meanwhile, several cities in Northern Virginia share a water system with the District. The Environmental Protection Agency has warned that this system, parts of which date back to the Civil War, is in danger of collapse. The Army Corps of Engineers, which runs the system, wants out of the business and a Virginia authority wants to take it over. Despite the city’s fiscal crisis, D.C. officials oppose this plan because they want a hand in running the system. Perhaps the most comprehensive *Post* article on this situation and its many players is a front-page story by R.H. Melton in the Feb. 24 issue. The *Post* metro desk phone number is (202) 334-7300.

ILLINOIS

► President Clinton’s recent proposal to give tax breaks to companies who clean up abandoned industrial sites will have a direct impact on Illinois companies. Though more than 300 such “brown-field” sites exist in Chicago alone, both major metropolitan papers downplayed the story. *The Chicago Sun-Times* ran a dispatch from Basil Talbott (Washington bureau) on page 12 (March 12), noting the local angle with comments from city officials. In contrast, the *Tribune* ran an AP story (not mentioning the local angle) on page 8 of the same day.

► *The Chicago Tribune*, meanwhile, has recently featured pieces on endangered or troublesome animals species on its front pages. A March 8 story profiled a fight over a bridge project in collar country that threatened a rare turtle. A March 22 article examined an alien fish called a Goby that, if it spreads into the upper Great Lakes, will cause such widespread ecological destruction that it will make the zebra mussel look like a real piker.

INDIANA

► Kyle Niederpruem, of *The*

Indianapolis Star, profiled a former Indiana state GOP chairman who is now a “raging environmentalist.” Gordon K. Durnil has written a book about his change of heart: *The Making of a Conservative Environmentalist* (reviewed in *SEJournal* vol.5 no.3). Niederpruem wrote that Durnil’s epiphany came while he served as chairman of the International Joint Commission; he joined predisposed to industry, but became disillusioned. According to Durnil, industry leaders should be asking if they are harming anybody or anything. He has turned into an activist. For further information, contact Kyle Niederpruem, at (317) 633-9385.

MAINE

► Several Northeastern newspapers including *The Boston Globe* reported on Feb. 29 Maine Gov. Angus King’s decision to drop his state’s 15 year effort to build a \$70 million cargo port on Sears Island, a stunning victory for the US Environmental Protection Agency and New England environmentalists. The port had embroiled the region as one of its premier environmental issues. Maine had hoped it would boost its access to world markets and improve state’s fiscal picture, while environmentalist had argued that the 940 acre coastal island is an ecological gem that would have been ruined by the port. The project had been in the EPA pipeline for years, and recently, the EPA had said it would not oppose it if the state did \$410 million in mitigation work. King argued that “the decision was rigged” by the EPA, which seemed to okay the project but knew the state could not afford the mitigation. EPA Regional Administrator John DeVillars said the mitigation was warranted and that King was raising a red herring to avoid the real reason the project was dropped, one conceded by Maine’s Transportation Commissioner—that cargo traffic would not have been sufficient to economically sustain the port. Contact Scott Allen, *The Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3112.

MASSACHUSETTS

► Six right whales, including three calves, died on the East Coast this winter—triple the number confirmed

dead in 1995. It is believed that only about 320 Northern right whales exist. Environmentalists recently suggested that at least some of the deaths may have been caused by the U.S. Navy during maneuvers this winter in the Atlantic. The Navy responded that there was no proof that they caused the deaths but the National Marine Fisheries Service has called in outside researchers to investigate. For more information, contact Scott Allen, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000.

► There is nothing new about debates centering on the rights of endangered species. The debates focusing on piping plovers on the Massachusetts shoreline have taken some new twists, however. One centers on just how many Massachusetts beaches should be reserved for the exclusive use of plovers during the spring and early summer to nest and raise their young. Off-road vehicle enthusiasts are demanding greater access and the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife is beginning to agree with them. The second twist pits the plovers against seagulls. On Cape Cod, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed poisoning up to 4,000 gulls which are a danger to the plovers. The plan has caused an uproar. Among the opponents of the poisoning plan is the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The contact for this story is Scott Allan, *Boston Globe*, (617) 929-3000.

► Two years ago WCVB-TV, Channel 5 in Boston found that the air inside ice arenas throughout Massachusetts could be extremely dangerous. Recently reporter David Ropeik did a follow-up which found some improvements at rinks. This winter, Ropeik also looked at school buildings. The results were startling—one out of three schools in Massachusetts are inadequately ventilated. In some cases the poor ventilation is affecting students, teachers and the quality of education. In some cases it is affects their health. While the problems are severe in the winter, they can be serious any time of year. Too often ventilation systems are permanently turned off, teachers are told not to open windows, and vents are permanently closed. For details, call David Ropeik, WCVB-TV Boston, (617) 449-0400.

OHIO

► Scott Powers, of *The Columbus Dispatch*, spent eight months this year chronicling the legacy of radioactive contamination in Ohio from the development of nuclear weapons and technologies. The team effort lead to a three-part series that ran October 1-3. Part 1 was a review of the 50 sites with confirmed radioactive contamination and why they have waited decades for attention. Part 2 examined how the contamination spread into the lives of ordinary people. The conclusion examined why officials may be forced to consider shortcuts in cleaning up the sites. The *Dispatch* has produced a ten-page Special Reprint. Contact Scott Powers at (614) 461-5233 for a copy or more information.

NEVADA

► The premiere issue of *Great Basin News* (Winter 1996) explores a new detente between environmentalists and ranchers in Elko county, NV, deep in the heart of the Western Sagebrush Rebellion against federal environmental regulations. The quarterly newsletter is edited by Jon Christensen and published by Great Basin News Service, which also makes weekly dispatches available by fax or e-mail. Christensen is former Great Basin regional editor of *High Country News*. His cover story on “Nevada’s Ugly Tug-of War” (HCN Oct. 13, 1995) sparked a public journalism style debate and search for common ground in Elko. Contact: Great Basin News Service, 6205 Franktown Road, Carson City, NV 89704; phone and fax: (707) 882-3990; e-mail: GBNews@aol.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

► Several northeastern newspapers including *The Boston Globe* have reported in recent months on the debate over whether the U.S. Forest Service should reissue a special-use permit to the Appalachian Mountain Club to operate the AMC’s Pinkham Notch camp and backcountry huts in the White Mountain National Forest. The AMC received 30 year permits in 1935 and 1965, but when the last one expired in October, years of tension over the huts came to a head, and

the agency put off a new permit. The latest twist came on March 1, when the agency announced some public meetings and comment opportunities on the AMC's required master plan for its club and huts, all in advance of a planned review under the National Environmental Policy Act. The AMC has been hit from all sides. Property rights groups say an advocacy organization like the AMC should not be allowed free use of public lands while it takes stands on hydropower and other issues that not everyone agrees with. Environmental groups say the Forest Service's reliance on the AMC for everything from smog research to search and rescue missions shows that the agency cannot manage the forest on its own. All sides ask whether the AMC's increasing use of the upscale huts is harming the forest and warrants an environmental impact statement. Contact Robert Braile, *The Boston Globe*, (603) 772-6380.

NORTH CAROLINA

► *The News & Observer* of Raleigh has been examining the massive fish kills and algae blooms that foul North Carolina's coastal waters each summer. Last October, the kills became so extensive that state officials declared an unprecedented health warning for the Neuse River, a tributary of the Pamlico Sound. In March, the *N&O* published a four-part series that examined how state officials ignored years of warnings about the Neuse, allowing farms and the Raleigh-Durham region to grow and increase their discharges of nitrogen—the main pollutant fouling the river. Governor Jim Hunt is now proposing regulations to reduce nitrogen runoff, but the cleanup plan is coming under fire from the state's business and farm lobbies. For a reprint of "Sold Down the River," contact Stuart Leavenworth at (919) 829-4859 or e-mail him at stuartl@nando.com. The series can also be read on the world wide web at <http://www.nando.net/nao/neuse/neuse.html>. You can also read the *News and Observer's* "Boss Hog" series, a five-part investigation of the state's pork industry, at <http://www.nando.net/sproject/hogs/hoghome.html>.

RHODE ISLAND

► In mid-January the tugboat Scandia caught fire during a fierce storm. Its crew abandoned ship and within hours the tug and a barge it was towing, the North Cape, were driven up onto a pristine Rhode Island beach, alongside a federal wildlife refuge. The North Cape spilled 828,000 gallons of home heating oil before salvors were able to seal its hull and tow it away. Days later reporters at the *Providence Journal Bulletin* learned that such barges are among the least-regulated commercial vessels on the water. A powerful network of tugboat owners has displayed great skill in fending off regulations aimed at making their industry safer. The National Resources Defense Council calls the failure of the Coast Guard to impose tougher rules "scandalous." For information contact Elizabeth Abbott or Christopher Rowland, *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, (401) 277-7000.

► Hours after the oil spill, the state of Rhode Island announced a fishing ban in a 250-square mile section of Block Island Sound, where the oil became totally mixed with seawater. Some thought the ban would last just a week or two, until the oil dissipated. Actually, it dragged on for seven weeks before the National Marines Fisheries Service finally agreed to ease the ban by allowing certain types of fishing in the tainted water. N.M.F.S. acted only after being hit with heavy pressure from state and federal officials in Rhode Island, who wanted the fishing ban lifted a month early. The problem: apparently no state had ever before imposed such a large-scale fishing ban after an oil spill. The federal bureaucrats had no guidelines to follow to tell them when it was safe to lift the ban. Some believe the Rhode Island case will set a nationwide precedent. For information, call Peter Lord, *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, (401) 277-8036.

VERMONT

► A stalemate between Vermont and New York over control of phosphorus in Lake Champlain threatens a five-year effort to come up with a cleanup plan for the lake. The plan was tentatively scheduled for release in March but its

release has been postponed because of the standoff. The two states jointly developed the strategy, spending more than \$411 million in federal money. The election of Republican Gov. George Pataki in Nov. 1994 heralded a change in New York's attitude toward lake cleanup, however, and the states have since been unable to agree on how to share the burden of phosphorus control. Phosphorus levels in some parts of Lake Champlain are higher than in the worst parts of Lake Erie in the 1970s, when that lake was considered dead. Three-quarters of the 650 tons of phosphorus draining into the lake each year comes from farms and urban areas. The remainder comes from the 49 sewage treatment plants in the lake's drainage basin. The cheapest way to clean up the phosphorus problem is to remove it from sewage treatment plant effluent, even though the flows contribute only one fourth of the lake's phosphorus content. New York officials balked at the suggestion, however, because there is no state money for sewage treatment plant upgrades in the economically depressed towns along the lake. Instead, New York hopes to work with farmers to reduce their contributions to the phosphorus load. For information contact Nancy Bazilchuk, *The Burlington (Vt.) Free Press*, (802) 660-1873.

WASHINGTON

► Danny Westneat, (206) 464-2772, new environmental writer for the *Seattle Times*, wrote March 10 about growing speculation that Washington's Hanford Nuclear Reservation may be used to treat and dispose of nuclear wastes from around the nation.

► On Feb. 21, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer's* Rob Taylor (206) 448-8337, described evidence that high-level radioactive waste from Hanford's tank farms may have migrated to groundwater and may pose a greater threat to taint the Columbia River than has been acknowledged. Taylor also wrote Jan. 25 about federal moves to back off from the level of cleanup it has pledged to conduct.

WEST VIRGINIA

► The *Fairmont Times-West*

The Green Beat

Virginian has created an environmental reporting beat and appointed Jenni Vincent to it. She has already begun her work with an extensive series of acid mine drainage. The *Times-West Virginian* has a circulation of about 14,500. Vincent can be reached at (304) 367-2540.

► *The Charleston Gazette* continues to win its court battle to obtain records concerning the economic incentives the state will give to a proposed pulp and paper mill that environmental advocates oppose. In early January, the *Gazette* published a series of stories about documents a circuit judge ordered be released. Call

reporter Ken Ward Jr. at (304) 348-1702.

► The *Morgantown Dominion Post* published a series in February about acid mine-drainage and its effects on rivers in the North-Central region of West Virginia. Call (304) 292-6301.

WISCONSIN

► Northern Wisconsin news media have joined local residents in protesting closed-door meetings between the Exxon Corp. and governments around Exxon's proposed copper mine near Orando. Exxon officials say the secrecy is needed

to negotiate local mining agreements, and that the public will have a chance to comment later. Environmentalists have circulated a draft copy of the agreement, indicating Exxon is promising to give Forest county a \$three million dollar interest-free loan to help build a new county jail. About 15 reporters were expected to attend a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources briefing in mid-April where DNR Secretary George Meyer and other agency officials planned to talk about environmental regs and the farming community. That means discussion about animal waste, pesticides, and groundwater.

SEJournal

**Society of Environmental
Journalists**

P.O. Box 27280

Philadelphia, PA 19118

**Address Correction and
Forwarding Requested**

FIRST CLASS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 4347
PHILADELPHIA, PA