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inside



4 Sewage 101

7 Family Planning Progress

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from THE editor

I Want My MPG

What Could Have Been,
What Could Still Be

BY JOHN BYRNE BARRY

Instead of starting by describing another missed opportunity by Congress to raise fuel economy standards—not that I have an opinion on that—I thought I'd get personal instead and talk about my car.

It's a 1985 Honda Civic wagon with almost 150,000 miles on it. It's reliable and I don't drive much and I'm a cheap-skate, but I'm tired of it and I thought it



might be nice to get something a wee bit newer. I mean, I've got no air bags, no power steering, not even cup holders. I still have to use one of those old fashioned keys you insert into door and turn.

But, but...

I went to the Sierra Club's "I Want My MPG" fuel calculator—see sierraclub.org/mpg—which allows you to find out how much you'd save on gas for your car model if fuel economy were modernized. But other than hybrids, practically the only cars that get better mileage than my 21-year-old Honda Civic are newer Honda Civics.

Had Congress raised fuel economy standards to 40 mpg in 1990, we'd be using barely half as much gas as we are today.

Actually, the average new car sold in the United States today does get 28 miles per gallon, about what I get with my car, but the average new vehicle sold today gets worse mileage than a new car or truck sold in 1982. That's practically criminal.

(If the electronics industry progressed at that same glacial pace, we'd still all be using floppy disks and listening to music on record players.)

It didn't have to be this way.

Sixteen years ago, after a concerted campaign by the Sierra Club and our allies, Congress came within a handful of votes of adopting fuel economy standards of 40 miles per gallon. As our executive director, Carl Pope, says in his blog, "Had we won that vote, the world would be different today: America would be using about half as much gas as it currently does." He also suggests that the United States would

[MORE ON P. 6]

States Take Lead on Mercury, Global Warming

BY TIMOTHY LESLE

In May, Minnesota signed into law a mercury emission standard for its six biggest coal-fired power units—a rule stricter than that proposed by the federal government. In April, 11 states, the District of Columbia, and three environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, filed suits against the EPA for not regulating carbon dioxide. Late last year, seven northeastern states announced their participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to reduce power plant emissions of carbon dioxide, a key driver of global warming. An eighth state, Maryland, will become a full member next year; this March, it adopted what is described as "the strongest power-plant cleanup bill ever passed by a legislative body in America." Eight states (and Canada) have adopted California "clean car" legislation, which calls for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. And in April, Idaho adopted a two-year moratorium on coal-fired power plants, establishing a "zero new mercury emissions" limit. One state senator said that he'd received a "wheelbarrel-full" of e-mails in support of the ban.

Actions like these show that states are taking aggressive stances on environmental protection as the federal government is going in the other direction. The irony, says Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope, is that "theoretically, getting power down to the state and local level is what [the Republican leaders in Washington] stand for."

"What's most interesting about all this pro-environmental activity in the states is that it isn't confined, or even concentrated, in liberal states with liberal governors," writes Pope on his blog, "Although it is happening in places like Vermont, New Jersey, and Illinois, it actually seems to be concentrated in more conservative states with Democratic governors, and in more liberal states with Republican governors."

Case in point is the state-level action on mercury emissions. In 2005, the federal EPA proposed the Clean Air Mercury Rule, a set of regulations that would ultimately cut coal-fired power plant mercury emissions about 70 percent by 2018 and establish a mercury pollution credit trading regime. In response, Tim Pawlenty, the Republican governor of Minnesota, said, "The goal the federal government has set is too low and too slow."

The goal of Minnesota's phased plan is higher and faster than the EPA's: 90 percent reduction from its six largest coal plant units by 2014. Those six units release about two-thirds of the state's mercury emissions. And Minnesota is not alone, as several other states have passed or are seriously considering similar rules, including Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, and Montana. Mercury is a neurotoxin that can sicken adults and severely affect the development of children and fetuses; people consume it in contami-



They Deserve Less: Last year, Sierra Club volunteers Jennifer and Chris Milani of Ardmore, Pennsylvania, visited their daughters Juliet and Daniella's classrooms at Penn Valley Elementary with Club organizer Annie Leary to talk about mercury. After seeing her parents gathering signatures supporting stronger limits on mercury, Juliet asked if her class could also write letters. All of the students did. The state has since proposed cutting emissions 90 percent by 2015.

nated fish. The single largest man-made source of mercury pollution in the U.S. is from power plant emissions. In a national hair sampling project, which the Sierra Club helped conduct, preliminary results show that one in five women has higher mercury levels than the EPA's recommended limit.

Minnesota's mercury regulations come after years of organizing by groups like the Sierra Club's North Star Chapter, working with volunteers and the Mercury Free

Minnesota Coalition. The coalition negotiated with state offices and utilities to formulate the plan, which sailed through both state houses with unanimous approval from lawmakers.

"Minnesota is the 'Land of 10,000 Lakes,'" says Christopher Childs, the chapter's conservation chair and clean air co-chair, "You basically don't find a body of water in Minnesota that doesn't have mercury contamination in the fish."

[MORE ON P. 3]

Sierra Club, Steelworkers Launch Blue/Green Alliance



You Can Tell Them by the Color of their Pens. Or Can You? Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope, left, and International President of United Steelworkers Leo Gerard sign a joint resolution to form the Blue/Green Alliance at a June 8 press conference in Washington, D.C. They exchanged pens after signing. For more, see "Good Jobs and a Clean Environment," page 7.

The PLANET

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Postcard from San Juan

I Went to Puerto Rico and All I Got Was Great Hospitality from the Sierra Club's Newest Chapter

BY JOHN BYRNE BARRY

I didn't go to Puerto Rico to write a story about the Sierra Club's newest chapter. I went there on vacation with my girlfriend Nanette as part of her 50th birthday celebration. But I had recently met "Pachi" Pérez, the new chapter chair, at the chapter leader training in California in March, and I've known Camilla Feibelman, a field representative based in San Juan, the island's capital, since she was a college intern in the Club's San Francisco headquarters.

I hoped to attend an excom meeting, or go on a chapter-sponsored outing, but the timing didn't work out. What happened turned out to be far better: Pachi invited us and a bunch of the chapter leaders to dinner at his house, and we had a wonderful time. The dinner was three-quarters social and one-quarter Sierra Club-related (and partly in Spanish), so I didn't play reporter as much as grateful guest. That said, I captured enough telling "snapshots" to weave together a modestly accurate story of La Isla del Encanto (the Island of Enchantment) and the Club's newest chapter. So think of this as a slide show of paragraphs. (And a couple photos, too.)



Dense San Juan: After a packed red-eye from Oakland to New York City, and a morning flight to San Juan, we waited for an hour in the stifling humidity for a bus into town. Turns out that even though buses go to and from the airport, passengers with luggage aren't actually allowed on them. The bus driver took us anyway, but ten days later, when we tried to take the bus back to the airport, no drivers would let us on and we had to take a cab. Our hotel was in Condado, a dense neighborhood a few blocks from the Atlantic Ocean, full of blocky 10- and 20- and 30-story apartments and condos. Cranes were everywhere, though there was little evidence of planning or zoning.

Walled City: Charming Old San Juan, with its narrow cobblestone streets and colorful buildings, is flanked by two large forts built by the Spanish in the 16th century—El Morro and San Cristóbal, and surrounded on three sides by walls. On the



Island Smiles: Here we are with many of the chapter leaders at Pachi's. Front row: Mabel Rodríguez, our hosts Pachi Pérez and his wife, and Samarys Seguinot-Medina, a founding member of the chapter. Back row: Nanette Zavala (she's with me), Sylvana Palacio, Margarita Corrada, Eduardo González, John Byrne Barry, and Paola Ferrá.

video we watched in the visitor center, the narrator refers to Sir Francis Drake, who attacked Puerto Rico in 1595, as a "pirate."

Green Roofs: Paola Ferrá, a communications consultant and chapter communications director, picked us up in her air-conditioned SUV and drove us to Pachi's house, in a gated subdivision in Guaynabo, south of San Juan. (The metro area is home to a third of the island's 4 million people.) When I asked if she could turn down the air conditioner, she told us that "puertorriqueños (pwerto ree-KAYN-yose) like it hot outside, but when they come inside, they want it to be like an igloo." She explained with enthusiasm her plans to build a "green roofs" movement on the island. She learned about green roofs at a conference, but part of her reason for embracing it is that she lives in a condo and looks down on a lot of barren rooftops just begging for some lush gardens.

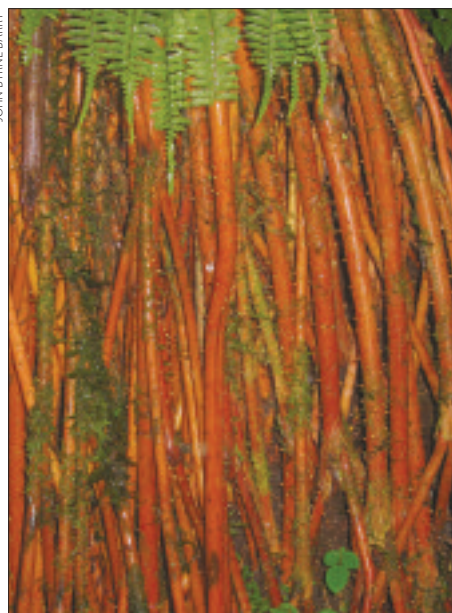
Second-Year Growth: Francisco Pérez, a.k.a. Pachi, chapter chair, invited chapter leaders to his house for dinner. Pachi, an environmental consultant who works out of his home and devotes about 20 hours a week to the Club, said he wants the chapter to grow to 1,000 members in its second year. (When the Sierra Club Board of Directors inaugurated the new chapter at its February 2005 meeting in San Juan, there were 190 members.) While he barbecued chicken in his backyard, we listened to the "coqui" (an amphibian similar to tree frogs) making their high-pitched "ko-'kee" calls.

A Sierra Club Presence in Every Town: Outings chair Eduardo González, an infectious enthusiastic bear of a man, told us at dinner that he wants a Sierra Club presence in every town on the island, like the Masons, of which he is also a member. Eduardo, a photographer and landscaper, said the chapter outings were attracting up to 50 people. One recent outing was "Poetry under the Stars." Eduardo was thrilled to be part of the Sierra Club and excited to be building the organization on the island. He and the others have long been inspired and concerned about the natural world, but forming a Club chapter gives them access to a national organization and newfound clout. Puerto Rico has as much need for environmental protection as anywhere in the

U.S. mainland, and even has decent environmental laws, but enforcement is lacking.

Founding Member: We also met Samarys Seguinot-Medina, who went to Washington, D.C., in March 2002 for a Public Lands Summit when she was a member of the Sierra Student Coalition at Metropolitan University in San Juan. A few months later came the first Sierra Club meeting in Puerto Rico, with a focus on protecting the Northeast Ecological Corridor, one of the island's many ecologically important natural areas, which is threatened by two huge hotel and housing developments proposed by Marriott and Four Seasons.

Rainy Rainforest: The morning after Pachi's barbecue, Mabel Rodríguez, a magazine editor and translator, and volunteer editor of the Puerto Rico Chapter newsletter, *Sierrico*, gave us a personal tour of El Yunque (el joon-kay), the only tropical rainforests in the U.S. National Forest System. It rained, of course—that's what happens in rainforests—and we got soaked, but it was hot and we dried out quickly. El Yunque is protected, but just to the north is the corridor the Club is working to protect from development. Mabel drove us back to San Juan first through flooded roadways in the rural part of the island, then on traffic-clogged streets once we were closer to the city. Like most of the mainland United States,



Long Carrots? No, they're the roots of the Sierra Palm in El Yunque, part of Caribbean National Forest.

Puerto Rico is dominated by the car, she says. The island has more roads per square mile than any U.S. state and a spotty public transportation system.

Grassroots Energy: Back in my office in San Francisco, I reread an e-mail from Camilla Feibelman, the Club's field rep in Puerto Rico. (She wasn't able to make it to the dinner at Pachi's—she was organizing a coalition meeting in the coastal town of Fajardo.) She attached a note from a recent editorial in the English-language newspaper, noting that environmental activists on the island "seem to be better grounded, organized, and successful lately in Puerto Rico. And just in time."

Something is definitely happening, she said in her note. "Today 50 people showed up to our walking tour of the trees of Old San Juan. Yesterday at the chapter's day-long planning retreat, one member jumped to her feet and shouted, 'We've got to play to win! We've got to hit them hard!' The campaign seems to be on fire and the phone rings non-stop. I've never felt like this before. This is what grassroots feels like. Maybe it's just that there are 4 million people in one small place so energy comes easy. I don't know what, but it's exciting."

Turtles on Parade: In April, the Club co-sponsored the first Festival del Tinglar (Festival of the Leatherback Turtle) in Luquillo, adjacent to the Northeast Ecological Corridor, and attracted more than 700 people despite torrential rains. Children dressed as sea turtles participated in a costume contest and a local representative who's sponsored a bill protecting the corridor led the parade.



Puerto Rico's economy, dominated by sugar cane for centuries, today is based mostly on manufacturing, notably the pharmaceutical industry, and tourism, with an estimated 5 million visitors in 2004. "We hope that the annual festival will be a key part of our economic proposal for the towns adjacent to the corridor," said Camilla. "Eco-tourism can bring people and money in ways that fancy hotels and gated communities can't."

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The Birdman of Baghdad

BY TOM VALTIN

A soldier in fatigues, rifle slung over his shoulder, is standing on a truck, peering through binoculars. He's not looking for Iraqi insurgents. He's scoping a black-crowned night heron.

Add one to the life list.

Say hello to Sergeant Jonathan Trouern-Trend, a national guardsman who served a year-long tour in Iraq and blogged about his birdwatching adventures in the Sunni Triangle. Sierra Club Books has now published a book which the *New Yorker* described as a "slender, handsomely illustrated distillation" of that blog. To learn more about *Birding Babylon: A Soldier's Journal from Iraq*, the *Planet* interviewed Trouern-Trend shortly after the book debuted.



Planet: I was surprised to read there were so many birds to be found in a war zone.

JTT: The birds were largely unfazed by the turmoil. I'd read about how in World War I, as soon as the artillery stopped the birds began singing. I was lucky to be stationed near water in Iraq. There were ponds nearby, a couple acres each, that were created to drain the huge air strips on our base.

Planet: Has the environment in Iraq been devastated by the war?

JTT: Well, the country had been through a lot even before this conflict, with the Iran-Iraq war, and Saddam Hussein's draining of the southern marshes in the late 1980s and early 1990s—it was a form of collective punishment against the Marsh Arabs, because they participated in Shiite uprisings. But the U.N. has a marshlands observation program that produces weekly satellite images, and vegetation in the southern marshes is back up to 50 percent of pre-drainage levels; it was down to 7 percent at one point. A group called Eden Again, headed by an Iraqi who studied in California, is now bringing together a proposal for marshland recovery, focusing on sustainable development.

Planet: How did your military colleagues react to your birding and blogging? Did you take a lot of grief?

JTT: It ran the spectrum. The hard-charging 19-year-olds who suffer from testosterone poisoning thought it was a girly-man pursuit. But some of the doctors would go out with me sometimes. Keeping the blog helped me interact with a lot of people, including Iraqis. I got an e-mail from a southern Iraqi birder, a father like me, so there was that commonality as well. The blog actually helped me keep in touch with my kids while I was in Iraq. I shied away from things that would worry them; I'd write about visiting children in a neighboring village—not that we got bombed today and four people were killed. But so far as my military colleagues were concerned, I think the blog helped soldiers see things with new eyes. Every time they found a weird bird or

bug they couldn't identify they'd let me know about it or bring it to me. I have a collection of insects from all over the world, and I collected bugs while I was in Iraq. I'm giving talks about insects now that I'm back in the States. People who are stationed in Iraq have been in touch with me ever since I arrived back home. A woman who's a helicopter pilot—she flies huge transport choppers—just wrote to me about seeing flamingoes.

Planet: How does birding in Iraq compare with birding in the U.S.?

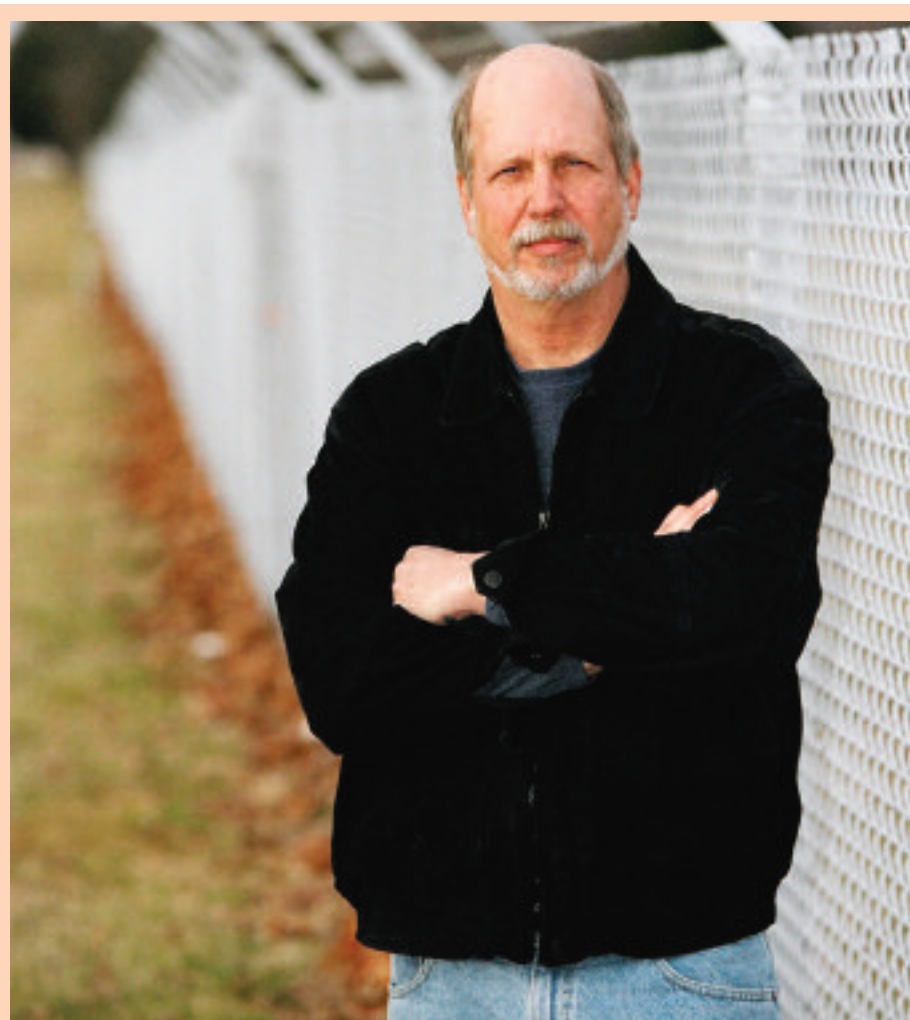
JTT: The Iraq list is actually about the same as in my home state of Connecticut in terms of numbers—over 100 species—and you find many of the same species. The chaos is pretty focused around Baghdad, and even so, people still get out of the city and into nature. There's a long appreciation of wildlife and nature in Iraq, especially in the north, in the Kurdish areas. And even in Baghdad, from the street you might see little evidence of nature, but go inside, off the street, and people always have a nice little garden. There's a big bird market in Baghdad, and Arabs from the Gulf States still come to Iraq to go waterfowl hunting. The outbreak of bird flu has slowed this, but there are still plenty of safe areas.

In spite of the war, good things are happening. Thirty-five environmental organizations are registered in Iraq now, working together—groups like Greenpeace of Kurdistan and the Iraq Nature Conservation Association. They have roundtable meetings to develop capacity to do projects together, and they continue to do their thing even when the country is beset with problems, like it is now. The Palestinian Authority has been handing out brochures to farmers about bird conservation. I started a Wikipedia page on Iraq fauna, letting people know how they can help. Western NGOs can do some real good in areas like community organizing, women's issues, and environmental health. And getting children involved is really important. The hopeful thing to me is that many of the people I met were very positive, resilient, can-do, well-educated. They'll be the next generation of leaders, including environmental leaders. I'd definitely be willing to go back and do a bio blitz with environmental groups if the State Department says it's OK. There's an interesting story to be told in that this is one of the places with the longest history of human-animal interaction anywhere. Now that I'm back in the States I'm giving talks at schools on this subject, and I'd love to do the same in Iraq.

Planet: Did you have a favorite bird sighting in Iraq?

JTT: My favorite was the white-cheeked bulbul; I had many sightings even when it was 120 degrees out. We'd be wilting in the heat, and these little birds were flitting around like it was nothing. And there were birds I saw all the time on the base that I'll always associate with my time there, like the barn owls nesting in our bunker.

You can order *Birding Babylon* at sierraclub.org/books. Or read Trouern-Trend's blog at birdingbabylon.blogspot.com.



Advocate for Safe Weapons Disposal Honored: Vietnam veteran Craig Williams, above, was among the winners of the 2006 Goldman Environmental Prize, awarded annually to six grassroots environmental heroes around the world. A cabinetmaker by trade, the Kentuckian built a nationwide grassroots coalition (including the Sierra Club) to fight Pentagon plans to incinerate chemical weapons stockpiled around the United States and lobby for safe disposal solutions. Williams co-founded the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, which won the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its international campaign to ban land mines. Other 2006 Goldman Award recipients included Silas Kpanan'AYoung Siakor of Liberia, who tipped the United Nations to illegal logging in his war-torn nation; Yu Xiaogang of China, who documented the socioeconomic impact of dams on Chinese communities; Tarcisio Feitosa da Silva of Brazil, who led efforts to create the world's largest area of protected tropical rainforest; Olya Melen of Ukraine, who used legal channels to halt construction of a massive canal through the Danube Delta; and Anne Kajir of Papua New Guinea, who uncovered government corruption and complicity in allowing illegal logging. For more, see goldmanprize.org.

Momentum in the States

[FROM P. 1]

Brian Pasko, the chapter's legislative coordinator, credits public demand for sparking the state government's support for strict mercury rules. Furthermore, Pasko notes, "The mantra throughout the [legislative] session was that Minnesota needs to be a leader and we need to do better than the federal standard."

While Minnesota's mercury plan enjoys widespread support, similar proposed rules in Pennsylvania face tougher opposition from utilities, coal mining interests, and a conservative legislature. "We would be the first coal-producing state to have a mercury rule in place," says Jeff Schmidt, the Pennsylvania Chapter senior director.

The Sierra Club and 60 other organizations, led by umbrella group PennFuture, petitioned the state to take regulatory action in lieu of the weaker federal standards. The Club's Building Environmental Communities program, with organizers like Annie Leary of the Philadelphia office, worked with the chapter to gather 10,000 signed postcards to the administration of Governor Edward Rendell to show the strong public support for a state mercury rule. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) agreed, and has now proposed a rule that requires a 90 percent reduction in mercury emissions by 2015.

Despite this advance, the Pennsylvania legislature is considering bills that would require the state to stick with the federal rules.

In his efforts to preserve these stricter rules, Schmidt has been telling legislators that by supporting the federal rules, they are locking Pennsylvania into an illegal

plan. Since it allows pollution trading, plants that haven't upgraded their facilities can continue emitting mercury by buying pollution "credits" from plants that are up to code. "While the Clean Air Act does allow trading for pollutants like nitrogen oxides or sulfur dioxide," says Schmidt, "it does not allow for trading of pollutants considered toxic. And mercury is definitely considered a toxic pollutant under the act." Trading, he says, means a power plant can "buy its way out of cleaning up"—and Pennsylvania's power industry currently purchases more pollution credits than any other state. "The consumers of Pennsylvania are seeing their electric rate money being sent to other states to clean up their plants, rather than being spent here in Pennsylvania."

If Pennsylvania lawmakers won't listen to Schmidt, they may still listen to voters. In early June, PennFuture released a poll showing that 80 percent of Pennsylvanians support the state's mercury rule, and 63 percent are less likely to vote for a legislator who does not support the rule.

The federal government may not be acting on citizen concerns about mercury and global warming, but a growing number of states are. On June 11, the effort to stop global warming got another boost when the Western Governors Association passed a resolution, with bipartisan support, calling for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. As California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*, says: "This is not us versus the federal government as much as we say, 'Look, we have it happening in our states, and we can make an impact... And if we join forces we can make more of an impact.'"

Sewage 101 — More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Sewage and Nutrient Pollution But Were Afraid to Ask

by Tom Valtin



Testing the Waters: Volunteers Sharmili Sampath and Jack Randall gather water samples in Gunpowder Creek, a tributary of the Ohio River in northern Kentucky.



Working with Decision-Makers: Sierra Club water policy expert Ross Vincent, left, inspects polluted Fountain Creek with Colorado Congressman John Salazar and Pueblo City Councilman Gilbert Ortiz. The billboard above was paid for by the *Pueblo Chieftain*, a local newspaper that Vincent describes as “traditionally hostile to the Sierra Club—but this issue is changing the relationship.”



Bowling for Dollars: Hawaii Chapter activists engaged citizens and gathered donations on Earth Day to help the chapter promote sewer system improvements and protect Hawaii’s clean water.

Years ago, three friends and I stuffed our backpacks with several months’ worth of clothes and headed halfway around the world in search of the exotic and the sublime. We found it in spades—in glacier-clad mountains, steamy jungles, vestiges of lost empires, and cities so jam-packed with humanity they made Manhattan, my home at the time, seem uncrowded in comparison.

That sojourn was a highlight of my young adulthood, teaching me, among other things, that for all its comforts and opportunities, the American way of life is just one way to live. Still, I vividly recall “hitting the wall” one evening, in a storied locale that had fired my imagination since childhood, when our hotel room was suffused with a sickening stench emanating from an open sewer outside our window. “This is a great country,” one of my companions offered, “but they just don’t have their s**t together.”

Sewage is something every society—indeed, every human settlement—must deal with. We ignore it or treat it lightly (pun intended) at our peril; dealing responsibly with sewage is a big factor in maintaining safe and healthy communities. Certainly the United States, with its “first world” sanitation and plumbing, has little in common with open sewers. Or does it?

Every year, millions of Americans get sick from contact with inadequately treated sewage that ends up in water that they swim in or drink, so you wouldn’t think there’d be much of a constituency for more feces in our water. Yet in 2003 the EPA proposed a plan to relax sewage treatment regulations and discharge large volumes of partially treated wastewater into lakes and rivers during rain events. And agencies like the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission are currently trying to lower recreational water quality standards in order to ease restrictions on sewage dumping following rainstorms.

Where Nutrient Pollution Comes From

We tend to think of pollution as toxic substances like mercury or PCBs. In fact, the most common threat to the health of waters across the United States is nutrient pollution, which comes from a variety of sources, including animal waste, fertilizers, human sewage, and stormwater runoff. Row crop farming and factory farms are both huge sources of nutrient pollution.

Plants and animals need nutrients to survive, of course, but putting too many nutrients—especially nitrogen and phosphorus—into our waterways can make them dangerous and unhealthy. When a water body receives more nutrients than it needs, organic matter like algae begins to take over and other organisms can’t live or grow. All U.S. coastal waters currently show signs of nutrient over-enrichment, and more than 60 percent of coastal rivers and bays in every coastal state in the Lower 48 are moderately-to-severely polluted by nutrients. According to the EPA, elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorus are responsible for impairing a huge list of waterways in nearly every state.

Water quality in the lakes and streams that supply our drinking water is directly linked to the safety of the water that comes out of our taps. Excessive nitrogen and phosphorus levels produce correspondingly high levels of organic matter in our raw water supplies, and when disinfectants like chlorine are added to kill pathogens, they combine with this organic matter to form unwanted by-products. These disinfection by-products, such as tri-

halomethanes, which have been linked to cancer and birth defects, have been found in the tap water of more than half of Americans.

In addition to harming human health, algal blooms and low dissolved oxygen levels caused by nutrient pollution harm fish and other aquatic life. In areas like the Gulf of Mexico’s infamous “Dead Zone,” excess nutrients have caused waters to become totally devoid of oxygen, resulting in massive fish kills.

States with large numbers of factory farms have major nutrient pollution problems in their waterways. These giant complexes confine thousands of animals in one facility and produce staggering amounts of animal waste—1 trillion pounds per year. All too often this waste leaks into rivers and streams, contaminating the drinking water, fouling the air, and spreading disease. The EPA estimates that hog, chicken, and cattle waste has polluted more than 35,000 miles of rivers in the lower 48 states.

Sewer overflows and discharges of raw sewage are also major sources of water pollution. The EPA estimates that every year, the amount of untreated sewage that enters the environment in counties across the nation is enough to fill both the Empire State Building and Madison Square Garden. Lack of investment in maintaining municipal sewage systems, combined with a lack of political will to curb new sewage hook-ups, results in more sewage than many systems can treat, especially when stormwater enters the system.

Fighting Sewage Overflows With Postcards

The Sierra Club is currently fighting a battle involving water quality standards and stormwater overflows along the Ohio River that could have a ripple effect on sewage regulations nationwide. The Ohio, at 981 miles in length, is the drinking water source for approximately three million people. More than 25 million, or nearly 10 percent of the U.S. population, live in the Ohio River Basin.

This January, the commissioners of the Ohio River Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO), which represents eight states and the federal government, put forward for public comment their recommendations that after a “wet weather event” (that is, rain), recreational water quality standards for the river be reduced.

“When it rains hard, the combined sewer overflows from communities along the river are overwhelmed by stormwater, causing raw sewage to flow into the river,” explains Tim Guilfoile, Sierra Club Water Sentinel for northern Kentucky. “But rather than fix the overflows, wastewater treatment operators want to relax the standards for a period of time after a rain.” Guilfoile says it appears that the EPA is using this as a test case, and if weakened standards are approved, the same agenda will be pushed nationally.

ORSANCO scheduled six public hearings on its proposal, with the decision whether to adopt the new standards to be made at its June meeting. Guilfoile and fellow staffers Becky McClatchy and Chris Robertson sprang into action the moment the proposal was released, working with volunteers to secure funding from the Sierra Club’s Safe and Healthy Communities campaign and putting together a broad coalition of Ohio Valley conservation and sportsmen’s groups. “ORSANCO thought there would be a little diddly opposition from a few Sierra Club wackos, but we’ve

How Nutrients Poison Waterways

Sewage is just one of many sources of nutrient pollution, which contributes to impairing waterways in all 50 states. Nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, which are needed by plants and animals to survive, can become dangerous when too many of them run off into waterways, causing algal blooms that essentially smother other organisms. This graphic shows the primary contributors to nutrient pollution and how they get into the water.

1 SEWAGE

Sewage overflow can escape into waterways when sewage treatment facilities are overtaxed or poorly maintained.

2 SPRAWL

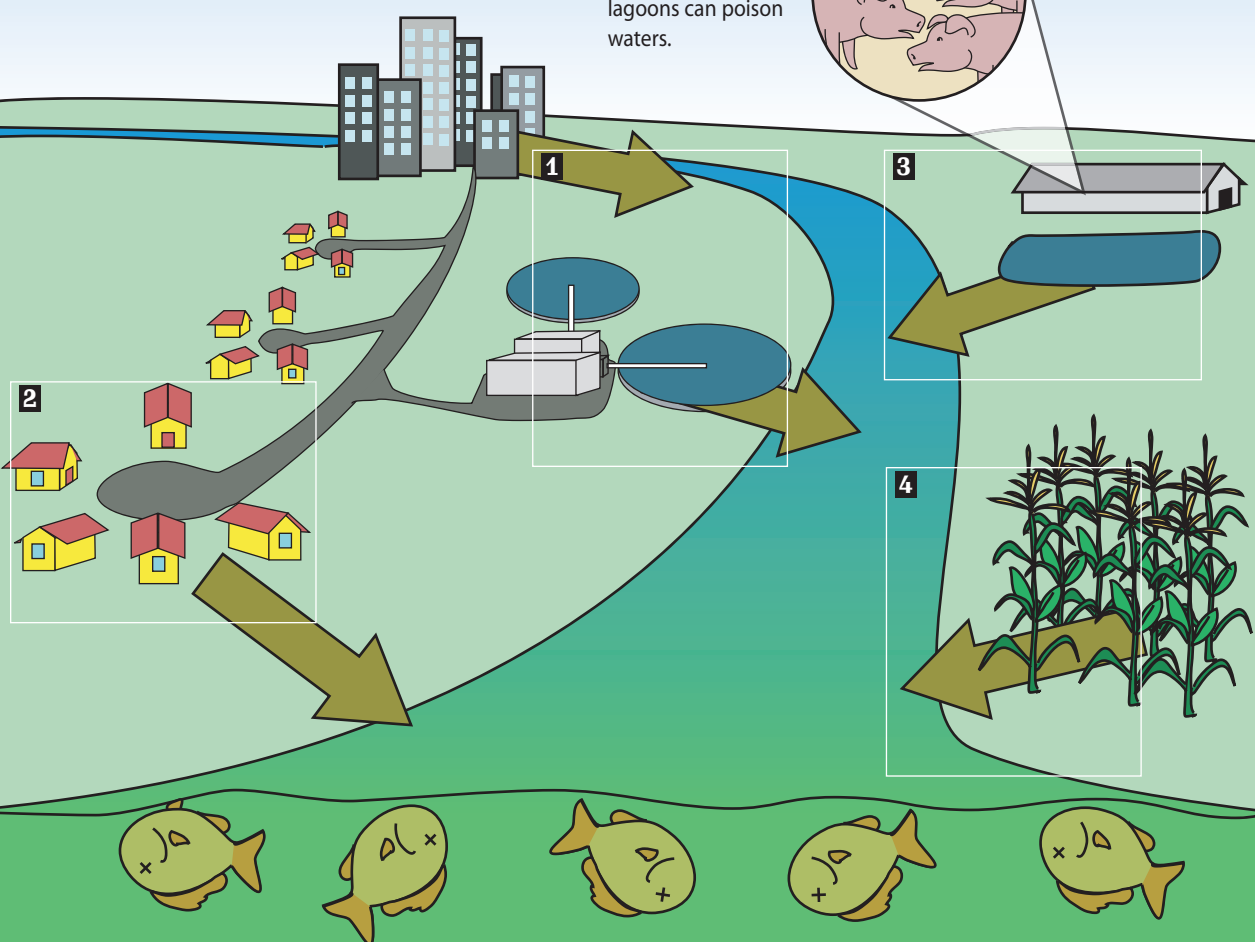
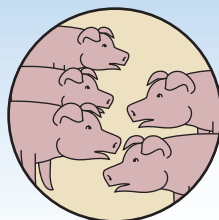
When open areas are paved over for streets, parking lots, and other developments, there are more impervious surfaces and nutrient-laden runoff makes its way into water instead of being absorbed into the soil.

3 FACTORY FARMS

In small quantities, animal manure can be used as fertilizer. But huge animal factories and CAFOs produce so much waste that runoff or leaks in waste lagoons can poison waters.

4 ROW CROP RUNOFF

Fertilizers and pesticides from croplands seep into the water table and then into streams, rivers, and lakes.



5 ALGAL BLOOMS

When too many nutrients enter the water, they contribute to an overabundance of algae, which robs other organisms of oxygen and light.

6 DRINKING WATER IMPACTS

To kill pathogens in drinking water, water agencies use chlorine and other disinfectants that create toxic by-products when waters contain high organic matter.

7 FISH KILLS

Nutrient pollution can deprive waters of oxygen so much that it results in massive fish kills.

completely baffled them with how thoroughly we've engaged the public," Guilfoile says. "They've never seen this type of response before."

A direct mail campaign targeting boaters, fishermen, hunters, and Sierra Club members generated more than 8,000 postcards opposing the weakened standards that were then submitted to the agency. Nearly 100 people attended the most recent of five public hearings, in Louisville. Five testified in favor of the new standards, while nearly 40 people testified in opposition, including Kentucky's assistant attorney general. The attorney general is now on record as opposing the new standards.

The upshot? In early June ORSANCO announced it would delay action until it reviewed the "unprecedented number of comments" it received.

Honolulu Sewer Line Break Highlights Chronic Problem

This spring, after a 42-inch sewer line cracked, at least 48 million gallons of untreated sewage flowed into Ala Wai Canal, which empties into the ocean just west of Honolulu's Waikiki Beach. City officials claimed they had no alternative but to pump the sewage into the canal to prevent wastewater from backing up into homes and hotels.

At first, tides and winds took the sewage out to sea, but a shift in the wind sent it back toward Waikiki, forcing officials to post signs warning tourists to stay out of the water, which showed levels of bacteria up to 60 times acceptable levels.

The closure of Hawaii's most famous beach due to raw sewage was catastrophic enough for a state so dependant on tourism. But the situation turned deadly when a 34-year-old Honolulu man fell into the contaminated water at Ala Wai Yacht Harbor on March 31 and died one week later of bacterial infections, two of them flesh-eating. Doctors concluded that both legs and an arm would need to be amputated to save the man's life, but he died of massive organ failure after one leg had been removed.

The Club's Hawaii Chapter has long warned the City & County of Honolulu that this kind of spill was all-but-inevitable if they failed to upgrade their sewage treatment

plants and collection system. Twice, the Club and others sued the city over violations of the Clean Water Act, the first time resulting in a consent decree that upheld most of the charges, the second still pending.

Since 2004, the Club has repeatedly communicated to the city its desire to work out a settlement that focuses on a proactive solution with citizen participation and support rather than waste money on attorneys' fees. The city has responded by hiring one of the nation's largest law firms to defend it, allocating more than \$2.5 million to be paid to that firm.

"The Waikiki sewer line break wasn't an isolated incident, but part of an ongoing problem that has been years in the making," says Sierra Club organizer Melody Heidel. On average, she says, the city has spilled sewage about once every two days—the result of decades of poor maintenance, neglect, and raiding of sewer funds.

Part of the problem, Heidel says, is that the public doesn't

know where to find basic data. "I get calls all the time from people asking what beaches are safe, vastly more calls since the March spill. I tell them about the state Web site and they say, 'Yeah, but what do *you* think?' What we need next to the surf report, unfortunately, is the poop report."

Heidel coordinates the Hawaii Chapter's Blue Water Campaign, which does community education, water quality monitoring, and maintains a hotline for reporting sewage spills and pollution complaints and a statewide "rapid response team" of 150 volunteers who can be deployed at a moment's notice to investigate complaints.

Acts of God? Or Management Failures?

In Colorado, the Club has been waging a vigorous campaign to compel the city of Colorado Springs to clean up its act following repeated sewage spills in Fountain Creek, which runs south to the city of Pueblo, where it joins the Arkansas River. Among other pollutants, the creek contains high levels of *E. coli*, and Pueblo residents living near the creek have had to warn their children not to play in the polluted water.

The Sierra Club has sued Colorado Springs for repeated sewage releases into the creek and inadequate regulation under the Clean Water Act. Club water policy expert Ross Vincent says there's documentation of more than 100 spills over the last seven years.

"Apologists say these sewage releases are accidents or acts of God," he says. "Baloney. These are management failures. The infrastructure is old, the city continues to authorize new development hook-ups to connect to the system, and enforcement is ineffective."

The Sierra Club and other citizen groups are bringing residents out on "photo hikes" along the creek and doing water quality monitoring. They recently garnered their first-ever supportive editorial from the *Pueblo Chieftain* newspaper, which used to publish regular anti-Earth Day editorials.

Sewage-in-Basement Videos an Unexpected Hit

The Ohio Chapter's Miami Group scored a major triumph in 2004 when a federal judge ruled that Cincinnati residents who suffered sewage backups in their basements would obtain "effective and timely assistance" in dealing with the problem and mandating a \$1.5 billion commitment from the local sewer district to stop the illegal sewer overflows and start a "claims, cleanup, and prevention" program.

The court victory, says Miami Group activist Marilyn Wall, recently elected to the national Club board of directors, grew out of a wide range of Club organizing efforts to draw attention to the problem, most notably making videos chronicling sewage-in-basement victims, and distributing them to the media, city council, and the judge.

Blending—Good for Scotch, Bad for Drinking Water

Another victory was won in 2005 regarding sewage "blending"—the practice of allowing sewage treatment operators to dump barely treated sewage into lakes and rivers anytime it rains. When the EPA in 2003 proposed a policy that would allow sewage treatment plants to routinely discharge inadequately treated sewage into lakes, rivers, streams, and coastal waters, the Sierra Club launched a counter-offensive.

Joining with six state environmental agencies, the American Public Health Association, public health officials, shellfishermen, marina operators, and others, the Club lobbied heavily on Capitol Hill against the EPA's blending proposal and the administration backed off.

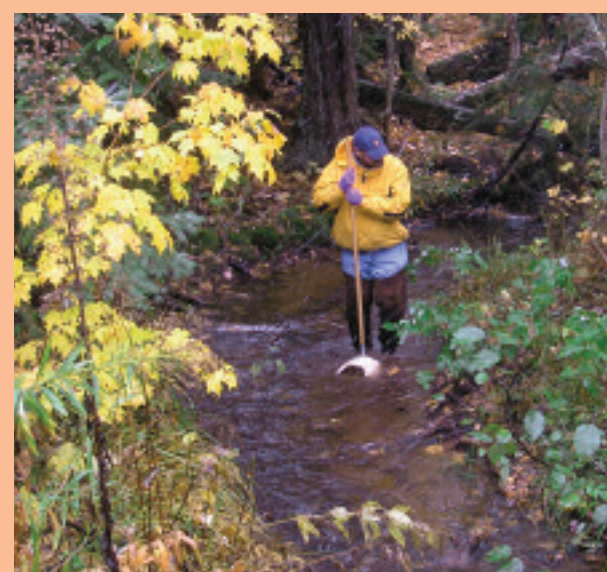
What You—and Your Local Government Agencies—Can Do

One of the objectives of the Safe and Healthy Communities Conservation Initiative Committee is to stop sewage pollution. Coming soon is a water activist toolkit that includes guidance on how to monitor and control sewage overflows and other sewage pollution. For the activist toolkit and other resources, see sierraclub.org/healthycommunities.

WHAT YOU CAN DO AT HOME Don't overwater your lawn. ■ Avoid pesticides and chemical fertilizers. ■ Consider replacing some grass with trees or shrubs, which return more water to the ground. ■ Compost or mulch leaves and grass clippings to keep them out of storm drains. ■ Pick up after pets. ■ Use rainbarrels to collect rainwater from rooftops. ■ Urge your public officials and developers to control impacts of new developments. ■ Become a "Water Sentinel" and help monitor water quality in your community. (Go to sierraclub.org/watersentinels.)

WHAT GOVERNMENT AND DEVELOPERS CAN DO Ensure that stormwater protections are incorporated into the design of the community. ■ Provide for ample greenspace to absorb excess rainwater. ■ Upgrade and maintain wastewater treatment facilities.

FIND OUT MORE Read "Sick Waters: Excess Nutrients Harm the Health of Our Waters," available at sierraclub.org/planet/sickwaters.



Ankle Deep: Water Sentinels Director Scott Dye sampling for aquatic insects in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

I Want My MPG

[FROM P. 1]

have embraced the Kyoto Protocols on curbing global warming because “it would have been easy to meet our emissions targets,” and may not have embarked on risky military adventures in the Persian Gulf. (See “The Road Not Taken at sierraclub.org/planet/mpg.)

Imagine.

But this spring, it seemed like that moment was coming around again, and that Congress and/or President Bush were about to take meaningful action to raise fuel economy standards. The time was ripe, with gas prices climbing above \$3 a gallon and the buzz about global warming turning into a national conversation.

It didn't happen.

Representatives Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.) introduced a bipartisan amendment to raise fuel economy standards to a combined 33 miles per gallon highway and city, but the House Energy Committee refused to adopt it.

Meanwhile, President Bush, who has been expanding presidential power in other domains, called on Congress to give him power to increase the fuel economy standards on cars. But as Dan Becker, director of the Club's global warming program, says, “Like Dorothy in Oz, the president has had this authority all along but refused to use it.”

In 1975, when Congress first enacted Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, it set passenger standards at 27.5 miles per gallon. The statute also gave the Department of Transportation authority to raise passenger car standards beyond 27.5 mpg in future years, subject to disapproval by either house of Congress. Since then, however, the Supreme Court has ruled that this type of one-chamber “legislative veto” is unconstitutional. This means the administration retains the authority to raise CAFE standards without approval from Congress.

This past March, the Bush administration announced slightly higher fuel economy standards for light trucks. Emphasis on slightly. By the administration's own admission, this adjustment will save only two weeks of oil by 2011.

But along with this increase came a restructuring of the rules that replaced the existing fleetwide standard with a size-based system, providing a perverse incentive for automakers to build bigger vehicles to qualify for weaker fuel economy standards. This could actually decrease fuel economy from its already low present level.

In response to these CAFE changes, on May 23, the Sierra Club and 10 states and several other environmental groups sued the Bush administration, claiming that the new standards are illegal because they set standards below the technically and economically feasible level.

Pat Gallagher, director of the Club's Environmental Law Program, says, “They underestimated the technologies and ignored important benefits, such as the ability to significantly reduce our global warming emissions.”

Congress squandered an opportunity 16 years ago and earlier this spring, but here comes another chance. We've got the technology on the shelf to make all new vehicles average 40 miles per gallon within ten years. That could save the average driver more than \$5,000 over the vehicle's lifetime (and that's after accounting for the added costs of the fuel-saving technology). And it could also save 4 million barrels of oil a day—an amount equal to what the United States currently imports from the Persian Gulf and could ever get out of the Arctic Refuge, combined.

Whether Congress seizes this opportunity or perpetuates our oil addiction could depend on how much noise the environmental community makes. Of course, it's an election year, gas prices are hovering around \$3 per gallon, and it could be a long, hot summer.

In the meantime, the Sierra Club is calling on automakers to use current technology to make all their cars, SUVs, and light trucks go farther on a gallon gas. To sign a petition to the automakers, and to find out how much you could save if CAFE standards were modernized, go to the Club's “I Want My MPG” site at sierraclub.org/mpg.

As for replacing my old car, maybe I'd be better off splurging on a new lightweight bicycle. Looks like the best way to keep my emissions down is to leave the car at the curb.



Proposed Interstate Would Ravage Southern Appalachians

STOP I-3: Three Sierra Club chapters are fighting a proposed new interstate highway linking Savannah, Georgia, and Knoxville, Tennessee, that would cut through the heart of the wild country near Brasstown Bald, Georgia's highest peak, pictured above. A shorter interstate highway route from Savannah to Knoxville already exists. The still-pristine Upper Chattahoochee River, in Georgia's Chattahoochee National Forest, below, would be subjected to increased pollution from highway runoff if I-3 is built.

■ BY JULIE AND LARRY WINSLETT

The Dragon's Tail. For 30 miles, US Hwy 129 snakes around the western end of The Great Smoky Mountains National Park like a roller coaster. Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest stands a mere stone's throw to the south. It's about the worst place imaginable to put an interstate highway, but that's what Georgia's Representative Charles Norwood and Senators Saxby Chambliss and Johnny Isakson have proposed. Dubbed I-3, it would extend from Knoxville, Tennessee, to Savannah, Georgia.

Two reasons are given as justification for I-3: to fulfill an economic need for more interstate highways in an area underserved by them and for “national security.” Congress has allotted \$1.3 million for a feasibility study and the Georgia 2006 state budget includes \$100,000 dollars to promote the road. These expenditures are especially grievous in light of proposed massive cuts to existing essential programs, as well as the fiscal crises faced by Georgia and the nation as a whole.

Three Sierra Club chapters—Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina—have joined the fight along with other organizations, taking the position that *no* route through the sensitive Southern Appalachians of Western North Carolina is acceptable.

Here's what Ron Jones of the North Georgia Group says: “I-3 would do nothing for national defense. The money could be far better spent to help our military with better equipment and to secure our borders. As for the area being underserved by major highways, a cursory look at a highway map renders this argument ludicrous. I-3 would devastate parts of



Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, some of the most beautiful mountain areas in America. It would destroy scenery, rural communities, and degrade an already stressed environment. The impact on the area's waterways, the lifeblood of the Southeast (especially the Savannah and Chattahoochee River watersheds), would be incalculable. Air quality would suffer. Danger from nuclear transport between Oakridge and Savannah River Site would also increase.” Georgia Chapter Conservation Chair Kevin Doyle says that the only beneficiaries of the road would be a few rich investors.

One of the biggest concerns about the proposed interstate is its impact on southern Appalachian national forests, specifically the wildlife, water quality, and peace and solitude. As Wayne Jenkins of Georgia Forestwatch puts it: “You just don't build interstates through the heart of a region's golden goose.”

The Stop I-3 Coalition has been monitoring the progress of the highway proposal since it was introduced last summer. So far, both the Georgia and North Carolina departments of transportation have declined to lead the study. This leaves the Federal Highway Administration in charge of contracting out and overseeing the feasibility study, which should include public participation as well as participation by every level of government according to the agency's own guidelines (posted on www.stopi-3.org). The most worrisome concern at this point is that the study may proceed without sufficient public participation. In a strongly-worded letter to J. Richard Capka, acting director of the Federal Highway Administration, the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club demanded that (1) each affected state department of transportation must participate in the study process; (2) citizens from each state must be placed on the study's advisory or steering committee; (3) the entire study process must be open and transparent; (4) there must be full public participation at every phase of the study; and (5) all impacts must be addressed, including those on wetlands, publicly-owned lands, rare species and habitats, significant historical, archeological, and recreational resources, and high-quality watersheds and drinking water. Costs associated with overcoming technical challenges, including unstable geology, rugged mountain terrain and acid drainage from acid-producing rock formations must also be considered.

Take Action Please write your senators and representative and J. Richard Capka, Acting Federal Highway Administration Director, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20590, to demand that a complete feasibility study be conducted according to the agency guidelines, which call for full public involvement. We want the concept of an interstate cutting through the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains to be found not feasible as early as possible and the proposal permanently put to rest. If the study is done correctly, we are confident that it will find the project is unneeded, unwanted, and infeasible.

Family Planning Key to Sustainable Future

BY TOM VALTIN

Want to be a Sierra Club activist and travel to exotic, faraway lands? The Club's Global Population and Environment Program may be just the ticket. The program advocates on the local and national level for improved policies and increased funding for family planning programs, initiatives that advance the rights of women and girls, and reducing individual consumption.

In truth, most of the work done by Club population activists is right here at home, helping educate the public about population-environment connections and motivating citizens to take action. But every other year the program sponsors a trip abroad to spread the word about the benefits of family planning. In 2003, activists traveled to the Andean highlands of Ecuador to promote family planning and sustainable agriculture and help local organizations set up basic healthcare for the poorest of the poor.

According to population experts, a billion people will be added to the planet between 2000 and 2015, exacerbating biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and global warming. "The health of the planet is directly linked to the health of families," says former program director Annette Souder, now the Club's Associate Director for Washington Operations. "Voluntary family planning programs are one of the best and most comprehensive ways to ensure a more sustainable environmental future."

Club population activists recently undertook two trips, to Madagascar last November and the Philippines this March. The Madagascar trip included seven Club volunteers, two staffers, and a journalist, Marilyn Berlin Snell from *Sierra* magazine. (Read Snell's story in the July/Aug issue of *Sierra*: sierraclub.org/sierra/200607/flora.asp.) The group met with international and local officials and visited three villages to see first-hand the positive impact their tax dollars make in health, population, and environment programs.

The group visited rainy, high-altitude villages in the north and arid, lowland villages in the south. "The biodiversity of Madagascar is amazing," says Illinois Chapter activist Cindy Salopek, a trip participant. "Eighty percent of the flora and fauna is found nowhere else on earth—lemurs, chameleons, and six species of baobab trees to name a few." Nearly half of the 250-plus bird species that live in Madagascar are endemic to the island.

But Madagascar's population is growing exponentially, placing enormous strain on the environment. Slash-and-burn practices are destroying forests at an alarming rate and most of the population lacks access to basic needs like healthcare and clean water. "When you walk 20 minutes in 95-degree heat to the local water source where cattle are cooling off and young boys are filling up their water containers," says Souder, "you see very clearly the impact of increased human demand on natural resources."

But with the support of local and international conservation groups, the Malagasy are learning alternatives to slash-and burn. Sustainable agriculture, fish farming, bee keeping, and tree planting are among the activities they are undertaking to protect their natural resources. At the same time, voluntary family planning, immunizations for children, and water purification are being implemented.

"People are making the connection between healthy families and a healthy environment," Salopek says, "and women are empowered when they have the information they need to plan their families." She says integrating family planning into the environmental protection framework is less foreign to the Malagasy than to many Americans.

Participants on these trips are tasked with doing public education and garnering media when they come home. Salopek, whose day job is with the wildlife organization SOS Rhino, is working with the Club's Illinois Chapter to make the global population and environment connection locally. "Teen pregnancy rates are higher in the United States than in most other 'developed' countries," she says. "We're advocating policies and programs to address this, like the Responsible Sex Education bill now before the Illinois legislature."

In March, two Club volunteers joined Souder on another trip, to the Philippines, along with representatives from other environmental organizations. The group visited three sites and attended a conference on population and environmental health that attracted 300 participants from 17 countries. Souder joined high-level government officials as a plenary speaker at the conference, explaining



ANNETTE SOUDER



STEPHEN MALLS



STEPHEN MALLS

Planning Pays Off in Madagascar and the Philippines:

Two young villagers, top, on the Philippines island of Bohol, where voluntary family planning has recently been introduced. Sierra Club activists Ramona Rex and Susan Studer, middle, meet with a local project director on a site visit to Manila. Cindy Salopek, above, was one of seven Club volunteers and three Club staff who visited Madagascar last November to promote family planning and sustainable agriculture.

how grassroots advocacy is done in the United States.

"The Philippines has one of the highest rates of population growth in the world," says Oregon Chapter Population Coordinator Ramona Rex, one of the volunteers on the trip. But she says a growing number of Filipino legislators—including some who helped convene the conference—recognize the environmental benefits of slowing population growth.

The first site visit was to Gilutongan Island, whose population has doubled in 30 years, resulting in declining fish harvests and stress to the local reef system. Now, a marine reserve has been created, and as reef health improves, tourists and divers are bringing in revenue. Family planning supplies are now sold at an island convenience store. Locals are also growing seaweed for harvest, which they sell to a processor on a larger island who turns it into food.

A second visit was to an upland village on the island of Bohol that had been badly deforested. But one-third of the village was recently set aside as a nature preserve, an ecotourism program is now in the works, villagers have formed a co-op that integrates improved agricultural methods, family planning, and healthcare. The final visit was to Manila, where locals are working to clean up the Pasig River. Rural residents have been moving to the city in droves, and conservation groups are introducing family planning to newcomers from the countryside.

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Sierra Club Insider

Protest at DuPont Annual Meeting



Sierra Club members from three states joined the United Steelworkers and allied groups to protest outside DuPont's annual shareholders meeting in Wilmington, Delaware. Jim Rowe, left, president of United Steelworkers Local 943, which

represents more than 500 plant workers in Deepwater, New Jersey, spoke of the dangers of perfluorooctanoic acid, which is used in Teflon cookware and thousands of other consumer and industrial products. Inside the annual meeting, DuPont shareholders rejected a proposal to explore phasing out this controversial chemical. But the proposal received 27 percent of the vote, high for a shareholder initiative on the environment.

Good Jobs and a Clean Environment



Despite strong affinities, labor and environmental groups have a history of butting heads. In June, however, the Sierra Club—the nation's largest grassroots

environmental group—and United Steelworkers—the largest manufacturing union in America—put aside any differences to forge a new "Blue/Green Alliance" aimed at, in the words of Steelworkers' chief Leo Gerard, blowing up "the myth that you can't have a clean environment and good jobs."

Working together, the two groups, which claim a combined membership of more than 1.5 million, hope to reach a broader cross-section of Americans than either could alone. Among the goals of the new progressive coalition: ratification of the Kyoto Treaty, the adoption of higher vehicle fuel economy standards, and stronger environmental and worker protections in international trade agreements.

New Club Board of Directors Elected

This spring, Sierra Club members elected five of their peers to the Board of Directors: Bernie Zaleha of Boise, Idaho; Marilyn Wall of Cincinnati, Ohio; Rafael Reyes of San Mateo, California; Robin Mann of Rosemont, Pennsylvania; and Ellen Pillard of Reno, Nevada. The Board officers for 2006 are Lisa Renstrom, president; Jan O'Connell, vice president; Jim Dougherty, secretary; Joni Bosh, treasurer; Barbara Frank, fifth officer; and Greg Casini, vice president, administration.

Toxic Trailers



More than 100,000 people who lost their homes in Katrina are now housed in FEMA trailers in Mississippi and Louisiana. But recent tests by the Sierra Club of

the trailers' air quality show high levels of formaldehyde, exceeding the maximum safety limit recommended by the EPA and the American Lung Association.

Of 31 trailers tested, only two were at or below the recommended levels, and several were three times over the limit. To find out more, including how to test air quality, go to sierraclub.org/planet/formaldehyde.

The A-Z of Hurricanes

With the arrival of the 2006 hurricane season comes a new report by the Sierra Club and the Gulf Restoration Network that asks if we've learned the lessons of the past, and whether we're prepared for future storms. You can read "The School of Big Storms: The High Cost of Compromising Our Natural Defenses and the Benefits of Protecting Them" at sierraclub.org/planet/bigstorm.pdf.

Hummer H1 Decommissioned



The original mass-produced, street-legal Hummer is being put to pasture by its manufacturer, General Motors. "It's one thing if it's carrying soldiers to and from a

fight," Dan Becker, the Sierra Club's fuel-efficiency expert, told the *New York Times*. "It's another if it's hauling lattes home from Starbucks." The *Times* states, "With diesel fuel prices around \$3 a gallon, it costs more than \$150 to fill up the H1's two gas tanks, which together hold 51.5 gallons." Two other models are still available, the H2 and H3. (Check out the Sierra Club's hummerdinger.com to learn more.)



NOTES FROM ALL OVER

Quick Six, Spreading the Word, and a Fond Farewell

“6 in 2006”: Before last November, says South Carolina Chapter Membership Chair Erika Hartwig (pictured at right below, with Patti Carson, Erica Langenbahn, and Lori Castille), no formal membership committee had met in five years. But when the former chapter activist returned from Washington, D.C., to her native Columbia to attend graduate school last fall, she was quickly recruited as membership chair. “I’d heard about Sierra Club & Beer in Atlanta,” she says, “so I decided to duplicate that in Columbia.” At the first event she recruited two people to her committee; at the next, she added four more. The committee has set a goal of doubling chapter membership this year, establishing a “6 in 2006” campaign asking every member to recruit six new members. A link on the chapter Web site makes signing up for the campaign easy. Plus, each chapter leader has been tasked with recruiting 26 new members in 2006. “Most have already reached half their goal,” Hartwig enthuses.

The second phase of the campaign was to update the chapter Web site and create a “membership corner” for current and potential members to learn more about the



chapter. “We’re making it a priority to attract younger and more diverse members,” Hartwig says. The reinvigorated committee has tabled at boat races, a St. Patrick’s Day celebration, a sportsmen’s exposition, a book festival, and numerous events at the University of South Carolina. They’ve also organized a Sierra Singles event, a whitewater rafting trip, wine tastings, “naturalist” hikes, and public education events. Hartwig says the efforts have paid off with a substantial boost in new members.

Earth Day Sampler: In Bellevue, Washington, Club activists went door-to-door offering incentives to use compact fluorescent bulbs (the “1,000 Light Bulb Challenge”) and asking residents to sign a postcard asking the mayor to make Bellevue a Cool City. In New York City, Club members gathered with clergy from various faiths at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine for a Greening the Religious Community event, where they collected signed postcards thanking Mayor Bloomberg for joining Cool Cities and urging him to take action. In Washington, D.C., more than 100 Club volunteers turned out for an Anacostia River cleanup at three sites in the District and Maryland. In Baton Rouge, the Environmental Conservation Organization at Louisiana State University celebrated an Alternative Earth Day (picture above right) with a Frisbee tournament and live music; Club activists joined student leaders in gathering petitions for Bus Rapid Transit and cypress forest protection. In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, Foothill Group activists celebrated the fruits of their lobbying when the city council ditched a plan to buy 25 conventional pickup trucks and 15 sedans and instead announced they would purchase three hybrid vehicles, adopt a fuel-efficiency policy, and put on hold any further sedan purchases.



JEFF DUNN/SCS

In Memoriam: Maxine McCloskey: Maxine McCloskey, wife of former Club Executive Director Michael McCloskey, died on April 14. She was 78. Born



in Portland, Oregon, McCloskey became an internationally recognized environmental champion. Widowed just a year after obtaining a Master of Arts from Reed College in 1963, she established the Clyde R. Johnson Award for Excellence in Chemistry at Portland State University. Following her marriage to Mike McCloskey, she taught political science and U.S. history at Merritt College in Oakland, California.

An early environmental advocate, primarily for whales, wildlife, and their habitats, she established the Whale Center in Oakland in the 1970s, helped pass the 1982 moratorium on commercial whaling as a U.S. delegate to the International Whaling Commission, and was instrumental in designating the Point Reyes/Farallones National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of San Francisco. Active in planning Sierra Club Wilderness Conferences and the centennial celebration in 1992, she also promoted the organization’s oral history program. In 1995 she was awarded the William E. Colby Award, the highest award for service to the Club.

—TOM VALTIN

who we are

Ken Smokoska—Escondido, California
Sierra Club California Energy Chair

Ken Smokoska is bullish about smart energy solutions. For the last year he has traveled throughout California with his PowerPoint presentation and his golden retriever Sunshine, addressing local governments,



school districts, and town hall meetings, urging cities and counties to enroll in the Community Choice Program to get more power from green sources.

Eldest of eight children, with a dad in the Air Force, Smokoska moved around a lot as a kid and developed a love of the outdoors through his dad. “He got me involved in scouts and took me camping—it was the only vacation we could afford.” These days he loves to head into the Yosemite high country, or the national forests with Sunshine, who he’s enrolling in a search and rescue program.

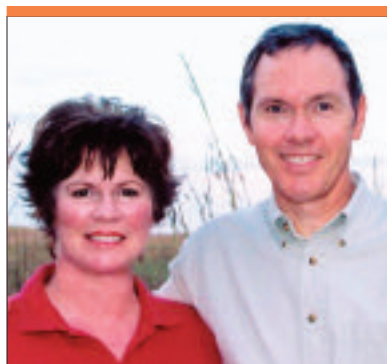
A machine-shop worker in the Steelworkers Union before attending college, Smokoska logged a stint training on a nuclear sub in the Navy before spending most of his career in marketing. In 2004 he started California Alternative Technologies, where he is director. The company is working with the San Diego School District to design and install solar collectors and other green features.

He is also helping expand a trade technology charter school where at-risk youth can live and study when they turn 18. “Kids get career counseling and vocational training in green trades, earn a high school diploma, and we hook them up with work on renewable energy construction projects.”

Smokoska has raised a dozen adopted teenage boys over the last ten years, the last of whom is going to college this year. “I’m closely removed from a mental institution after that tour of duty,” he jokes.

Larry and Vicki Patton—El Dorado, Kansas
Tallgrass Prairie Activists

Larry and Vicki Patton grew up on Kansas farms before meeting in college at Emporia State University. “Our families both helped settle rural Kansas following the Civil War, and have always been involved in the conservation of wild Kansas places,” says Larry, now



Dean of Humanities & Fine Arts at Butler Community College. “We devote any time and energy we have toward protecting and restoring the Flint Hills and other prairie ecosystems. We’re seeding another 20 acres this spring.”

Vicki, a library media specialist in the local school district, says growing up in a farm family on the edge of the hills engendered a respect for the land. “I developed a sense of place that many people today never experience. These quiet, remote places that connect people with nature are disappearing to the tune of millions of acres a year. As a schoolteacher and caretaker of agricultural land, I feel compelled to share the importance of prairie preservation with the young people I encounter.”

In 2002, the couple helped start Protect the Flint Hills (www.protecttheflinthills.org); Larry serves as president and Vicki as secretary. Their goals include encouraging Sierra Club members and the general public to understand the role that prairies play in the health of the planet. “The tallgrass prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world,” Larry says. “Only 3 percent of North America’s tallgrass prairie remains undisturbed, and most of that is in the Flint Hills.”

In their spare time, they are active in their church, pursue genealogy and research on regional history and folklore, and give “living history” demonstrations with their Percheron horses, a breed once used to carry medieval knights into battle.

Claudia Hilligoss—Murphys, California
Claire Tappaan Lodge Committee

Claudia Hilligoss is accustomed to moving around. In a 25-year career with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Indiana native lived in Indianapolis, Tampa, Fort Wayne (Indiana), Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Palo Alto, California, before settling into small-town life in Union, Kentucky, just south of Cincinnati near the Ohio River.

There, the avid watercolorist and ceramicist became chair of the Sierra Club’s Northern Kentucky Group. She also worked as a counselor to battered women. “It was hard,” she reflects. “I wanted to take these women home with me.”

While living in Palo Alto in the 1990s, Hilligoss started hiking with a group called Sierra Singleaires, and began leading service trips in Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. “Leading outings was so rewarding,” she says. “It was very healthy, very healing for me.” In Kentucky,

she continued leading service projects at Mammoth Cave National Park and Big Bone Lick State Park.

All the while, Hilligoss was building her own house, working as her own contractor. But when an opportunity arose to work for the Claire Tappaan Lodge, she jumped at it. “My first visit there was life-changing, to be in an area of such natural beauty. I just can’t shake it.”

Hilligoss is now relocating to the Sierra Nevada to serve on the Claire Tappaan Lodge Committee. She also plans to pursue an advanced degree in psychology from the University of Nevada at Reno, specifically eco-psychology and the relationship of women to wilderness. “Outdoor experiences work wonders for our self-esteem and self-sufficiency,” she says. “To spend time up among the alpine lakes, hiking, skiing, and spotting new wildflowers—it’s such a positive lifestyle.”

—TOM VALTIN