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M A S S A C H U S E T T S

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NEWS BRIEFS

Local Leader Receives John Muir Award

On September 20, at a ceremony in San Francisco, Maine conservation leader Vivian Newman received the John Muir Award—the Sierra Club's highest and most prestigious award. Newman has spent two decades working to protect the integrity of our nation's coasts, waters and wetlands.

The John Muir Award honors a distinguished record of leadership in national or international conservation causes that continues John Muir's preservation and conservation work. In receiving this distinguished award, Newman joins the ranks of William Colby, Ansel Adams, Sigurd F. Olson, William O. Douglas, Jacques Cousteau, and David Brower.

Newman is a relative newcomer to Maine, having moved there less than three years ago. Currently, Newman is chair of the Coastal/Marine Committee and co-chair of the Maine Chapter Conservation Committee. Newman also serves as chair of the Sierra Club's National Marine Resources Committee.



Vivian Newman at a recent Maine chapter annual meeting.

Photograph by John Wilder

On the cover: Fenced beach access in Falmouth, Cape Cod (see story page 4). Photograph courtesy Falmouth Chamber of Commerce

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NEWS BRIEFS

NERCC Releases "Lighting the Way"

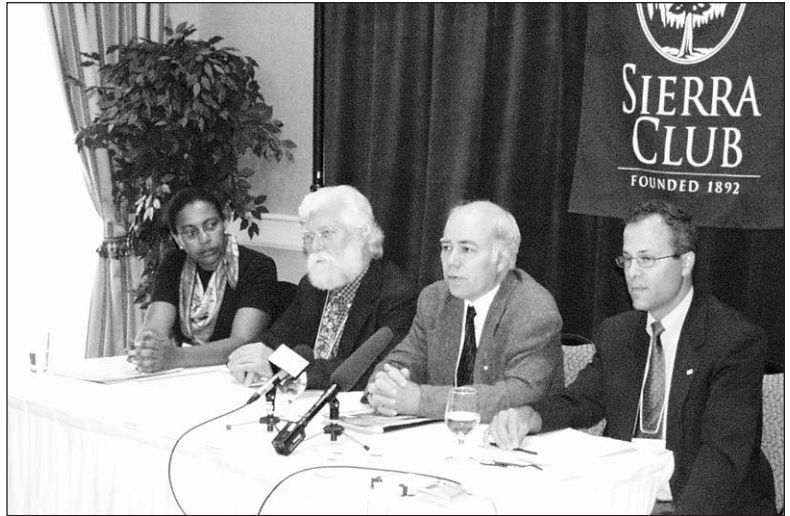
On Tuesday, September 9, the Northeast Regional Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club (NERCC) released a report, "Lighting the Way," as part of the proceedings of the 28th annual conference of the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers.

"Lighting the Way," which was put together by a summer NERCC intern, describes the accomplishments of the US northeast states and Canadian eastern provinces in energy conservation, and lays out what the next steps should be, according to the Sierra Club. The document and conference were especially timely after the northeast US power grid failure, which left many without electricity and water for over 24 hours.

Sierra Club members from Canada, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island participated in the conference. In its most compelling resolution, which passed unanimously, the conference asked the EPA to reconsider its decision to relax the New Source Review regulations for power plants.

What you can do

To see the NERCC report, go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/rcc/northeast>.



Photograph by Ethan Hoag

Presiding at the September 9 NERCC press conference, from left: Mary Ann Nelson, Massachusetts Chapter Chair; Mark Dittrik, Sierra Club of Canada, Atlantic Chapter; David Coon, Conservation Council of New Brunswick; Daniel LaBlanc, Sierra Club of Canada, Atlantic Chapter.

Sierra Club Endorses Pro-Environment Candidates in Cambridge

The Sierra Club has endorsed six candidates in the Cambridge City Council race: incumbents Marjorie Decker, Henrietta Davis, and Brian Murphy, and challengers Carole Bellew, Craig Kelley, and John Pitkin.

"We reserve our political endorsements for candidates we believe would be outstanding advocates for environmental protection," said David Margil, chair of the Greater Boston Group of the Massachusetts Sierra Club. "These individuals have shown a deep commitment to improving the quality of life, protecting the environment, and making Cambridge more pedestrian-, bike-, and public-transit-friendly. They recognize the importance of the environment for our lives, the area's economy, and the health of our families."

Sierra Club Member Gifts Western Massachusetts Home Town

Massachusetts Sierra Club Chapter member John Astore has made a surprise gift of 37 acres of land to his home town of West Stockbridge. The beautiful property, the site of an abandoned marble quarry, lies next to public land owned by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and is a popular swimming hole for local residents.

Astore, 94, has served the town for half a century in various public offices, and still works as an assessor. His motivation? "I want this land to be preserved," he told reporter Derek Gentile of the *Berkshire Eagle* staff. "So much is being sold and ruined these days, and not enough land is being preserved."

Astore says that he has had many offers to buy the property, but he would not sell because he didn't want the land to be developed.

Back to Our Grassroots

The Sierra Club's strength is its large active membership. In fact, the Sierra Club is the country's largest grassroots environmental organization. This is the result of years of grassroots activities: knocking on doors and calling friends and neighbors.

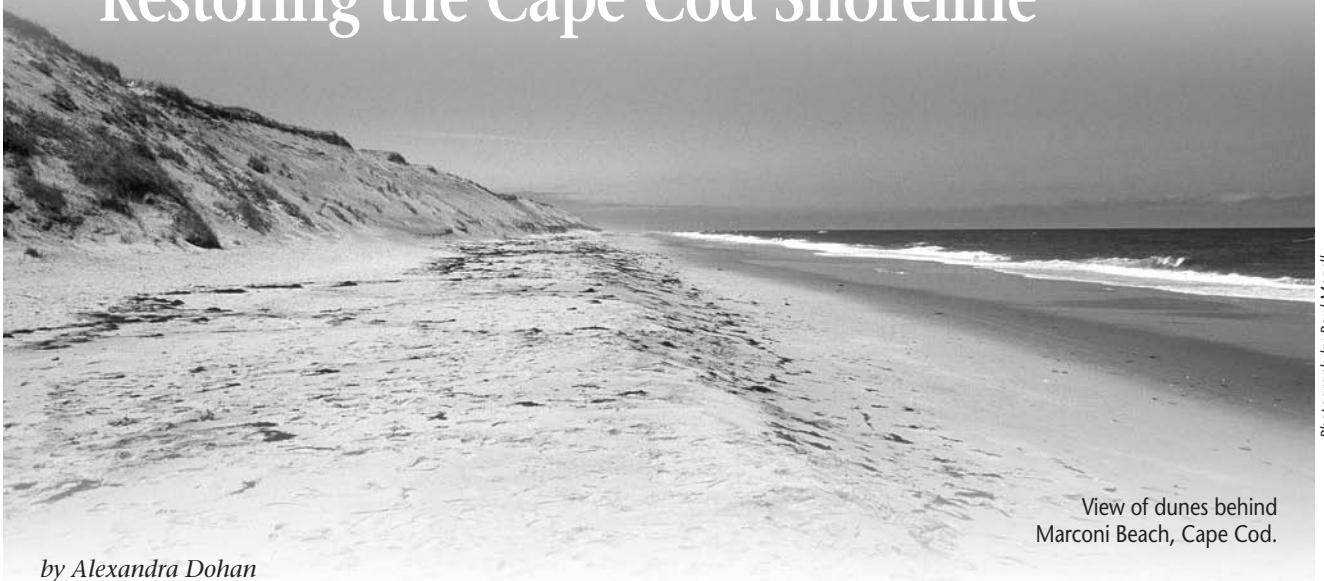
This fall for the first time the Sierra Club will ask members to contact each other. You may receive a knock on your door from a member just like you asking you to sign a post card or take a bumper sticker for your car.

Why go to all this trouble? Grassroots organizing is where the club's roots are (pun intended) and it is needed now more than ever. As the saying goes: if the people lead, then the leaders will follow.

What you can do

If you'd like to be part of one of the club's exciting fall campaigns, please contact Jeremy Marin at jeremy.marin@sierraclub.org. Or call Jeremy at 617-423-5775.

The World in a Grain of Sand: Restoring the Cape Cod Shoreline



View of dunes behind
Marconi Beach, Cape Cod.

by Alexandra Dohan

Photograph by Paul Mozell

Henry Beston's Outermost House in Eastham on Cape Cod is gone today. But sand and sea, though in fact very much changed, would appear much the same to a casual observer as when Beston lived there in 1928, keeping a journal about the beach, the ocean, the wildlife, and the people he found there. One of the great mysteries of the coast is how it appears to remain the same while constantly changing. Plants, animals, land and water form a complex web that maintains itself remarkably well, if there are no major disruptions. Even after a violent storm destroys a beach or fills a tidal channel, the original pieces seem to flow seamlessly back together in a new pat-

Rocky shoreline in
Falmouth, Cape Cod.



Photograph courtesy, Falmouth Chamber of Commerce

tern. Whole beaches can be moved in a single storm—witness Chatham Light and the “break” or breach of the barrier island that occurred in 1987. The whole channel has moved, but the beach has restructured itself, not for the first or the last time.

The animals and plants that live here, on the transition zone between the sea and the land, have adapted to constantly changing winds, waves and sand. When humans get involved, however, we can tip the natural balance unfavorably, unless we are careful. Concrete foundations, septic systems, jetties, groins, seawalls, and other human structures affect coastal landforms. A beach or sand dune that is altered by humans becomes less self-sufficient, less able to heal itself after natural alterations. Groins and jetties block the transport of sand along the shore, causing beaches to shrink.

Falmouth, Massachusetts, is a case in point. Located on Buzzards Bay and Nantucket Sound at the southwestern end of Cape Cod, Falmouth has become a popular summer resort area in the last century. People with homes along the shore have built seawalls, groins, jetties, and other sorts of “sand traps” to prevent their own bit of sand from washing down the coastline. This works out well for owners, but deprives the next beach of sand. When currents pull the sand away from the down-drift side of the groin and deposit it further down the beach, the artificial alteration causes a chain reaction that ultimately starves the beach of sand, and changes the shoreline ecosystem. Today, such structures armor much of the coastline along

Falmouth's south shore. As a result, the beaches south of Falmouth like Trunk River and Menauhant are much more narrow and rocky than they were, say, a hundred years ago, and many of the dunes that lay behind the beaches have disappeared.

Once you have domesticated an animal, it can't survive for long on its own in the wild. A beach that has been tamed by humans has the same problem. Rock walls, jetties, beach replenishment, filling of wetlands: all of these may keep nice beaches in front of homes, or keep the homes from falling into the sea, but what of the beach itself, and what of the creatures that call the coastal zone home? Concrete, stone and wood can straitjacket the natural physical processes that build dunes, beaches, barrier islands and tidal flats.

The Falmouth Coastal Resources Working Group (CRWG) has developed an innovative proposal for the Falmouth shoreline. The goal is not to simply restore the beach, but to restore both coastal landforms (beaches, dunes, tidal flats, and other sediment sources), and the natural physical transport processes that produce these landforms. Once coastal processes are restored, coastal landforms can be sustained. In turn, coastal ecosystems will benefit. No short-term, quick fix, the CRWG's restoration program spans the next one hundred years.

Jude Wilber, a coastal scientist in Falmouth, got things going when he opposed funding for coastal armoring projects at Falmouth Town Meeting in 1999. Instead of paying for more seawalls and jetties, the town decided to form the CRWG to study coastal processes and develop recommendations for managing Falmouth's south shore. The nine members of the CRWG were given the task of examining the current situation of the coastal zone in Falmouth, and making an educated prediction about what the coast would look like in the future. Dr. Rob Thieler, a coastal geologist with the US Geological Survey in Woods Hole, chairs the group.

The CRWG has written a comprehensive report detailing the present condition of the coast in Falmouth and how it came to be, and offering a wide range of recommendations to restore and sustain the coastal zone. The group recommends removal of various artificial structures or benign neglect of such structures. Public outreach is critical, as is ongoing acquisition and preservation of coastal open space. Accord-



Photograph courtesy Falmouth Chamber of Commerce

Falmouth Cove,
Cape Cod.

ing to the group's report, "Falmouth is today at a crossroads... [I]f the next 100 years of shoreline development is similar to the previous century, the Falmouth shoreline will be an undesirable, even hazardous environment, devoid of all beaches except those artificially maintained. Many properties, both public and private, will be vulnerable to storm damage and destruction. Maintenance costs will rise dramatically, and the very values that created and have sustained Falmouth as a desirable coastal town will be destroyed."

But "this grim forecast need not represent the town's future," the report continues, "The town can turn away from the destructive strategies of the past and apply the knowledge of the processes at work along its shoreline to enhance, rather than degrade, its coastal areas. It will take a change in management strategies, and it will entail costs. But the CRWG feels that those costs will be offset by the reduction of storm damage and maintenance costs, and the increased value of its shoreline. Falmouth can be a leader; it can develop a new model for human interaction with the coastline. In so doing, Falmouth will not only point the way for other communities, but will maintain its traditional human and natural values."

Once coastal processes are restored, coastal landforms can be sustained.

In turn, coastal ecosystems will benefit.

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Profit Before Parks:

State's highest court approves clearcutting of state park for private developer

By James McCaffrey

For more than one hundred years, the Sierra Club has fought nationwide to protect and preserve our public lands so that future generations can enjoy them. In Massachusetts the front line of this battle has been waged for nearly a decade at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation, a publicly owned parkland in Princeton and Westminster. On July 14, 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) overturned a previous decision to prevent a private ski area developer from clearcutting 12.5 acres of the park to expand its \$10-million-a-year commercial operation.

A balance of conservation and recreation?

The latest SJC ruling puts the interests of intensive development-dependent recreation over that of passive recreation and conservation. By overturning the previous ruling, the SJC sanctions the destruction of our irreplaceable public parklands by private ventures, and threatens the environmental protections and public lands stewardship of the Commonwealth.

The developers and the Department of Conservation and Recreation claim the decision strikes a "balance of conservation and recreational usage." But less than 5 percent of the US population ski. The ski area now controls 22 percent of Wachusett Mountain State Reservation—including more than one hundred acres of ski terrain—most of which is off-limits to non-skiers who do not require the destruction of 2,000 trees and a mature northern red-oak forest to sustain their recreational pursuits.

A process gone wrong

At Wachusett, the developers and the state were required to submit plans for the use of Wachusett park. However, the developer's expansion plan was approved before the state was able to submit its management plan for the park! The state ultimately determined that "[t]he mountain's forested slopes are an irreplaceable natural resource" and recommended that the area in question "be managed in a 'hands off"

manner to protect the maturing forests around the summit and allow them to regain an old growth character."

So the decision to proceed with the developer's expansion plan goes against the state's own directives. Sadly, it also strikes down a tradition in Massachusetts of preserving our natural areas ahead of the interests of commercial development. Until now, this stewardship-based principle has

The clear-cutting of the forests at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation took less than a week. The effects, however, will be felt for decades.

protected our public lands from the unremitting march of sprawling development.

The clear-cutting of the forests at Wachusett Mountain State Reservation took less than a week. The effects, however, will be felt for decades. The relentless campaign by the administration and a private ski corporation to destroy the heart of an irreplaceable natural resource has unfortunately established a new ideology: profit before parks.

A silver lining

The administration, the legislature, and the state's highest court have each in turn failed to prevent the clear-cutting of Wachusett's great forests. If there is any silver lining in this dark cloud, it is that the conflict has raised awareness of a growing nationwide trend: the privatization and commercialization of our public lands. Sadly, this will be the legacy the Crowley family, former Department of Environmental Management Commissioner Peter Webber, and former Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Secretary Robert Durand leave, since each of them played an active role in abandoning Massachusetts's tradition

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View of Mount Wachusett from summit of Mount Watatic.



Photograph by James McCaffrey

Greylock Glen, Revisited

By Elisa Campbell

In June of 2001, Acting Governor Jane Swift stopped a Greylock Glen project that would have included a golf course and resort hotel/conference center. Swift announced that state economic development efforts would instead be directed by the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (MassDevelopment) and would be focused on downtown Adams. However, the future of the Glen was not determined at that time.

Recently, MassDevelopment and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the agency originally authorized to develop the land in the Glen, decided what to do—or at least where to start. Their current proposal is for an environmental education center “which may also accommodate associated conference center functions” on about 20 acres at the edge of the Glen parcel nearest the center of town. This project would use the \$2 million that the state claims remains in the funds originally authorized for the project during the mid-80s (Chapter 676). The proposal also includes plans for trails through the Glen.

The proposed environmental center was put out to bid in the spring. The project includes significant public subsidies, including use of the land from DEM, tax-exempt bonds from MassDevelopment, and a grant from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative for “green technologies” in the building and on the site.

In late August, MassDevelopment turned down all the proposals, asking for more details. As of this writing, we do not know what happens next.

Environmentalists concerned about the Glen have been following this process carefully. While people differ about whether an environmental education center should be built on the Glen, everyone is concerned that there will be more proposals for development on the rest of the Glen in the future. Town officials and pro-devel-



Looking north along Greylock Glen in the spring.

Photograph by Elisa Campbell

opment people continue to push for more, including a golf course.

What you can do

Since the state has moved the project from DEM to MassDevelopment, the process for making decisions has become completely unclear. The rules for DEM were known; with MassDevelopment it often seems as if there are no rules, at least as far as public hearings, etc., are concerned. That makes it difficult for environmental-

ists to describe the situation to the citizens of the Commonwealth who have frequently demonstrated love for Mount Greylock. No one fighting for the mountain and its protection has given up, and we won't. New people have joined us. If you want to know more, or to help, contact Elisa Campbell at ecampbell@sierraclubmass.org. ❖

Elisa Campbell is a member of the Massachusetts Chapter Executive Committee and chair of the Pioneer Valley Group.

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Campaign for Responsible Automakers: Still Going Strong

By Chris Hallgren

The reasons for reducing our nation's excessive appetite for gasoline are many: global warming, local air pollution, foreign policy, and the simple economics of spending so much of our money on gas. In fact, in *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices*, the Union of Concerned Scientists puts the use of cars and light trucks at the top of its list of "most harmful consumer activities." In its campaign to reduce our consumption of gasoline and oil, the Sierra Club continues to encourage Ford Motor Corporation to offer cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles throughout its fleet. The Club's Campaign for Responsible Automakers has targeted Ford primarily because of promises made by Ford CEO and self-proclaimed environmentalist, William Clay Ford, Jr. This is no time to let Ford off the hook; the company announced in April that it was breaking Mr. Ford's promise to make a 25 percent improvement in the fuel economy of its SUVs by 2005.

The Campaign for Responsible Automakers promotes the adoption of existing technology that has been proven to be effective at improving fuel economy without dramatically increasing cost. While gas-electric hybrids and even fuel-cell vehicles offer great promise for the future, innovations such as continuously variable transmissions, variable-valve-control engines and idle-off starter-generators are available today and can be implemented to improve the fuel economy of any vehicle, from the smallest commuter car to the largest SUV.

In other developments, this past summer the Sierra Club announced that former Sierra Club President Dr. Robert Cox will run for Ford's board of directors in order to improve the company's environmental record. At the same time the Club released an ad questioning Ford's commitment to innovation. The ad, which ran in the *New York Times* and *Business Week*, pointed out that the gas mileage of the Model T, Ford's first car (25 miles-per-gallon), is *better* than the average gas mileage of Ford vehicles today.

Earlier this spring, on April 2, Massachusetts supporters of the Campaign for Responsible Automakers joined supporters in other US cities in a National Day of Action, flooding the top executives of Ford Motor Corporation with about 15,000 calls

1903-2003
A CENTURY OF INNOVATION...

...EXCEPT AT FORD.


Model T: 25 mpg Explorer: 16 mpg

Nearly a century ago, Ford's Model T got 25 miles to the gallon. Today, Ford's cars and trucks average 22.6 miles per gallon, and the Explorer gets just 16 miles per gallon. That's not progress.

In fact, Ford has fallen behind. Foreign automakers are leading the way by putting smarter transmissions, better engines, sleeker aerodynamics, and other innovative fuel saving technologies into their vehicles. Japanese automakers are driving the future with hybrid cars that average over 50 mpg. And five years after the introduction of the hybrids, Ford has failed to make and market one of its own.

So for Ford on its 100th birthday — we have a wish: Do better — use existing technology to make cleaner cars that go farther on a gallon of gas, save your customers money and time at the pump, clean up the environment and cut our country's need for oil. **Begin your second century with innovation truly worth celebrating.**

To find out more about fuel economy innovations available to Ford right now, go to: www.sierraclub.org/freedom.

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and 4,000 emails saying customers expect and deserve vehicles that use today's technology to go farther on a gallon of gas. Local supporters took advantage of another opportunity to encourage the auto giant to do the right thing when the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club hosted a table at Earth Fest in Boston on April 26th. Despite heavy rain, volunteers collected over 300 signed post cards to be delivered to the Ford Corporation.

What you can do

Drive responsibly, use alternative modes of transportation whenever feasible, and buy responsibly. Most importantly, tell your friends and associates what you're doing and why. For more information about the campaign, including whom to contact if you'd like to get involved, go to <http://www.sierraclubmass.org/greencars.html>. For more details on the campaign's "Freedom Package" of fuel saving technologies, please go to www.sierraclub.org/freedompackage. ❖

Chris Hallgren is chair of the Massachusetts Chapter Campaign for Responsible Automakers.

The Gutting of the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act

by Megan Admundson

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) are among the most beloved and effective of environmental regulations. With the aid of these acts we've watched the bald eagle come back and have worked to protect our own Northern Right Whale.

This spring, in another demonstration of Bush's shameful disregard for the environment, these two regulations were severely challenged. The Department of Defense (DoD) has proposed a Defense Readiness Act that exempts the DoD from a great number of environmental regulations, including the ESA and MMPA. The military manages over 25 million acres of land—land that often houses endangered species. But the military's record on environmental protection is poor. Many in Massachusetts remember the Massachusetts Military Reservation fiasco, when the military did not clean up major toxic plumes that were going to pollute drinking water on Cape Cod.

There is also no evidence that these exemptions are necessary. Although the ESA currently provides for some exemptions in the name of military readiness, the military has never applied for any. Now the DoD wants us to believe that without further exemptions we will destroy our military. In

reality, everyone from former EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman to DoD Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz has asserted that there is no proof that our military is less ready because of environmental regulations.

Here's how the Defense Readiness Act looks:

In the House

The House Rules Committee, in charge of this bill, decided that if the military should receive exemptions, then so should everyone else. The House Rules Committee attempted to extend the exemption to all other federal agencies and even some private corporations. Luckily, an amendment passed that confined the exemption to the DoD.

Some key changes in the House version include a weakening of the definition of *harassment*, or what the ESA considers harmful to endangered species. Currently the definition is

fairly comprehensive, and includes any modification of habitat or behavior of endangered species that could affect the species' ability to rebound. The House version of the MMPA also makes marine mammal "small takes" limitless for everyone, not just the DoD. It further allows the Secretary of Defense to exempt the ESA or MMPA at any time in the name of readiness.

In the Senate

The Senate's bill is much better than the House's, although it still affects the ESA and MMPA. According to this version, military lands would be exempt from critical-habitat designations. Instead, under the Sikes Act, the Secretary of Defense will work with the Secretary of the Interior to develop an integrated management plan for military lands that protects and rehabilitates wildlife, fish, and game. Although this is far less damaging than the House version, plans developed with the input of the Secretary of Defense are likely to be less protective of natural resources than they would be under current environmental regulations.

The Defense Readiness Act remained in conference committee through the summer and is expected to be addressed this fall. While rumors abound of the House re-entering many of the provisions it passed that the Senate did not, there is still time to contact your Congressmen to save the ESA and the MMPA. ❖

Megan Admundson has held a number of volunteer posts in the Massachusetts Sierra Club, including chair of the Northern Right Whale Campaign. She is currently on the GBG Executive Committee.

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JET SKIS:

Economic, Public Health, and Wildlife Impacts

By Leslie Doyle

Jet skis are the bane of existence for many a beach lover. But beyond the grating noise, what impact do they have on our communities?

Quite a bit, as it turns out. Jet skis threaten wildlife. They pollute our air and our water. And they are fundamentally unsafe.

Threat to wildlife

Fish and wildlife biologists have found that jet skis routinely disrupt the lives of marine mammals like dolphins, seals, humpback whales, and manatees, as well as nesting waterfowl. Because they do not emit a low-frequency sound that can travel long distances, jet skis do not alert surfacing birds or mammals (including humans) of their approach until it's too late. Because they can get into areas inaccessible to conventional motorboats, jet skis can disturb sensitive aquatic habitats.

Jet skis also create excessive turbulence or "brown-outs," which block light, deplete oxygen in the water, and harm both fish and birds. Jet skis have been outlawed on Lake Tahoe, one of the deepest lakes in the world, where they contributed to the decline of water clarity.

Air pollution

Jet skis emit toxic chemicals into our air and water: benzene (a Class A carcinogen), methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE has been found to cause cancer in lab animals), and toluene (which

affects the nervous system). According to the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management Office, outdoor concentrations of benzene, 1-3, butadiene, acetaldehyde, and formaldehyde in the northeast region already exceed established health protective guidelines by several orders of magnitude.

As is well known, air pollution contributes to a variety of health problems. In Massachusetts, more than 750,000 people suffer from heart or lung ailments that are seriously aggravated by air pollution.

Water pollution

Several cases of MTBE contamination have been directly linked to jet ski use. For example, MTBE was measured at 88 parts per billion after jet ski events on Lake Shasta.

Even at extremely low concentrations, the noxious taste and odor of MTBE can render water undrinkable. Once MTBE gets into the water, it is extremely difficult and costly to get it out because it is resistant to traditional methods used to remove other hydrocarbon contamination from water supplies. The South Lake Tahoe utility district has already spent \$9 million to clean up MTBE contamination and estimates that it will cost \$45 million more to remove MTBE from the town's water supply.

Although the jet ski industry has developed cleaner, four-stroke engines, the vast majority of the 7,000 jet skis currently registered in Massachusetts have two-stroke engines. In two-stroke engines, the intake and exhaust valves are open at the same time, so excessive unburned fuel pours straight out of the vehicle before it can be combusted. Such engines can dump up to four gallons of unburned oil and gas directly into the water in just two hours.

Even the new two-stroke direct-injection engines emit four times greater emissions than four-stroke engines with equivalent horsepower, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Noise pollution

What is it about jet ski noise that puts people on edge? The Noise Pollution Clearinghouse explains: "Jet ski noise is different than that of conventional motorboats because of constant fluctuations in pitch. Rapidly varying noise is much more disturbing than constant noise, as decades of psycho-acoustic research has established."

Safety concerns

Jet skis are different from traditional motorboats because they are propelled by forcing water through the vessel (jet propulsion). Due to this design, most jet skis cannot stop or react quickly to avoid obstacles. If the rider releases the throttle or experiences a power failure, he will not be able to avoid a collision.

Researchers from the University of Michigan have warned that jet skis "present several safety hazards resulting from their ability to attain high speeds while having only limited [stopping] capabilities." This problem is exacerbated in newer jet skis that have even greater horsepower. Sea Doo now offers models with 215 horsepower—more power than many cars on the road today.

Earlier this year, vice-chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board Mark Rosenker expressed frustration that five years after the board released a safety study recommending the adoption of improved design and controllability standards for jet skis, there are still no comprehensive safety standards for jet skis.

So beware: next time you see a jet ski approaching, that jarring noise isn't all it's leaving in its wake.

What you can do

For further information or to receive action alerts on this issue, please contact Leslie Doyle at 508-435-0275 or lesliedoyle@comcast.net. ❖

Leslie Doyle is a freelance writer and chair of the Massachusetts Chapter Legislative Committee.

Photograph by Eric Endlich



Jet skier on the Charles River, Boston.

BOOK REVIEW:

Constant Battles The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage

By Steven LeBlanc with
Katherine Register
St. Martin's Press, \$25.95, 230 pp.

Reviewed by Diana Muir

Anthropologists have carefully examined the lives of hunter/gatherers and farmers living in non-complex societies and determined that these people, both the few such groups that survived into the twentieth century and the many who lived in the long period of human history known only from archaeology, were unlike us in three important ways.

First, neither hunter/gatherers nor pre-state farmers engaged in warfare. War emerged with civilization, first introduced to the world by the early Mesopotamians who gave us writing, the wheel, and so much more. Earlier peoples may have had feuding or battle-as-ritual, but not actual wars in which soldiers aim to kill a lot of the enemy.

Second, these non-complex societies lived in harmony with nature. Unlike 'civilized' peoples from Babylonian onward, who have deforested hills, silted up estuaries, and driven numerous species to extinction, people in simpler societies lived in harmony with nature, often taking great care not to upset the balance of species and resources. They were the original ecologists.

Third, the people whose lifeways are the simplest and most natural of all—the world's hunter/gatherers—are the best able to achieve harmony with nature since they have developed ways to keep population growth within sustainable levels. They achieved this by nursing infants for three or four years, which leads to such a long natural spacing of births that zero growth is achieved.

Archaeologist Steven LeBlanc, curator of collections at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard, has written *Constant Battles* to inform us that it ain't necessarily so.

Despite endorsement of the three principles outlined above by virtually every anthropology professor now publishing, the effort to produce a single example of a society that eschews war, lives in harmony with nature, and has achieved zero population growth has born little fruit. Of the cultures known to archaeology and ethnology—and there are well over 1,000—only about a dozen have been described as actually achieving even one of the three hallmarks imputed to all pre-state societies.

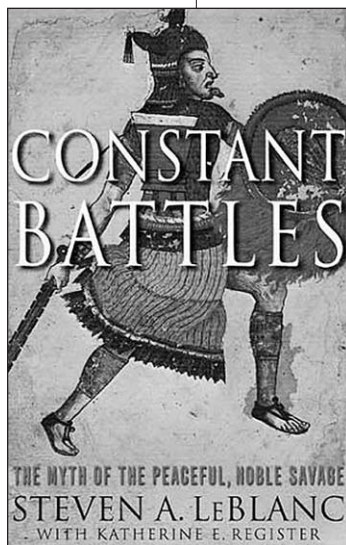
LeBlanc examines this very brief list and finds that they all fall into one of a few categories. There are groups like the Hutterites, undoubtedly pacifist, but only able to be so because they live entirely within a nation state that takes care of defense. There are groups like the Siriono of Amazonia, studied by anthropologists in the 1940s when introduced diseases had so decimated their numbers that the handful of

surviving Siriono could not possibly overexploit the resources of an environment that had once supported many times their number. And there are groups like the Warrau of Venezuela, studied when they had just been given steel axes and other metal tools that made it possible to easily fashion dugout fishing canoes and chop down palm trees to get at the nourishing pith. Steel made it possible for the Warrau to live in unprecedented plenty.

In other words, when people suddenly live in great plenty, either because they are able to exploit resources in new ways or because some catastrophe has left only a few survivors in a lush ecosystem, they may indeed live in peace and without degrading their environment.

As for a group that lives in peace and plenty because it has carefully preserved the local ecosystem and/or successfully kept population growth below zero so that the ecosystem would be able to sustain the group in

continued on page 12



BOOK BRIEF:

Everything You Wanted to Know about Vermicomposting . . .

Compost By Gosh!

Written and illustrated by Michelle Eva Portman
Flower Press, 42 pp., \$16.95

Reviewed by Roberta Tovey

Not for the squeamish, Michelle Eva Portman's new children's book will do much to encourage kids of all ages to play in the dirt. Portman tells it like it is when worms meet garbage:

"While writhing and wriggling,
On food scraps they dined.
Now waste turned to gold
Has come out their behind."

Cleverly illustrated with photographs overlaid with drawings, this book packs in enough down-to-earth information to start you and your children on your own composting adventure at home. ❖



Constant Battles

(continued from page 11)

comfort going forward, LeBlanc asserts that none exists.

I have recently spent an extended period in Tozzer Library researching a book intended to portray those human groups that have maintained zero population growth and achieved a sustainable balance with their environment. I did, of course, understand that I would have to mention some groups only in passing since space would obviously permit going into detail with regard to only a few of the more interesting ecologically sustainable cultures. In the end, I did not have to leave out a single instance of humans living in balance with nature because I could not find a single society that met the criteria. This was true even though I was not requiring that these societies be pacific, merely that their environmental adaptation be sustainable.

Every human group tends to grow over time. According to LeBlanc's compellingly written account of the human story, this incessant growth has always meant that societies sooner or later outgrow their resource base. At that point they set out to expropriate someone else's resource base, whether with stone-tipped spears, bronze battle-axes, or Black Hawk helicopters.

LeBlanc's depictions of hunter/gatherers are especially chilling. He describes women digging up an entire patch of wild tubers, then selecting only the large ones as worth the trouble of carrying back to camp. The rejected tubers are left on the ground to wither, a digging method that precludes a future harvest from that patch. And when hunter/gatherers fight, they aim to kill. The purpose of warfare in a world of hunter/gatherers, after all, is to eliminate competition for resources.

LeBlanc carries the reader along by the force of his argument. He sets out to persuade us that "the warfare and ecological destruction we find today fit into patterns of human behavior that have gone on for millions of years." And he succeeds. ❖

Diana Muir, a regular contributor to the Sierran, is working on a new book on the role of overpopulation in history.

Restoring the Cape Cod Shoreline

(continued from page 5)

The CRWG recommends the prohibition of new coastal armoring structures. Existing structures should be reconstructed or repaired "where the underlying landform is a sediment source, a coastal beach, coastal dune, eroding coastal bank or other dynamic coastal landform." Funding from state and federal sources may be required to study various beach nourishment experiments in the process of "softening" the coastline and to acquire land. To get all this started, the report urges the formation of a "Town Coastal Management Committee" to "review proposed coastal projects, coordinate coastal activities and to inform the public concerning coastal processes."

Wilber and the CRWG hope that Falmouth will be a model for future coastal management all around the nation. According to Chris Neill, chair of the Massachusetts Sierra Club's Cape Cod Group, the CRWG proposal "puts Falmouth out in front of most of the rest of the country." The challenge, Neill says, will be "to have the town

boards actually deny permits for beach nourishment, dock construction, seawall rebuilding and other things. That day is yet to come."

The CRWG hopes that with the cooperation of the many town boards, committees and commissions that oversee the coastal zone, some of the recommendations will come to pass sooner than later. Given time, Falmouth's shoreline will no longer need management and people will build farther from the shore. Nobody expects Falmouth to become a pristine coastal wilderness again, but the hope is to make the coastline self-sustaining, as it once was.

What you can do

For more information about the problems of coastal armoring on the Cape and elsewhere, check out "*Against the Tide: The Battle for America's Beaches*" by Cornelia Dean. ❖

Alexandra Dohan lives in Lexington, Massachusetts, and has had a lifelong interest in all things maritime.

Profits Before Parks

(continued from page 6)

of preserving our cultural, historical and environmental resources for the benefit of all citizens.

The future of our state forests and parks

In the next 20 to 30 years, Massachusetts will reach its full build-out for developable land. The loss of mature northern red oak forests at Wachusett is a tragedy, but there are even larger issues at stake. Massachusetts loses 44 acres of open space every day to private development. Some of this occurs, as it did at Wachusett, on public parkland. At the municipal level, 20 percent of all park-takings are for private or residential use.

How we treat the few places afforded protection today will determine the quality of life for future generations, and dictate who will choose to live, work, and visit this great Common-

wealth. We must work to change the attitude that puts profit before preservation, lest the public lose faith in the state's ability to be a trustworthy steward. Some privatization of state facilities (e.g. rinks and pools) may be appropriate, but not without limits or the need to adhere to existing laws that protect these lands.

The Sierra Club has already begun actively working with environmental leaders in the legislature to identify and correct the regulatory and legislative flaws that allowed the decimation of our state park at the hands of a private developer. We look forward to working with our members throughout the Commonwealth to ensure that such tragedies never again occur in our state forests and parks. ❖

James McCaffrey is director of the Massachusetts Sierra Club.

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Help Prepare a Massachusetts Wildlife Plan!

Here is an opportunity for volunteers to influence our state's wildlife policy.

Congress requires all the states to prepare a Comprehensive Wildlife Plan as a condition for obtaining some types of federal funding. The plans must be completed by October 2005. The Sierra Club has asked state chapters to work with the responsible state agency; in Massachusetts, this is the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The Massachusetts Chapter plans to establish a Wildlife Committee to work on this project and other wildlife issues.

Interested? Please contact the chapter office: (617) 423-5775, office@sierraclubmass.org or the Chapter Conservation Chair, Gil Woolley: (617) 965-6247, gwoolley@sierraclubmass.org.

Daily Transportation/Sprawl News Updates

Transportation and sprawl happen every day, and so do news articles covering them. Jeremy Marin, Conservation Organizer from the Boston office, puts out a daily email listing the title and a link to all of the day's transportation and sprawl stories from around Massachusetts.

If you would like to join the list of people receiving the daily updates, drop Jeremy an email at jeremy.marin@sierraclub.org.

GBG News

The Greater Boston Group (GBG) is moving to address inadequacies in the City of Boston recycling program. At present the city does not pick up recycling from buildings that have been classified as rooming houses. Such a designation includes college fraternities and sororities.

Several members of the GBG executive committee are taking a personal interest in correcting this apparent inequity and will be meeting with the city's trash enforcement and licensing personnel.

Another area of interest is the proposed development plans for land adjacent to the Metropolitan District Commission's Alewife reservation. Not only is the reservation home to a wide variety of wildlife, including beavers, fish, and numerous bird species, it also features an array of habitats including marshes, forests, meadows, and a river. While the development proposals still remain in flux, the GBG is monitoring the situation closely and looking particularly closely at potential traffic congestion as well as storm water runoff.

The GBG continues to spearhead several urban transportation issues: advocating for the North/South Rail Link, which would connect North and South Stations; pressing for a light rail solution for the Silver Line; and closely monitoring the restoration of the Arborway light rail line to Jamaica Plain. ❖

The Massachusetts Chapter and Borders Books are co-sponsoring author Jeffrey M. Smith in a discussion about his book, *Seeds of Deception: Exposing Industry and Government Lies About the Safety of Genetically Engineered Foods You're Eating*, on Wednesday, October 8 at 12:30 PM at Border's Books (10-24 School Street, Downtown Crossing, Boston).

Mr. Smith has nearly a decade's experience working for non-profits and political groups in the field of genetically modified foods. From Iowa, Mr. Smith serves on the Sierra Club Genetic Engineering Committee.

Seeds of Deception shows that industry influence and political collusion—not sound science—allow dangerous genetically modified foods on the market. For more information on the book, go to seedsOfdeception.com. ❖

Newsletter Editor

Experienced editor needed to take over editing and production oversight of the *Massachusetts Sierran* beginning January 2004. This volunteer position involves working with editorial board to establish newsletter direction; assigning, editing and writing articles; and setting and maintaining deadlines and production schedules. Please apply to jobs@sierraclubmass.org.

YES! I want to save America's wild lands and wildlife before our chance to do so disappears forever!

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Conservation and Issue Committee Meetings

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

October 18

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Place: Sierra Club office

December 13

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Place: Sierra Club office

NORTH/SOUTH RAIL LINK COMMITTEE

October 21

Place: Sierra Club office

This committee meets on the third Tuesday of every other month to discuss and strategize progress on the Rail Link, extending the Northeast Corridor national passenger rail service from South Station to North Station, New Hampshire, Maine and beyond, as well as connecting the commuter rail systems from Rhode Island to New Hampshire. All members are welcome to attend, to learn, and to participate.

Contact Louise Lewis, Chair:
617-266-5890 or ejlewis@shore.net.

SIERRAN EDITORIAL BOARD

October 9

Time: 6:30 PM

Place: Sierra Club office

COASTAL MARINE HABITAT AND WILDLIFE COMMITTEE FORMING

This committee will work on: fisheries management, Northern Right Whale conservation, federal legislation to lease or license the ocean's bottom, Stellwagen Bank Marine Sanctuary Management Plan, coastal armoring, and the US Commission on Ocean Policy. Please contact Mary Ann Nelson, Chapter Chair, for more information: chapter-chair@sierraclubmass.org.

OUTINGS COMMITTEE

Outings need leaders! If you have a favorite hike or other activity that you would like to lead, please contact Deborah Holt, Outings Chair, at holtdj@verizon.net.

(continued on back page)

Massachusetts Chapter and Group Meetings

CAPE COD GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

November 13

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: Falmouth Unitarian Meeting House,
840 Sandwich Road, Falmouth

Take Route 6 to Mashpee Rotary. From rotary, take Route 151 west toward Falmouth. After about three miles, turn left at a stop light, onto Sandwich Road. The meetinghouse is well marked, about two miles on the right.

MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

November 15

Time: 10:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Place: Sierra Club office

The Sierra Club office is located at 100 Boylston Street, Suite 760, Boston.

*All meeting times may change without notice.
Please consult Web site for updates (www.sierraclubmass.org).*

SIERRA CLUB ACTIVIST NETWORK

Would you like to stay up-to-date on environmental legislation impacting Massachusetts? Sign up today for the Sierra Club Activist Network! To join, send a BLANK message to scan@sierraclubmass.org. Make the subject of your message SUBSCRIBE.

SCAN is an "announce only" list with very low traffic (usually less than two messages per month). We will never share your name or e-mail address with any outside entity.

Committee Meetings (continued)

CHAPTER/GROUP TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

If you are interested in transportation issues and want to find out what the chapter is doing about several critical issues, please contact John Deacon, Transportation Chair: jdeacon@sierraclubmass.org.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE WANTS MEMBERS

Would you like to help support key environmental issues? The new Chapter Legislative Committee is looking for members to help plan and implement the Sierra Club's legislative priorities in the State House.

To join the committee contact Leslie Doyle at lesliedoyle@attbi.com or 508-435-0275.

*The Sierra Club office is located at
100 Boylston Street, Suite 760, Boston.*

*All meeting times may change
without notice.*

*Please consult Web site for updates
(www.sierraclubmass.org).*

LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Testimony from the public is welcome at the following hearings before the Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture:

October 16

Senate Bill 1259: An Act to Improve the Supply and Delivery of Water to Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Ratepayers.

November 14

House Bill 1161: An Act to Promote the Use of Integrated Pest Management Techniques.

*All hearing are held at 10:00 AM at
the State House, Room A2.*

*Please keep your comments brief
(two-three minutes). You are welcome
to supplement your testimony with
written material.*

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