A glacial river winds through lush green forest in the Tongass National Forest. President George W. Bush (inset) wants to give state elected officials more control over federal lands in their states.

Responding to the pleas of western state governors seeking more say in the administration of national forests within their borders, the Bush administration on July 12 announced national forests will no longer be off-limits to new road construction. State governors will be encouraged to submit proposals to the federal government regarding the designation of roadless areas in national forests within their individual states.

Our announcements today illustrate our commitment to working closely with the nation’s governors to meet the needs of local communities, and to maintaining the undeveloped character of the most pristine areas of the national forest system,” said Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman in a July 12 statement.

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DaimlerChrysler, Ford to Invest $100 Million in Fuel Cell Company

by James M. Taylor

DaimlerChrysler and Ford have agreed to invest $100 million in Ballard Power Systems, the world’s leading manufacturer of fuel cells for vehicles. The investment, announced on July 8, is being hailed by industry analysts as an advancement that will quicken the pace of research into hydrogen fuel cells as a potential automobile fuel source.

In return for their investment, DaimlerChrysler and Ford will gain control of Canadian-based Ballard AG, a venture that, according to the July 9 Detroit Free Press, “designs systems to deliver the hydrogen fuel and power associated with a car.

Deal Could Accelerate Practical Fuel Cell Development

According to the July 8 issue of the Toronto, Canada-based Globe and Mail, “The companies hope the deal, which includes a much-needed cash injection [for Ballard], will accelerate the development of a mass-produced car using Ballard’s fuel cells, seen as a possible clean alternative to the internal combustion engine.”

The responsibility for developing the fuel cell system, “which is very complicated and very much aligned with the car, is now being assumed by the automakers, and we think that’s a plus for us,” said Ballard CEO Dennis Campbell. “It’s an expensive part of the business and we can now shift that responsibility and burden to the automakers.”

Campbell further stated the automakers’ expertise in developing hybrid vehicles provides them with the knowledge and experience needed to accelerate the pace of fuel-cell development for automobiles.

The U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy agency noted DaimlerChrysler, Ford, and Ballard “will be jointly responsible for the research, development, and manufacturing of the vehicular fuel cell systems, which include all the components other than the fuel cell itself. Ballard, meanwhile, will work on developing the next-generation electric drive system and the next two generations of vehicular fuel cells, for which it will receive up to $58 million in funding from DaimlerChrysler and Ford. The changes are intended to optimize the role of the three partners in developing vehicular fuel cells, while providing Ballard with improved financial and operational flexibility.”

Difficult Barriers Remain

According to the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA), “auto industry executives and observers agree on the immense potential for hydrogen as the fuel of the future. Major automakers,” the organization said, “hope to have affordable cars powered by hydrogen fuel cells in showrooms in a decade.”

Nevertheless, NADA acknowledged that “difficult barriers remain, including the cost of fuel cells and the lack of a mainstream hydrogen distribution system.”

“Distribution and storage of hydrogen—the least dense gas in the universe—are other technological and infrastructure difficulties,” observed Matthew Wald in the May 2004 issue of Scientific American. Not only is hydrogen fuel more expensive than gasoline, but the hydrogen fuel cell that must be built in automobiles is significantly more expensive than the internal combustion engine. Noted Wald, “The hydrogen fuel cell costs nearly 100 times as much per unit of power produced as an internal-combustion engine.”

Noted a February 2004 ExxonMobil study, A Report on Energy Trends, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Alternative Energy, “There are a number of additional challenges associated with the manufacture of hydrogen from renewable energy. Currently, using average costs for renewables in the U.S., hydrogen is five times more expensive than gasoline when produced from wind and 17 times more expensive when produced from solar energy.”

The study continued, “One must consider whether hydrogen use for transportation fuel is the most appropriate use of renewable resources. A unit of wind or solar energy that is used to displace coal in power generation saves 2.5 times more carbon dioxide than using the same unit of wind or solar energy to replace gasoline with hydrogen.”

The ExxonMobil study concluded, “We and others believe that resolving the issues surrounding hydrogen will take many years, perhaps decades. Therefore, significant commercialization or broad marketplace deployment is not likely for some time. This general view is shared by DOE [the U.S. Department of Energy] and Honda, among others.”

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.
Hybrid Vehicles Proving Costly in Miami-Dade County

by Iain Murray

Florida’s Miami-Dade County, which in 2003 spent more than a million dollars to purchase gasoline-electric hybrid pickup trucks, is now learning that greater fuel efficiency does not necessarily save money.

In 2003 the county agreed to buy 50 of General Motors’ new trucks without completing its normal purchasing process. “The idea was to be a leader in the field of getting hybrids and encouraging fuel savings through the county purchasing program,” Commissioner Katy Sorenson told the Miami Herald, as the paper reported on July 13. “We understand that the kinks haven’t been worked out yet.”

High Cost Plus Maintenance Equals Big Loss

Those kinks come in the form of a significant cost to the county. It spent $1.27 million on 30 Chevrolet Silverado two-wheel-drive and 20 four-wheel-drive hybrid trucks, also agreeing to sell them back at a depreciated price to GM after three years so the company can study how they performed.

Because the hybrids cost much more than their non-hybrid counterparts and get only about 10 percent greater fuel efficiency than the standard models, each vehicle will cost the county between $75 and $175 more per month to run than the standard models, even taking into account the fuel efficiency savings.

The editor in chief of Car and Driver magazine told the Miami Herald, “The Chevy hybrid [provides] only about half a mile a gallon better than a regular Silverado under real driving conditions. You wouldn’t make up the additional price of the vehicle with fuel economy.”

Small-Vehicle Technology Unsuited for Larger Vehicles

The higher price vs. better fuel economy tradeoff also has been a problem with smaller hybrid automobiles. A survey by J.D. Powers and Associates released earlier this year found very few purchasers of the popular Honda Civic or Toyota Prius hybrids would keep their vehicles long enough to save more on fuel than they paid extra for the hybrid vehicle. (See “Hybrids’ Disappointing Mileage Confounding State Laws,” Environment & Climate News, July 2004.) Unlike the pickup trucks, however, the smaller vehicles achieve substantial increases in fuel economy, although their achievements in real driving conditions are often significantly lower than the EPA sticker suggests.

The larger problem, however, is that the U.S. auto industry is finding it difficult to develop hybrid versions of larger vehicles that deliver increases in fuel economy similar to those achieved by the smaller models. The Silverado is a case in point. Similarly, the new Ford Escape SUV (based on Toyota technology) delivers a reasonable increase in fuel efficiency in city driving, but not much in highway driving. The Escape, moreover, is Ford’s smallest SUV.

Such problems point to a dilemma confronting the U.S. auto industry. Politicians are keen to have American drivers get better gas mileage, whether it be for environmental reasons or to reduce dependence on foreign oil, but American-made hybrid vehicles are less likely than the smaller, more successful Japanese vehicles to deliver the radical changes needed to justify the increased price.

The domestic auto industry historically has been more dependent than its foreign competitors on high-performance, low-mileage SUVs, pickups, and minivans. Given that it has proven more difficult to achieve significant fuel efficiency savings in hybrid versions of large vehicles than small ones, a general push for hybridization will penalize the U.S. industry at the expense of foreign competitors.

Market Manipulation May Backfire

To date, the push for hybrid vehicles in the United States has been bipartisan. President Bush has proposed a temporary income-tax credit for the purchase of new hybrid vehicles, which would lessen the problem of the higher purchase price of hybrids. Bush’s challenger for the presidency, Senator John Kerry (D-Massachusetts), is considering a plan to give U.S. automakers billions of dollars to convert their automobile plants to build more fuel-efficient vehicles like hybrids, according to a January 23, 2004, Detroit News column.

Neither of those approaches, however, takes the consumer’s likely wishes into account. As one industry source told the Detroit Free Press on July 29, Kerry’s proposal may sound “good in concept, but might not be practical because automakers and the government might spend billions converting plants to create automobiles like hybrid vehicles that don’t turn out to be pragmatic or popular with consumers.”

As the hybrid vehicles have been on the road for only a couple of years, there are long-term issues that remain to be resolved. The engines (involving complex electrical systems and an internal combustion engine) are much more complicated than the traditional gasoline engine. Therefore, they are unlikely to appeal to those who like to work on their own cars. Also, hybrid purchasers have not had experience with long-term maintenance, which means the resale value of the vehicles remains significantly in question.

In the end, the market will determine the true value of hybrid vehicles of all shapes and sizes. They may eventually come to dominate the small-vehicle market. But lawmakers who try to shift the market for larger vehicles through tax breaks and subsidies may find the public’s desire for traditional large vehicles to be significantly less tractable than they hoped.

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New “Smart Oil Changes” to Safeguard Environment

by James M. Taylor

For generations, automobile technicians have advised car and truck drivers to change their engine oil as frequently as every 3,000 miles. The 3,000-mile advice, however, is designed to be precautionary and may not always be necessary. As a result, environmental advocates assert unnecessary amounts of used motor oil end up in the environment.

In response, American automaker General Motors recently began a campaign to stress the environmental benefits of an automobile maintenance system, which has been available for the past few years, in combating unnecessary discharge of used motor oil into the environment.

GM’s Oil Life System (GMOLs) uses an algorithm that evaluates engine speed and temperature and then informs the driver when to change the engine oil with a simple Change Oil message on the dash. By bringing vehicles in for oil change, which can exceed 5,000 or even 7,000 miles since the last oil change, drivers can double or even triple the time between oil changes when compared with the common industry recommendation of 3,000 miles.

The system thus helps the environment and saves consumers money.

Less Oil to Damage Landfills, Groundwater

According to automobile industry experts, oil changes can pose a significant environmental problem. The American Petroleum Institute estimates more than 640 million gallons of motor oil are sold each year, about half of which is used by do-it-yourself oil changers.

While gas stations, quick oil change shops, and car dealerships generally follow good practices and return the used oil for recycling, only about a third of do-it-yourselfers do so.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates do-it-yourself oil changes are the single largest source of water pollution in the United States.

Improving Other Maintenance

GMOLs is installed in about 95 percent of the vehicles GM produces today and on a wide variety of models since the mid-1990s. Roughly 20 million vehicles on the road today are equipped with GMOLs. Together, these vehicles can help save an estimated 120 million gallons of oil per year if consumers follow the Change Oil recommendation. GM emphasizes the engine oil and filter must be changed at least once a year even if the GMOLs indicator does not come on.

In addition to alerting automobile owners of the need to change their oil, the system places vehicles on a more simplified and reliable maintenance plan. Dealers will be able to use the oil change dates as designated points to offer other maintenance such as tire rotation, visual inspections of the fluid levels and brakes, and inspection of the vehicle operating components.

“Simplified Maintenance Schedules are a major convenience to drivers because it takes the guesswork out of when to change oil and it eliminates the need to make decisions regarding routine maintenance,” Lord said. “Basically, when the light comes on you bring the vehicle in for maintenance and the technician can perform an oil change along with other necessary maintenance items such as checking belts, rotating tires, and changing the air filter.”

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Colorado

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News reported, “Colorado shows a steady increase in oil production since 2001. If the state energy regulators’ forecast is correct, 2004 will be a very productive year.”

The same Rocky Mountain News story noted Colorado oil production is forecast to be 21.9 million barrels in 2004, a 2.8 percent increase over 2003 production and a 7.4 percent increase over the 2002 production.

With oil selling at close to $40 per barrel, the state will likely produce more than $800 million worth of oil this year.

Colorado produces less than 1 percent of total U.S. oil production, and it does not rank in the top 10 oil-producing states. However, the state’s 7.4 percent increase in oil production since 2002 means 2004 oil production will generate $50 million more in revenue from Colorado-based wells than would have been the case if the state had leveled off at its 2002 production numbers.

Other States Also Gaining Windfalls

“Rising oil prices may be creating havoc at the gas pumps and making Wall Street jittery,” observed the June 3 edition of Stateline.org, “but it’s a boom for a handful of oil-producing states.”

“Higher prices mean the state gets more revenue,” said Harold Hamm, chief executive officer of Oklahoma-based oil and gas producer Continental Resources, Inc.

That handful of oil-producing states may soon be growing in number. “The biggest U.S. oil producers, Texas and Alaska, reap a windfall, but price increases also boost business in 29 states with smaller and older depleted wells, known as stripper wells,” reported Stateline.

(Depleted wells are ones that still produce but not at their prior capacity. Stripper oil wells are ones that produce 10 barrels or less per day, while stripper gas wells produce 60,000 cubic feet or less per day.)

The Stateline article continued. “Higher world prices mean that private companies pay more to states in severance taxes for pumping oil found underground. States also get a take if the oil comes from federal lands within their borders. Coastal states such as Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama get royalties from oil drilling in waters off their shores.”

According to Stateline, oil production tax revenues for several states are substantial and increasing:

- Kansas, which ranks eighth among oil-producing states, estimates the recent rise in oil pricing yields $36 million in budget revenues in 2005 above and beyond its prior projections.
- The state government in Louisiana estimates oil taxes and royalties will produce $109 million in state revenues for fiscal 2005.
- Oklahoma figures the recent rise in oil prices will net the state an additional $28 million in oil revenues above and beyond its prior projections for 2005.

- Texas, the largest U.S. oil producer, has collected $32 million more in oil-production taxes than last year at this time.

- Wyoming produced the country’s second-largest oil producer, collected $59 million in oil severance taxes in 2003.

- Like Colorado, Wyoming is benefiting from recent hikes in natural gas and oil prices. State officials estimate every $1 increase in the price of a barrel of oil adds $6.1 million in state severance taxes, federal mineral royalties, and corporate property taxes. Similarly, an increase of just 10 cents in the price of natural gas adds nearly $18 million to state revenues, according to Jim Robinson, a senior economist at the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information.
- For states that produce significant amounts of oil and natural gas, high prices mean still more revenue for state citizens and state government. In Louisiana, for example, oil proceeds account for roughly 15 percent of the state government’s revenues, according to Stateline.

Bipartisan Support for Oil Production

Alaska, the country’s second-largest oil producer, has taken its citizens to court in states blessed with such resources and legislators from both parties in states with substantial mineral royalties argue strenuously enough for opening up their opposition to oil production in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and other state sites. Murkowski, by contrast, argues Knowles’ affiliation with the party of vocal ANWR opponents such as Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) and John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) means Knowles cannot be trusted to argue strenuously enough for opening up ANWR for oil production.

In Oklahoma, Democratic Senate candidate Brad Carson has argued he should be elected because “we need more Democrats in the Senate willing to work across the political aisle” in advocating greater domestic oil production. “Having Democrats willing to stand up for strong energy policy will make a difference,” Carson added. He supports oil production as a matter of national policy, not just in Oklahoma. “We have to take the partisanship out of the issue. While there are no guarantees, our voices are really important if ANWR is going to happen.”

Chris John, a Democratic candidate for Louisiana’s open Senate seat, has similarly come out for increased domestic oil production. John has promised that if he is elected, he will use his Democratic affiliation to convince ANWR opponents to change their vote.

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.
Mining: Doing it Right the First Time

by Greg O'Claray

Governor Frank Murkowski’s blueprint for a prosperous Alaska has a solid foundation of resource, energy, and economic development and “doing it right the first time.” Hiring Alaskans is our number one priority because every good job also means good schools and communities for Alaska families.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency endorsed the governor’s blueprint when it recently issued the draft Clean Water Act permit for Coeur Alaska’s Kensington gold mine north of Juneau. The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development has been working with Coeur for many months to recruit, train, and fill mine jobs with resident Alaskans. The company is on record supporting maximum Alaska hire.

Coeur expects to employ 500 workers, 300 in initial construction and 200 in operations. The mine will also support an estimated 180 indirect jobs. Payroll and benefits will boost the regional economy by $16 million.

The Kensington mine is an excellent example of doing it right the first time. And it is important to note that the Coeur Alaska project is far from alone.

I met recently with senior executives of Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd., developer of the Pebble Gold and Copper Project near Iliamna. The “Pebble” is the largest known gold deposit and second-largest copper deposit in North America.

Northern Dynasty is hiring 114 workers for full-time jobs during the first year of construction at the Pebble Project. And 86 of those workers—more than 75 percent—are resident Alaskans.

The developer plans to employ more than 1,000 workers over the Pebble mine production life of 20 years or more. And jobs in the mine will be matched by an equal number of indirect jobs, further expanding payrolls and benefits.

Northern Dynasty forecasts development costs for the Pebble project at up to $1 billion with more than $15 million budgeted for mapping and environmental work in 2004. Short-term and long-term, that’s doing it right the first time.

We always emphasize Governor Murkowski’s Alaska hire initiative when my department discusses industry requirements for workers. The initiative encourages employers with 20 or more workers to ultimately achieve a 90 percent or greater resident workforce.

Today, more than 1,100 companies and organizations have met or exceeded the governor’s Alaska hire goal. I have worked with mining management and labor for many years. Mining was a cornerstone of development in Alaska long before statehood or territorial days.

Politics and some attitudes have not always understood or been kind to the industry. However, that mindset is improving with the Kensington, Pebble, and future mine projects committed to “doing it right the first time.”

Governor Murkowski’s blueprint for resource development encourages that positive attitude with its commitment to a prosperous economy and respect for public policy decisions supported by sound science.

Alaska’s mining industry is on the threshold of new prosperity. In months we will have more Alaska miners employed and punching time clocks including those taking home paychecks from the Kensington mine and the Pebble project.

Their ranks and those of prosperous, working families will also grow by 350 workers at the Pogo gold mine near Delta. Eighty-five percent of the Pogo workforce will be resident Alaskans.

The Pogo mine made headlines when construction workers had to be abruptly laid off when an environmental organization filed a last-minute lawsuit that shut down the mine. Governor Murkowski quickly called together Pogo managers, environmental group leaders, and government officials. They negotiated almost around the clock at the Fairbanks governor’s office.

In less than 24 hours, the governor’s team helped forge an agreement that sent construction crews back to work and got the Pogo project headed back to being on schedule.

Further north and west, a workforce of 412 is earning paychecks at the Red Dog Mine near Kotzebue. Some 399 workers are on the job at the Port Knox and True North mines near Fairbanks.

Near Healy, 81 workers are punching the clock at the Usibelli Coal Mine and a crew of 260 is employed at the Greens Creek mine near Juneau.

Another 300 miners are employed and on the job at additional mines in the state including the Donlin Creek prospect in Southwest Alaska.

Our new generation of skilled mining engineers and workers is producing an impressive array of rare and essential minerals and earning good paychecks for families in Alaska.

Doing it right the first time is our goal. Hire Alaskans: It’s good for business.

Greg O’Claray is commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Mining

Continued from page 1

High-Paying Local Jobs

Pending final approval after legally required public notice and debate, the proposed Kensington Gold Project will be located approximately 45 miles north of Juneau, Alaska in the Tongass National Forest. The area contains an estimated 1.8 million ounces of proven and provable gold reserves and 1.4 million ounces of other valuable resources. (Provable reserves are “estimated quantities... which geological and engineering data demonstrate with reasonable certainty to be recoverable in future years from known reservoirs under existing economic and operating conditions,” according to the Securities and Exchange Commission definition.)

With gold trading at roughly $400 an ounce, the area’s provable gold resources alone are worth more than $700 million to the local and state economy. Coeur spokespersons said company officials believe significant exploration potential exists at Kensington, which could materially increase the project’s total resources.

“The Kensington Project is one that has been very important to southeast and all of Alaska for some time,” said Alaska Governor Frank Murkowski. “It is consistent with our goal of helping to create high-paying jobs in the natural resource sector. I am pleased with the signing of the [Memorandum of Understanding] and look forward to the permitting and construction of the project.”

“The signing of this [Memorandum of Understanding] brings certainty regarding completion of permitting so the final feasibility study can be updated on this major gold project, which would significantly increase Coeur’s gold production—and bring several hundred jobs to Southeast Alaska,” said Coeur Chairman Dennis Wheeler.

Agreement Ensures Environmental Protection

The agreement between Coeur and EPA, the Army Corps, and the State of Alaska establishes maximum allowable discharges into area streams, as well as maximum allowable impacts regarding the local environment. For example, the agreement sets limits on the transportation of people and equipment across Berners Bay and other area waterways that support fish species such as salmon and char.

“Coeur expects to employ 500 workers, 300 in initial construction and 200 in operations,” noted Greg O’Claray, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, in a July 2 news release. “The mine will also support an estimated 180 indirect jobs,” O’Claray said. “Payroll and benefits will boost the regional economy by $16 million.”

“This is great news,” said Laura Skaer, executive director of the Northwest Mining Association. “What if every state supported mining like Alaska does under Governor Murkowski?”

O’Claray’s July 2 statement appears above.

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.

“The area contains an estimated 1.8 million ounces of proven and provable gold reserves and 1.4 million ounces of other valuable resources. ... With gold trading at roughly $400 an ounce, the area’s provable gold resources alone are worth more than $700 million to the local and state economy.”
Windmills Ruining Scenic Views, Producing Killing Fields

by James M. Taylor

Citing problems with giant wind turbines spoiling mountain views and slicing migratory birds in mid-flight, U.S. Representatives Alan Mollohan (D-West Virginia) and Nick Rahall (D-West Virginia) are asking for federal intervention. The two congressmen have asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to examine the negative effects of wind turbines on the state’s environment.

The federal government provides a tax credit of 1.8 cents per kilowatt-hour to wind power generators, spurring development of generator towers in windy areas such as the West Virginia mountains.

For example, a June 5 story in the New York Times reported, “Jerome Niessen, president of NedPower, which has received permission from the West Virginia Public Service Commission for a 200-turbine wind farm ... in Grant County, said he expected to generate 800 million kilowatt hours per year, for a tax savings of $16 million a year for 10 years, or $180 million on a wind farm that will cost $300 million to build.”

In a June 22 letter to the GAO, Mollohan and Rahall noted large wind turbines are frequently built along West Virginia’s most scenic places—mountaintop ridges and valleys have been turned into eyesores to humans and an executioner of countless birds and other wildlife. The two congressmen asked the GAO to investigate what steps can be taken to keep wind turbines from taking an even greater toll on the environment in the future.

“There is nothing more beautiful than my West Virginia hills,” said Mollohan, the ranking Democrat in the House Resources Committee, in comments to the press reported in a Charleston Gazette-Mail editorial on June 27. “And I don’t need windmills to re-landscape God’s glory and my West Virginia hills. ... The issue is not a few windmills, it is thousands of windmills on every ridge.”

Windmills Killing Wildlife

Mollohan singled out for concern the Tucker County turbine complex atop Backbone Mountain, one of the state’s most prominent mountaintop ridges. Under the string of 44 turbines that sit on 200-foot towers and reach more than 300 feet into the sky, researchers recovered 475 bat carcasses during 2003. Most dead bats and birds are quickly consumed by scavengers, according to Citizens for Responsible Wind Power.

The 475 carcasses are “only a small fraction of the total number of bats likely killed” and represents “the greatest wildlife kill associated with a wind plant anywhere in the world,” the group noted. The organization estimates the total number of bat kills last year to have exceeded 3,000 on Backbone Mountain alone.

“It’s by far the biggest bat mortality event I know of worldwide, and, as far as I know, the biggest mortality event of any animal,” agreed Merlin Tuttle, director of Bat Conservation International in Austin, Texas.

“Bats are not the only victims of the region’s giant wind turbines, according to Mollohan. The mountaintop passes on which the turbines are built are “a major avian flyway for hundreds of migratory bird species, including bald eagles and golden eagles,” said Mollohan and Rahall in their letter to the GAO. “Ornithologists, in fact, estimate that approximately 1.7 million birds per night migrate over the Allegheny Front during the migration season. It would appear, then, that continued growth of wind energy along the Allegheny Front represents an imminent threat to literally hundreds of different migratory bird species.”

Citizens Rally Against Turbines

“Heaven knows that West Virginia has always stepped up to the plate to contribute to our nation’s energy security.” Mollohan told the West Virginia press. “But we now have a situation where speculators are staking claim to some of our most scenic areas and erecting these monstrosities that produce little energy and are made possible only by a tax credit.”

“A lot of people don’t like how wind power is shaping up as a power source,” the aforementioned Charleston Gazette editorial noted. “Must West Virginia play host to thousands of clean, green, scenery-despoiling machines to make urban environmentalists feel better? At the cost of how many birds and bats?”

The turbines on Backbone Mountain represent merely a fraction of West Virginia’s total number of turbines. On June 29 the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported today’s turbines represent just the beginning of what is planned for the region. “Projects are being pursued aggressively along ridgetops in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland.”

The action by Mollohan and Rahall has received strong support throughout the Mountain State. “For the many people who believe these monstrosities are an assault on the beauty and tranquility of our mountains—a ‘green’ form of extraction—this request is welcome,” reported the June 30 Parkersburg News and Sentinel.

Windmills Ineffective Energy Source

“The issue is not, as wind turbine advocates want us to believe, between ‘clean’ energy production as opposed to the more traditional forms of energy such as coal,” the News and Sentinel reported. “The windmills actually produce little electricity, and the majority if not all that is produced goes out of state. If not for federal tax credits given to these corporations, most would not even be profitable enough to build. ... Make no mistake, these are not the pastoral windmills pictured in paintings, but giant towers with turbine rotors, some rising more than 400 feet above the ground.”

In “Facing up to the True Costs and Benefits of Wind Energy,” a paper delivered at the Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. annual meeting on June 24, energy consultant Glenn Schleede showed how the federal subsidy and other special treatment for wind farms mask wind power’s true cost, such that “tax avoidance—not environmental and energy benefits—has become the prime motivation for building ‘wind farms.’”

“Wind power is often posed as a logical alternative and a method for relieving demand for coal produced by the devastating practice of mountaintop removal in West Virginia’s southern counties,” said Citizens for Responsible Wind Power President Linda Cooper in the July 17 News and Sentinel. “However, no evidence exists that wind energy development in the high Alleghenies would cure or lessen this ill—even if gigantic turbines were sited on all potentially suitable ridgetops.”

Added Cooper, “Without effective siting guidelines and conscientious review, wind energy development will only add to the loss of the area’s rich natural and cultural heritage. The state’s first such project, visible from both the ridgetops of Canaan Valley/Dolly Sods and Blackwater Falls State Park, may just be a taste of the disappointing economic benefits and dismal environmental consequences in store for the state without studies like those Congressmen Rahall and Mollohan have commissioned.”

“Once again West Virginians are being asked to pay more than our share for the nation’s energy policy,” observed the June 30 News and Sentinel. “But there is hope because the struggle has now moved to the most pristine part of the state—and an area that has many constituents—our mountains. West Virginians should demand that we not be forced to shoulder the complete load for this new technology just because we have the terrain that is needed for it to be successful.”

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.
Illinois Officials Fight to Keep Invasive Carp out of Great Lakes

Voracious feeders threaten to crowd out native species

by Steve Stanek

The future of sportfishing and the survival of native aquatic plants and animals in the Great Lakes may depend on what happens in the next few years in a narrow stretch of water that was cut through the Illinois prairie more than a century ago.

About 30 miles west of the shore of Lake Michigan, in what is now the far southwest suburbs of Chicago, state and federal agencies are laying electrical cables with powerful pulsating currents across the bottom of the 150-foot-wide Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal. The canal was completed in 1900 to reverse the flow of the Chicago River and carry Chicago’s wastewater away from the lake and the city, to the Illinois River.

Canals Link Carp to Great Lakes

The canal thus provides a link between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi and Illinois River systems, and moving up those systems toward Lake Michigan are at least three voracious species of Asian carp. Experts fear that if the carp enter Lake Michigan, they will rapidly overrun the entire Great Lakes.

Asian bighead, silver, and black carp “are the biggest threat to the Great Lakes right now,” said Mike Conlin, acting director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and, for 30 years, Illinois’ director of fisheries. “If they get in, the results could be devastating.”

“We’re seeing huge numbers in the Illinois River,” Conlin said. “We found one 20 miles below the current electrical barrier, about 50 miles below [Lake Michigan]. As their territory expands, they take over the river.”

The carp are fit for human consumption, and some people enjoy their taste, but their appeal to anglers is not nearly great enough to arrest their advance toward Lake Michigan and the inevitable crowding out of other species.

Isolating the Great Lakes

Invasive species long have been a problem in the Great Lakes—about 160 alien organisms have been identified, many of which cause serious problems—but experts say the threat from Asian carp may be the greatest of all.

The Asian carp eat mussels, snails, plankton, and plants. Because of their bottom-feeding habits, they were imported into the American Midwest to clean up weed-choked ponds and commercial catfish farms. However, flooded streams spilled their banks, connecting the carp ponds, and allowed the fish to escape into the wild.

To stop the advance of the carp, workers recently built an electrical barrier near a temporary one that became operational on the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal in April 2002 near the town of Romeoville. The barriers create an invisible “electric fence,” experts hope will stop the fish. The cost of the permanent barrier will be about $8.5 million.

The original barrier was constructed to block round gobies—a small alien fish with an appetite for fish eggs—from moving from Lake Michigan into the Illinois River. That barrier failed to stop the advance of the gobies, though some may have been beyond the barrier before it was finished. The new permanent barrier will emit much stronger electrical pulses and have its own backup power sources.

Carp Eliminating Other Species

The black carp was bred to be sterile, but several have been caught by fishermen in the Mississippi River, and there is some worry they may be reproducing, according to a November 2000 Project Status Report of the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center. The report noted, “Asian carp are becoming abundant and persistent residents of the lower reaches of the [Upper Mississippi River System] and the Illinois River. These recent Asian carp invaders are increasing in population and expanding in range.”

The biggest worry is from the bighead variety, which can weigh up to 100 pounds and reproduce in huge numbers. In some stretches of the Illinois River, more than 90 percent of the fish are bighead carp. Four or five years ago, there were none, IDNR’s Conlin said. They entered the Illinois River by swimming up the Mississippi River.

The fear is that the carp could ultimately take over the Great Lakes. Because they are voracious bottom grazers and multiply rapidly, the carp could eliminate the small organisms that feed the fry of other fish, Conlin said.

Cooperation Among Governments Needed

The threat of Asian bighead, silver, or black carp reaching the Great Lakes was one of several topics that occupied the minds of mayors, other government officials, and private agency experts at the 18th Annual International Association of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors’ Conference, hosted July 16-18 by the City of Chicago. Other topics included water and port security, stormwater management, and Great Lakes restoration strategies.

More than 200 officials from some 40 Great Lakes communities attended the conference.

Marcia Jimenez, commissioner of Chicago’s Department of Environment, said she believes the most important message from the conference of mayors may have been a call for more local, state, federal, and international cooperation to combat the carp and other invasive species.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley complained that the 40 government agencies and 140 regulatory groups that govern the Great Lakes are often in conflict.

“There was a very clear, loud call to simplify and get better coordination,” Jimenez said.

“EPA Administrator Michael Leavitt was there and he agreed we’re not making progress in cleaning up the Great Lakes because we’re so busy figuring out rules,” Jimenez said. “There was a resounding agreement on that. Invasive species is a good example. Since the 1800s, over 160 have been identified. They will never stop unless we agree to rules and jurisdictions and the federal government helps get enforcement behind stopping their introduction.”

Clean Water Aids Carp Takeover

Perhaps ironically, improved water quality has increased the threat. Conlin said that several decades ago when ships took on or emptied ballast water, the ports were so polluted many of the invasive organisms died before they could reach clean water and get into the ecosystem. Now, with cleaner water as a result of efforts that began in the 1970s, they survive.

Over the past 40 years, another newly established invasive species population has been found in the Great Lakes—about 160 for nearly each year, according to mayors’ conference officials.

The Illinois River is also cleaner than in the past, further enabling the movement of carp toward Lake Michigan, according to Conlin. “We used to have a dead zone in the Illinois,” he said. “There was no oxygen. These fish couldn’t have gotten through the dead zone.”

Other Strategies Being Considered

In addition to the electrical barrier to keep carp out of the Great Lakes, other strategies are being considered. One is heavy commercial fishing of the species.

“We’re trying to get some harvest going to see if we can knock them back,” Conlin said. “A company is interested in harvesting 23 million pounds or more a year for a protein source (mainly animal feed). They’d also use part of the by-product as plant fertilizer.”

He said the company is considering locating a plant in Illinois.

“If that would happen, that would stimulate the harvest,” Conlin said. “There’s a market for these fish now, but the price being paid is so low it doesn’t pay commercial fishermen to harvest. They’d have to invest in heavier gear. These fish are so big they’d just tear up the equipment.”

Conlin noted a price subsidy would attract more commercial fishermen.

The company interested in harvesting the invasive carp is also trying to develop equipment and netting techniques that would make the harvest more efficient so that the added volume of fish caught would make the per-pound price profitable, according to Conlin.

Conlin said government agencies addressing the problem also plan to use applications of chemical deterrents to kill carp near the barrier.
Steve Stanek
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by Iain Murray and Myron Ebell

T he attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Iowa, New Jersey, New York, Vermont, and Wisconsin, and the corporation counsel of New York City, filed a complaint on July 21 in federal district court in Manhattan alleging that five leading electric power generators in the United States had created a “public nuisance” by emitting carbon dioxide and thereby contributing to global warming. All but one of the officers who brought the suit are Democrats.

“Save Our Planet,” Say Lawyers
The government lawyers are not seeking monetary damages but rather an abatement order—a court order requiring the utilities to reduce their emissions. Consequences for noncompliance would be fashioned by the court.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said, at a press conference on July 21, that the litigants’ aim was to “save our planet from disastrous consequences that are building year by year and will be more costly to prevent and stop if we wait.”

Blumenthal also told reporters, “Think tobacco, without the money.”

The complaint alleges that the states and city that brought the suit are suffering and will continue to suffer damage from global warming in the form of heat-related deaths; rises in sea level; degradation of water supplies; damage to the Great Lakes; injuries to agriculture in Iowa and Wisconsin; harm to ecosystems, forests, fisheries, and wildlife; wildfires in California; economic damages; increased risk of abrupt climate change; and “injury to States’ Interests in Ecological Integrity.”

The companies targeted by the suit are American Electric Power Co., Southern Co., Xcel Energy Inc., Energy Corp., and the federal Tennessee Valley Authority. As evidence that these firms manage and control the emission of carbon dioxide, the complaint uses various past statements and admissions by company spokespersons that global warming is a problem they want to do something about.

Only Xcel, through its subsidiary Northern States Power of Wisconsin, provides electricity to customers in any of the states that have filed suit. To establish some legal grounds for their federal suit, the complaint includes specific complaints for each state.

Lawsuit Rebuffed by Usual Allies
Some supporters of action to curb carbon dioxide emissions have strongly criticized the suit. Eileen Claussen, president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, told the New York Times on July 22 she found the suit “slightly perverse. ... Of course we need a national program and of course we need some legislation. The real question is, does this help you get there? It’s not clear to me that this lawsuit will help.”

Initial response from newspapers was also unenthusiastic. The San Jose Mercury News on July 22 called the complaint “a cheap shot” and noted, “Generation by a public utility is about as regulated as an activity can be. Utilities are not only permitted to produce electricity, they’re also obligated to. So any ill effects from an operation that has been approved from the local to the federal level can’t be laid at the feet of the utilities alone.”

The Cincinnati Post on July 22 was equally unimpressed. It satirized Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick Lynch’s statement that “It’s imperative that we confront those responsible for unleashing an invader with the power to wreak unspeakable havoc on our climate and to damage, and destroy, our ecosystems” as follows: “Good golly. If fossil-fueled power plants are that much of a public nuisance, maybe we’d better shut them down right now. That might reduce Rhode Islanders to living off whatever fish they can catch with a net, but it would take care of that invader.”

Depending on the duration and outcome of procedural matters, the district court can be expected to address the substance of the suit in late 2004 or in 2005.

Iain Murray (i.murray@cei.org) is a senior fellow of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (http://www.cei.org), where he specializes in the debate over climate change and the use and abuse of science in the political process. Myron Ebell (mebell@cei.org) oversees global warming and international environmental work at CEI and chairs the Cooler Heads Coalition, a subgroup of the National Consumers Coalition (http://www.consumeralert.org/) that focuses on climate-change issues.
Russian Scientists Reassert
Opposition to Kyoto Accord

We have a few minutes left and I would like to tell you about the impressions on the two-day seminar that has just ended.

Over almost a year we have repeatedly asked our foreign partners who advocate the Kyoto Protocol and who insist that Russia should ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and we have invited them to meet and discuss these issues, present arguments and counter-arguments, and discuss them jointly. But we have not received any reply for a year. These people persistently refused to take part in any discussion.

Alarmedists Dodging Real Discussion
Nine months ago, at an international climate change conference in Moscow, ten questions concerning the essence of the Kyoto Protocol and its underlying theory were submitted to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC. We were told that the reply would be given within several days. Nine months have passed since then, but there has been no reply, even though we have repeated our inquiries on these and the growing number of other related questions.

Instead of getting replies to our questions, we kept on hearing that replies did not matter; what was important is whether or not Russian trusts Britain, the European Union, and the countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol and that have been exerting unprecedented pressure on Russia to ratify it. This is why it was so important for us to arrange a real meeting and a real discussion of real problems with the participation of foreign scientists who have different views, in order to hear the arguments not only from our Russian scientists but also the arguments and counter-arguments from scientists in other countries.

We did get such an opportunity and over the past two days—we heard more than 20 reports, we held detailed discussions, and now we can say that a considerable number of the questions we formulated and raised have been somewhat clarified.

I would sum up my conclusions in [several] points. The first one concerns the nature and the contents of the Kyoto Protocol. This is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, international adventure of all times and nations. Frankly speaking, it’s hard to recall something like this of the same scale and of the same consequences.

At the July 8 conclusion of an international conference on climate change held in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s top economic advisor, Andrei Illarionov, reaffirmed his personal opposition and the opposition of Russian scientists to the Kyoto Protocol.

Illarionov declared that European Union pressure on Russia to ratify Kyoto is the equivalent of a war on truth, science, and human welfare. As a vivid example of Kyoto supporters’ unwillingness to argue the facts, Illarionov noted in particular the heavy-handed tactics attempted by some of the non-Russian guests at the conference.

The following are excerpts from Illarionov’s remarks, including passages from a question-and-answer session that followed his talk. Subheads have been added for the convenience of our readers.

Real-World Events Contradict Alarmist Predictions
Basically, none of the assertions made in the Kyoto Protocol and the “scientific” theory on which the Kyoto Protocol is based has been borne out by actual data. We are not seeing any high frequency of emergency situations or events. There has been no increase in the number of floods, just as there has been no increase in the number of droughts. We are not witnessing a higher incidence of contagious diseases, and if there is a rise, it has nothing to do with climate change.

If there is an insignificant increase in the temperature, it is not due to anthropogenic factors but to the natural factors related to the planet itself and solar activity. There is no evidence confirming a positive linkage between the level of carbon dioxide and temperature changes. If there is such a linkage, it is [a] reverse nature. In other words, it is not carbon dioxide that influences the temperature on Earth, but it is just the reverse: temperature fluctuations caused by solar activity influence the concentration of carbon dioxide.

The statistical data underpinning these documents and issued in millions of copies are often considerably distorted if not falsified. The most vivid example of this is the so-called “ice hockey stick,” or the curve of temperature changes on the planet over the past 1,000 years. It is not falsified. The most vivid example of this is the so-called “ice hockey stick,” or the curve of temperature changes on the planet over the past 1,000 years. It is not falsified. The most vivid example of this is the so-called “ice hockey stick,” or the curve of temperature changes on the planet over the past 1,000 years. It is not falsified. The most vivid example of this is the so-called “ice hockey stick,” or the curve of temperature changes on the planet over the past 1,000 years. It is not falsified. The most vivid example of this is the so-called “ice hockey stick,” or the curve of temperature changes on the planet over the past 1,000 years. It is

It is not for us to give an assessment to what happened, but in our opinion the reputation of British science, the reputation of the British government, and the reputation of the title ‘Sir’ has sustained heavy damage.”

Andrei Illarionov
Economic Advisor to President Vladimir Putin

At least how they introduced themselves at the seminar. I personally was surprised by the exceptionally poor content of the papers. At one of these seminars, simultaneously, they revealed an absolute—and I stress, absolute—inability to answer questions concerning the alleged professional activities of the authors of these papers. Not only the ten questions that were published nine months ago, but not a single question asked during this two-day seminar by participants in the seminar, both Russian and foreign, were answered.

When it became clear that they could not provide a substantive answer to a question, three devices were used. The British participants insisted on introducing censorship during the holding of this seminar. The chief science advisor to the British government, Mr. King, demanded in the form of an ultimatum at the beginning of yesterday that the program of the seminar be changed, and he presented an ultimatum demanding that about two-thirds of the participants not be given the floor.

The participants in the seminar [to which Mr. King objected] had been invited by the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Yuri Sergeyevich Osipov. Mr. King spoke about “undesirable” scientists and undesirable participants in the seminar. He declared that if the old program [were] preserved, he would not take part in the seminar and [would] walk out, taking along with him all the other British participants.

He prepared his own program which he proposed it is available here, and my colleagues can simply distribute Mr. King’s handwritten program to [replace] the program prepared by the Russian Academy of Sciences and sent out in advance to all the participants in the seminar.

Ugly Scenes Disrupted Discussion
A comparison of the real program prepared by the Academy of Sciences and the program proposed as an ultimatum by Mr. King will give us an idea of which scientists, from the viewpoint of the chief scientific advisor to the British government, are undesirable. Mr. King said that he had contacted the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Straw, who was in Moscow at the time and with the office of the British Prime Minister, Blair, so that the corresponding executives in Britain should contact the corresponding officials in Russia to bring pressure on the Russian Academy of Sciences and the President of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
Anti-Human Agenda Was Evident

The next point brings us directly to the Kyoto Protocol, or more specifically, to the ideological and philosophical basis on which it is built. That ideological base can be juxtaposed and compared, as Professor Reiter has done just now, with man-hating totalitarian ideology with which we had the bad fortune to deal during the 20th century, such as National Socialism, Marxism, Eugenics, Lysenkovism, and so on. All methods of distorting information existing in the world have been committed to prove the alleged validity of these theories—misinformation, falsification, fabrication, mythology, propaganda. Because what is offered cannot be qualified in any other way than myth, nonsense, and absurdity.

My last point is why it happens and how the whole thing can be described. When we see one of the biggest, if not the biggest, international adventures based on [a] man-hating totalitarian ideology which, incidentally, manifests itself in totalitarian actions and concrete events, particularly academic discussions, and which tries to defend itself using disinformation and falsified facts, it’s hard to think of any other word but “war” to describe this.

To our great regret, this is a war, and this is a war against the whole world. But in this particular case the first to happen to be on this path is our country. This is not a simple war. The main thing is that we now have obvious evidence that we have got over the past two days—although we had some hints before that time—in the approach to Russia practiced by some people attending the seminar, an approach to Russia as a kind of banana republic, an approach to a country that is not a colony yet but about to become it as soon as it ratifies the document.

During the discussion of the economic impact of the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and of when Russia will achieve the 1990 emission level, one of the representatives of this official British team of scientists and government officials said quite bluntly: Russia cannot expect an increase in the population, on the contrary, the population will decrease. And as long as you reduce your population, you can meet the Kyoto Protocol requirements.

Thank you for your attention. The remaining small team is ready to answer your questions.

Q: My question is to the representative from Australia. Unfortunately I did not get his name—

Illarionov: William Kinenmos.

Q: As far as I know, Australia has refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Can you tell us if Great Britain and the European Union exerted the same kind of pressure on Australia when it was thinking about whether or not it should ratify the Kyoto Protocol? And how can you explain what is now happening to Russia?

Kinenmos: Very early after Kyoto, the Australian government and the Prime Minister said that Australia was not going to ratify the Kyoto Protocol because of the impact on the economic conditions in Australia. It would mean the loss of jobs and the export of jobs because Australia is essentially a country that has a lot of energy-intensive industries, and their growth would be an energy-intensive industries. So the Prime Minister was very categorical, and he has been since that time, that Australia would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Q: Was there any pressure on Australia to ratify?

Kinenmos: I cannot answer whether in the government area there was pressure or not. There certainly was not pressure as is experienced here in Russia, but very early the Prime Minister said that Australia was not going to ratify, for the reasons that I gave.

Q: Japanese paper Mainichi. I have a question to Mr. Illarionov. Last month when the Foreign Minister of Japan came to Moscow, she met with high-ranking officials of the Russian government, and one of them told her that Russia will soon be ready to get the answer about the Kyoto Protocol ratification issue and he also told her that the answer will be in favor of Japan, pretty much indicating that Russia will be ratifying the protocol pretty soon. Do you think that will happen, and has Mr. Putin made the decision about ratifying or not ratifying the protocol?

Illarionov: I’ll try to answer each part of your question. The first part is, you said that the decision would be taken in favor of Japan. As you understand, a decision in favor of Japan means a refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Because the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol will hit hardest at those countries which had been careless enough to assume obligations to cut carbon dioxide emissions, and Japan was one of such countries.

In February a large international seminar was held in Moscow on the issues of the Kyoto Protocol and climate change, which was attended among others by representatives of Japan, including representatives of Japanese business and the government of Japan. I remember the presentation by a Japanese representative who described how Japan was already doing everything possible to comply with the terms of the Kyoto Protocol. That gentleman said that Japan was doing everything to reduce economic activities in Japan, including the movement of production outside Japan, thus aggravating the economic crisis in which Japan has been for the last 14 years.

It is known that in the last 14 years Japan has been lagging far behind other developed states and instead of bridging the gap between itself and the United States and even Europe, it was falling further behind. So, the introduction of the Kyoto Protocol through ratification, for instance, possible ratification by Russia, would mean that Japan would quickly start to move back to the state in which it was a decade ago; it would be weak, poor, and backward. I don’t think it would be in the interests of Japan.

If the Russian Federation ever decides to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, such a decision will have been taken not only on the basis of substantive analysis, but for some other reasons. We cannot fully rule that out, just as we cannot fully predict climate change on the planet. But in any case, if such a decision is taken, it would deal, I repeat, a very serious blow to Russia, Japan, the European Union, and Canada, the countries and regions which were rash enough to assume such obligations.

Q: The Japanese Information Agency. Mr. Illarionov, a very simple question. Why don’t you go along with the words of your boss, President Putin, who said quite clearly, “We are in favor of the Kyoto Protocol”?

Illarionov: I will permit myself to remind you of the words said by President Putin. President Putin has never said that he supported the Kyoto Protocol. President Putin said on May 24, 2004, that he supported the Kyoto process. So, I am sorry, but you can’t say that I do not support President Putin on this issue.
Nature Admits Widely Cited Global Warming Graph Was Erroneous

by Iain Murray and Myron Ebell

The July 1 issue of *Nature* magazine ran a correction by Michael Mann, Raymond Bradley, and Malcolm Hughes of mistakes in their widely cited 1998 *Nature* article, which purported to give an accurate reconstruction of global temperatures over the past six centuries. The 1998 article was the initial source for the “hockey stick” graph cited by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and others in predicting imminent and significant global climate change. The hockey stick graph purported to show the global mean temperature was relatively constant through the first nine hundred years of the past millennium and then rose sharply in the twentieth century. That graph accordingly takes the shape of a hockey stick lying on the ground with its blade poking up in the air. It was featured as proof of global warming in the Third Assessment Report of the IPCC, released in 2001.

Since the article’s first appearance, a number of papers have been published challenging either the hockey stick’s reconstruction of past temperatures (as did Esper et al. in the March 2002 edition of *Science*) or Mann’s overall handling of data (as did Chapman et al. in the April 15, 2004 issue of *Geophysical Research Letters*).

The brief notice in *Nature* did not contain any corrections beyond an uninformative list of data errors, but instead referred readers to the Web site http://www.nature.com/nature where they can find acknowledgments of changes to the study’s methodology (referred to as “an expanded description of the methodological details”).

Errors Undermine Results

This admission of error came as a result of an article by statistics expert Stephen McIntyre and Ross McKitrick, associate professor of economics at the University of Guelph, which exposed serious errors in the data and methodology other than the 1998 article. The editors of *Nature* agreed and required Mann and his collaborators to acknowledge their mistakes and revise their methodology accordingly.

“Corrigendum: Global-scale temperature patterns and climate forcing over the past six centuries,” the correction published in the July 1 issue of *Nature*, ends with the statement, “None of these errors affect our previously published results.” McIntyre and McKitrick strongly dispute that claim. “We have done the calculations and can assert categorically that the claim is false. We have made a journal submission to this effect and will explain the matter fully when that paper is published.”

The Mann correction was not published as an Addendum, which, according to *Nature’s* published policy, is done when “Authors inadvertently omitted significant information available to them at the time” but which does “not contradict the original publication.” The corrigendum listed five references but did not cite the paper by McIntyre and McKitrick (“Corrections to the Mann et al. (1998) Proxy Data Base and Northern Hemisphere Average Temperature Series,” *Science* 289 (1999): 522) as a source.

In June, Mann had published in the *Journal of Geophysical Research* a correction to another article by him, which had appeared in a previous issue. The correction came after complaints from other paleoclimatologists that his methodology in the paper did not show as big a warming trend from the end of the Little Ice Age as was necessary to support his conclusions, and in particular the hockey stick graph. The criticisms showed Mann had underestimated how cold the Little Ice Age was.

The full debate over the hockey stick controversy can be followed at Ross McKitrick’s Web site, http://www.uoguelph.ca/~rmckitri/researchtrc.html. Until the issue is resolved more convincingly, skeptics say, the “hockey stick” graph cannot be cited as reliable.

Iain Murray (murray@cei.org) is a senior fellow of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (http://www.cei.org), where he specializing in the debate over climate change and the use and abuse of science in the political process. Myron Ebell (mbe@cei.org) oversees global warming and international environmental work at CEI and chairs the Cooler Heads Coalition, a subgroup of the National Consumers Coalition (http://www.consumeralert.org) that focuses on climate-change issues.
EPA's Toxics Release Data Mask Progress in Pollution Control

by Joel Schwartz

According to the latest results from the Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), made public on June 23, 2004, toxic releases into the U.S. environment rose by 5 percent in 2002 over the previous year.

Environmental activists are practically jubilant, claiming this as the smoking gun proving the Bush administration has rolled back environmental regulations and stopped enforcing the few that remain. “The public is being exposed to far more toxic air pollution than the EPA acknowledges for the record,” said Kelly Haragan, counsel for the Environmental Integrity Project. “It’s time that the EPA and the states deal with the problem of inaccurate and flawed reporting of toxic releases.”

“Alarming is the gross, stubborn increase in toxic releases reported from power plants owned and operated by a single copper smelter. The facility shut down in 2002, and the dismantling of the plant created “waste” that was required to be reported in the TRI. Excluding that one facility, toxic releases actually declined by 3 percent in 2002. Toxic releases increased by about 10 percent between 1996 and 1997, on President Clinton’s watch. But like the purported uptick in 2002, that factoid has little import for public health. TRI is actually a poor data source from which to make inferences about the amount of chemicals entering the environment, emission trends over time, or the risks posed to the public. Other, more comprehensive data, show emissions have been declining and suggest these declines will continue.

TRI Data of Questionable Value

Here’s why the TRI doesn’t tell us what we need to know:

First, the term “toxic release” is misleading. Two-thirds of the toxic releases in the TRI are not actually released at all; instead, they represent solid or liquid waste that is either disposed of on-site or by a waste processor, recycled, or burned to produce energy; Hence, the reported 10 percent increase in 1997 becomes a 10 percent decrease when only emissions to air and to surface waters—a more relevant measure of pollution put into the general environment—are counted. By that more appropriate measure, toxic releases in the United States fell by 1 percent in 2002, even including the copper smelter.

Second, most chemical releases are not included in the TRI. Motor vehicles are not included, nor are businesses that use less than 10,000 pounds of a given chemical. Most non-manufacturing businesses are not required to report. Some toxic chemicals are not included at all. For example, power plant emissions of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide exceed all TRI-reported air emissions by a factor of 20, but they are not included in TRI reporting.

Third, emissions estimates are notoriously inaccurate, particularly for those that don’t come out of a well-defined exhaust pipe. Numerous research studies have revealed serious inaccuracies in EPA’s emission inventories, even for the few chemicals that have received substantial scrutiny. The problem is likely to be worse for most TRI chemicals.

Emissions have been declining in the United States for those pollution sources that have been carefully measured, including motor vehicles and power plants. In addition, during the past 10 years EPA has imposed Maximum Achievable Control Technology standards on dozens of major industries, capping their emissions at 60 to 99 percent below previous levels.

Fourth, even regarding chemicals emitted into the air or water, the TRI has nothing to do with people’s actual exposure to potentially harmful chemicals. Many chemicals degrade rapidly in the environment or are quickly diluted to such low concentrations that they are far below a level that could conceivably cause harm.

For example, most people probably know hydrochloric acid (HCl) can cause serious injury. But as toxicologists say, “the dose makes the poison.” HCl emissions in the United States are so diluted in the environment as to be inconsequential: The highest ambient levels are 80 percent below EPA’s “reference concentration,” a safety level set more than three decades ago to have deleterious effects, even for chronic exposure. Typical HCl levels range from zero to a small fraction of peak levels allowed by the EPA.

Similarly, although U.S. power plants emit large amounts of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, levels of these chemicals in the environment are far below a level that could conceivably cause harm.

The apparent increase in toxic releases resulted from emissions reported by a single copper smelter. ... Excluding that one facility, toxic releases actually declined by 3 percent in 2002.

EPA’s safety limits and continue to decline. As noted earlier, EPA does not include these pollutants in its TRI totals, which skews the numbers even further in the wrong direction.

Fifth, although the TRI generates huge, scary numbers about the amount of chemicals released each year, the most common chemicals that make up the overall number often pose the least risk. For example, the 600 million pounds of HCl or the 146 million pounds of methanol emitted into the air in 2002 are harmless in the amounts present in the environment. These two chemicals alone account for 46 percent of all TRI air emissions. What is important is not the total amount of emissions, but the amount and toxicity of the chemicals to which people are actually exposed.

As a result of all these factors, ambient pollution levels are a far more reliable gauge of both pollution trends and potential chemical exposure. EPA and state regulators monitor many different pollutants at more than a thousand sites around the United States, and they have found that all types of pollution have steadily declined.

Regulations Remain, More on the Way

Despite claims by activists and media personalities that the Clean Air Act has been gutted or rolled back, traditional command-and-control air quality regulation is alive and well. The Bush administration has largely continued the policies of the Clinton administration in this realm.

For example, the Bush EPA recently implemented regulations adopted by the Clinton administration that reduce allowable power plant nitrogen oxide emissions by 60 percent and automobile emissions by 70 to 90 percent. EPA is also implementing regulations that require a 90 percent reduction in diesel truck emissions in 2007 and in off-road diesel equipment in 2010, along with requiring use of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel only.

These and other regulations will progressively eliminate almost all remaining consequential air pollution in the United States during the next 20 years or so, as the nation’s vehicle fleet turns over to cleaner models and as industrial sources continue to install pollution controls.

Despite the shortcomings of TRI and the realities of air pollution monitoring data and regulatory policy, the latest EPA data and regulatory policy, the latest TRI data prompted the National Environmental Trust (NET) to proclaim “the era of big government may be over, but the era of toxic pollution is back.” NET has it exactly backwards.

Joel Schwartz (think@heartland.org) is a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and author of the forthcoming AEI book, Air Quality in America: A Dose of Reality on Air Pollution Levels, Trends, and Health Risks.

“Every concerned citizen and policy maker should read this book. ...everyone will be challenged by it to reexamine their beliefs and the environmental establishment’s claims.”

— NIGER INNIS, NATIONAL SPOKESMAN, CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY


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EPA Policy Ignores Declines in U.S. Air Pollution

by Joel Schwartz

According to a statement issued to the press on June 29 by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Mike Leavitt, reducing fine particulate matter is “the single most important action we can take to make our air cleaner.” It is part of the agency’s determination that 243 counties in the United States, which are home to 100 million people, are likely to be designated in November as Clean Air Act “non-attainment” areas for fine particulate matter (PM2.5).

On June 30, the Associated Press reported that once the non-attainment areas are designated, “state officials will have to develop and implement plans aimed at cutting the pollution by 2010 or 2015, depending on the severity of the air quality problem, or face sanctions, including possible loss of highway funds.” A Reuters story on the EPA announcement quoted Vicki Patton of Environmental Defense as declaring, “EPA needs to take swift action to cut the dangerous pollution from power plant smokestacks that millions of Americans will be left gasping for clean air.” Other U.S. environmentalists joined Patton in using EPA announcements as an opportunity to suggest the nation’s PM2.5 levels are too high, and that nothing is being done to clean them up.

Power Plant Emissions Down

The reduction of power plant emissions Patton calls for has already been achieved, according to EPA statistics. The agency reduced the amount of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and sulfur dioxide (SO2) allowed to be emitted by coal-fired power plants by about 30 percent between 1990 and 2000.

The effects of these actions can be seen in the air: Ambient SO2, NOx, and sulfate particulate matter all declined by about 30 percent between 1989 and 2002, according to EPA statistics. The Clean Air Act requires an additional 20 percent reduction in SO2 between 2000 and 2010, and EPA just implemented an additional 60 percent NOx reduction from coal-fired power plants during the May-September ozone season.

EPA recently proposed Interstate Air Quality Rule would reduce power plant NOx and SO2 emissions by an additional 65 percent and 70 percent, respectively, below current requirements.

Air Particulates in Sharp Decline

Particulate levels in the United States are lower than at any time since the industrial revolution. Particulate matter in the air has declined by more than 90 percent since the early 1900s. PM2.5 is down 40 percent over the past 20 years and 10 percent in the past four years, according to EPA statistics. In 1980, about 80 percent of the nation exceeded the PM2.5 standard now in place. Today, that rate is down to 18 percent.

EPA has two PM2.5 standards—a 24-hour standard for short-term PM2.5 levels and an annual-average standard. Virtually the entire nation—99.6 percent of the monitoring sites—all attains the 24-hour standard most of the time with plenty of room to spare. Non-attainment is limited almost solely to annual-average PM2.5 levels. Of the few non-attainment locations, 60 percent could reach compliance with PM2.5 reductions of less than 10 percent, and another 23 percent of locations would need 10 to 20 percent reductions.

Health Effects Greatly Overstated

In addition, there is evidence that EPA and activists have greatly exaggerated the health effects of current PM2.5 levels. EPA’s annual PM2.5 standard is based on a study of the American Cancer Society (ACS) PM study, which reported an association between PM2.5 and mortality. Some features of the study, however, suggest PM is unlikely to be the air pollution factor.

According to the ACS results, PM increased mortality for men, but not women, and for those with no more than a high school degree but not for those with at least some college. The ACS study also reported increased mortality among former smokers but not among those who currently smoke or never smoked, and among those who said they were moderately active but not among the very active or the sedentary. Some biologically implausible variations in the ostensible effects of low-level PM suggest the association between PM and mortality is spurious and does not represent a genuine cause-and-effect relationship.

Claims about low-level PM and health suffer from other biological plausibility problems. For example, coal-fired power plants contribute some 25 to 50 percent of the total PM2.5 in the eastern half of the United States, in the form of sulfates formed as a result of SO2 emissions. But recent studies of human volunteers suggest sulfates are not toxic, even at exposures many times greater than today’s peak levels, and even in people with respiratory diseases.

Scientists use ammonium sulfate, the main form of sulfate PM in the air in the eastern United States, as an inert control factor—that is, a substance not expected to have any health effects—in studies of the health effects of acidic aerosols, and magnesium sulfate is used therapeutically to reduce airway constriction in asthmatics.

Nitrates, PM, which makes up 25 to 50 percent of PM in the western U.S., has been shown to have no deleterious health effects in controlled studies.

EPA attributes about 90 percent of the benefits of the clean air pollution regulation to lives saved due to PM reductions. But if PM at current levels is not killing people, then almost all of the benefits EPA claims for clean-air regulation are Bogus.

Number of Persons Affected Overstated

EPA also has exaggerated the number of people living in areas that violate the PM2.5 standard. Instead of the 100 million reported in news stories, the true number is more like 45 million.

The overestimate is attributable to two factors. First, EPA included many counties not because their air quality violated the PM2.5 standard, but because the agency believes they contribute to violations in other counties. That makes sense for regulatory policy, but not as a means of determining PM exposure. Second, counties that monitor PM levels at more than one location sometimes violate the standard in one area but comply in another, yet EPA counts all people in the county as living in areas that violate the standard.

More Bureaucracy on the Way

Despite the weak evidence of harm from current PM2.5 levels, EPA’s PM2.5 non-attainment designations will set in motion a massive Clean Air Act planning and regulation process. Under current law, each non-attainment area must develop and implement a State Implementation Plan (SIP) demonstrating the area will attain federal PM2.5 standards between 2010 and 2015.

Non-attainment areas also will have to prove to EPA that their regional transportation plans are in “conformity” with their SIPs. They will have to convince EPA that, for example, adding more freeway capacity will not cause an increase in emissions above the level permitted by the SIP. A region that fails the conformity test risks losing its federal transportation funds. SIPs and Transportation Conformity also create many opportunities for the inevitable activist lawsuits that have been part and parcel of the Clean Air Act process. Virtually all of this, moreover, is a matter of process rather than results: Failure to have an approved SIP or to demonstrate conformity on paper carries far worse penalties than actually failing to clean the air.

“Virtually all of this, moreover, is a matter of process rather than results: Failure to have an approved SIP or to demonstrate conformity on paper carries far worse penalties than actually failing to clean the air.”
Proposed EPA Mercury Rule Garners Comments, Controversy

by Ben Lieberman

The public comment period for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed power plant mercury rule closed on June 29 after much controversy. Most of the record-breaking 600,000 comments came from environmental groups and their members, attacking the Bush administration. EPAs proposed 70 percent reduction in mercury emissions by 2018 as being far too lenient. A number of comments, by contrast, raised doubts that any further action regulating mercury is justified.

EPA puts the price of the proposed rule at more than $1 billion per year, and others think it could cost considerably more. “Clear Skies would reduce mercury emissions by 70 percent, [but] at a cost of about $4 billion per year,” noted American Enterprise Institute visiting scholar Joel Schwartz regarding a similar plan to cut mercury emissions by 70 percent, proposed by the Bush administration in 2003.

Comments on the EPA proposal raised questions regarding whether U.S. utilities are a logical target for mercury reductions. Combustion of coal from power plants, for example, releases traces of mercury into the air, but power plants are a logical target for mercury reductions in children whose mothers ate substantial amounts of contaminated fish during pregnancy. The scientific research is decidedly mixed as to whether consumption of such fish is harmful.

The strongest scientific case for concern about mercury has been made by a 2004 study in the Faroe Islands. The study, conducted by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health and institutions in Japan, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands, followed the progress of children born to mothers exposed to relatively high levels of methylmercury through whale meat consumption during pregnancy. The study concluded there was a modest loss of neurological development in the children. “The implications for neurological and cognitive health are relatively minor,” noted Schwartz in his comments to EPA, even assuming Faroe Island results are indicative of harm to American children whose mothers ate fish during pregnancy.

A University of Rochester Medical Center study, conducted in the Republic of the Seychelles and published in May 2003, is probably more applicable to the United States. Unlike the Faroe Islands study, the residents of the Seychelles are a logical target for mercury reductions that may result from this regulation. Instead, the agency assumes mercury controls will also reduce other power plant emissions, and it calculates the potential benefits based on declines of those emissions.

For that reason, the proposed mercury rule may be on shaky legal grounds. Under the Clean Air Act, EPA is to set power plant mercury standards only if the evidence shows they are “appropriate and necessary” based on evidence of a public health threat. The Utility Air Regulatory Group, which represents utilities affected by the proposed rule, stated in its comments, “EPA readily admits that it cannot quantify the linkage between mercury levels in humans and mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants.”

Hence, the group argues, “EPA’s conclusion that regulation of mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants is appropriate and necessary is not supported by the factual record.” Though far outnumbered by comments urging aggressive action against power plant mercury, EPAs docket also contains comments raising serious concerns whether any power plant emissions reductions are warranted. EPA is now obligated by administrative procedure law to address those concerns before moving forward with its proposed rule.

Ben Lieberman (think@heartland.org) is director of air quality policy and associate counsel at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (http://www.cei.org).

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Initiative Followed Legislative Failure

The Utah State Conservancy began the initiative earlier this year after the Utah legislature rejected a bill sponsored by State Representative Ralph Becker (D-Salt Lake) that would have required the state to purchase privately held lands and remove them from the domain of private citizens.

To place the initiative on the November ballot, the Nature Conservancy was required by law to gather the signatures of at least 10 percent of all registered voters in 26 of the state’s 29 counties. Utah enacted the 26-county requirement in 2003. “The legislative verbiage at the time was that the Conservancy spent nearly $300,000 in signature gathering, and other expenses, according to a story in the July 7 Desert Morning News. “Because they were so well financed, I thought these folks might succeed,” said Baskin.

At the July 6 deadline to submit the necessary signatures, however, the Nature Conservancy had met its quota in only 24 of the state’s 29 counties. “We have declared it insufficient,” said state elections chief Amy Naccarato.

Having been rebuffed both in the legislature and in the citizen initiative process, the Nature Conservancy vowed to fight the initiative decision in the courts. “We feel like this is a bump in the road and we’ll still be on the ballot in November,” said Amanda Smith, president of Utahs for Clean Water, Clean Air, and Quality Growth. “What we’re talking about is 200 to 300 signatures in two Senate districts. That’s a pretty small number. We’re confident we’ll prevail.”

Citizen Revolt Stalls California Land Acquisition

California Land Acquisition

The Utah defeat was one of several recent setbacks for forces seeking more acquisition of currently private land by federal, state, and local governments.

In San Mateo County, California, more than 5,000 local citizens—almost one-third of the area’s registered voters—signed a petition this year opposing plans by the region’s Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to annex 140,000 acres of coastal land. According to the July 15 San Jose Mercury News, citizens signing the petition expressed concern that the district would seize land from unwilling sellers, drain tax revenues by removing land from tax-paying citizens, and inhibit farmers from cultivating their land.

Unless supporters of the proposed land acquisition invalidate more than 1,000 of the 5,000 signatures, the petition will prevent the district from annexing the coastal land.

Michigan Legislature Considers Selling State Lands

In Michigan, state legislators are considering selling off some of the state’s lands.

Burdened by the costs of maintaining state lands and seeing a potential cash windfall in selling lands to private citizens eager to care for them, Michigan State Representative Jack Hoogenyld (R-Kalamazoo) has introduced legislation to sell the State Fairgrounds in Detroit.

“The fairgrounds are a valuable asset,” said Hoogenyld in support of his bill. “We should utilize the potential of this land and sell it, generating revenue, not costing the taxpayers revenue.”

The sale of the 200-acre fairgrounds, which represents only a small fraction of Michigan’s state-owned lands, would generate approximately $57 million in revenue. The state currently loses $2 million per year maintaining the site.

The Hoogenyld bill follows legislation that would allow the sale of some of the state’s municipal forest lands. The forest land sale, which the Michigan House approved by a wide margin in May 2004 and is awaiting action in the state Senate Appropriations Committee, would generate $50 million in revenue. “Supporters estimate as much as 16,000 acres might be sold in the first year and that the ward, $3,000 an acre. That would bring in near $50 million,” reported Edward Hoogterp of Booth Newspapers on May 24.

Revenues from the sale of the forest lands, which are sold by private citizens, would fund educational programs, forest projects, fire prevention projects, and other environmental initiatives.

“If you have 20,000 acres of land, it’s not enough to sell 1,000 acres a year and keep half the proceeds, it would be worth thinking about,” said East Grand Rapids Public Schools Superintendent James Morse.

“I don’t think of it as a revenue bill at all,” said State Representative Mike Pumford (R-Newaygo). “It’s an opportunity to get rid of outholdings and get them back on the tax rolls... This will provide tax base for local communities, and provide economic development.”

Federal Action Mirrors State Misgivings

The state-level trend to reject further expansion of government-owned lands and in some cases roll it back is being mirrored at the federal level. The U.S. Senate refused in both 2000 and 2001 to enact the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, which would have required the federal government to purchase billions of dollars’ worth of lands each year and remove the lands from private stewardship. Activist groups have pushed various reincarnations of CARA during the 2004 congressional session, but all such efforts have failed.

The Get Outdoors Act of 2004, which connected American obesity rates to a failure of the federal government to turn more land into national parks and other such properties, fizzled in Congress this spring. Cosponsor Representative Don Young (R-Alaska) watched in frustration as his Alaska State Republican Party explicitly repudiated his bill, while the Senate refused to vote on it.

In addition, federal lawmakers have targeted for removal all 2005 federal appropriations earmarked for new land acquisition programs. On June 3, the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee stunned land-acquisition advocates by cutting all lands designated for new land-purchasing programs. Although the subcommittee approved $50 million that already had been committed for existing land acquisition programs and $1 million for the National Park Service grants to individual states, the lawmakers categorically rejected the Bush administration’s request for more than $225 million in 2005 for new land acquisition projects.

“The federal government owns a third of this nation’s land,” said Matt Streit, spokesman for the House Resources Committee. “Seeing that the government can’t properly manage what it already has, it seems prudent, especially in a time when the federal purse strings are tight, to restrict more land acquisitions.”

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.

Land Acquisition Group Caught Misusing Taxpayer Money

by James M. Taylor

In another setback for government land acquisition advocates, a California conservancy group, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, was recently caught mismanaging millions of dollars in voter-approved bond money that was supposed to be spent on acquiring and restoring parkland.

According to the Los Angeles Times on June 6, California Department of Finance auditors issued a report on March 24 documenting that the conservancy group “does not adequately manage, control, or oversee” $115 million in bond funds given it by the state. The auditors accused the organization of “tunneling away money to pay for legal fees, office expenses, conferences, cars, travel, vacation and sick pay, and ‘excessive’ overhead charges.”

“In our opinion, they’re not spending funds in line with the bond measures,” said Office of State Audits and Evaluation spokesman Samuel Hull. “Some of the things they did I’ve never seen before. They are creative, I’ll give them that.”

According to the audit, the conservancy assesses an extremely high 9 percent “administrative overhead” fee for its land purchases, which has amounted to more than $1.5 million. The auditors report the conservancy’s administrative overhead account is staggering 350 times greater than the overhead of comparable state agencies such as the Coastal Conservancy and the state Department of Fish and Game. Such fees, according to the auditors, are “grossly out of proportion to services provided.”

Specific expenditures cited by the auditors as inappropriate include memberships in VIP airline clubs, hotel room service expenses in excess of state travel allowances, and air travel purchases for the wife of the conservancy’s executive director.

“Propositions 12 and 13 were passed in 2000,” said Patricia Bell Hearst, chairwoman of the board, “and it’s clear” to state Finance Director Donna Ardulini.

“I don’t want any crossing of the t’s or dotting of the i’s that aren’t substantive to interfere in any way” with the operations of the conservancy, said conservancy supporter State Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica). Kuehl told the Los Angeles Times she had “made that very clear” to state Finance Director Donna Ardulini.

James M. Taylor (taylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment and Climate News.
Oregon Anti-Growth Group Folds

by Wendell Cox

A lobbying organization opposed to growth of human population and personal consumption in Oregon, Alternatives to Growth Oregon (AGO), announced it was suspending operations on June 21, 2004. In a letter on the group’s Web site, the organization’s Board of Directors indicated the action was being taken “obviously not because AGO has fulfilled its mission, but because we no longer have sufficient funds to continue.”

Oregon long has been home to some of the nation’s strongest anti-sprawl regulation. But AGO, believing already-passed measures were not enough, stood virtually alone in opposing “smart growth” policies because they allowed too much growth, rather than too little.

For example, Andy Kerr, the organization’s founder and president, was reported in Sustainability Review as saying, “Growth is a race one loses the faster one runs. Growth is neither desirable, nor inevitable. ... Any further physical growth is either fat or cancer. ... Smart growth is an oxymoron. Less-stupid growth would be a better name.”

Agenda Proved Unpopular

The organization supported an array of public policies designed to discourage population growth. For example, AGO sought to eliminate government incentives designed to attract businesses to locate in the state, and instead proposed the state furnish tax breaks to families that produce few children. The organization sought to make up for the effects on workers of any lost business opportunities by calling for a mandatory and universal “living wage.” AGO also expressed strong anti-globalization and anti-immigration sentiments.

AGO also sought to limit personal consumption by advocating Oregon implement a “progressive” consumption (sales) tax and repeal its income tax, one of the highest in the nation. (A progressive consumption or sales tax is one that applies a higher tax rate to more-expensive purchases.) That proposal was unprecedented in the state; Oreganians have defeated conventional sales taxes in nine straight referenda, the last by a very substantial margin.

Outside the Mainstream

In the end, AGO discovered fighting off all growth, even in Oregon, can be difficult. The late Governor Tom McCall’s 1971 plea for people to “visit, but not to stay” has not been heeded. Since that time the state has added the equivalent of Philadelphia to its population, and it continues to grow.

“We staked out a goal that was not going to be met, at least in the short term,” lamented Kerr. “The whole course of western civilization has been growth, growth, growth.”

“They probably do speak for a certain segment of the general public,” said Kelly Ross of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Portland. “But the overwhelming philosophy in Oregon is still manage growth rather than stop it.”

“I lost interest in trying to work with them,” said Mike Burton, executive director of Metro, the Portland area’s regional government. “It was always, ‘You’re wrong and we’re right.’”

During the past few years, the Portland area has generally had the nation’s highest unemployment rate, and economic growth has lagged. The August 1, 2003, edition of the Portland Business Journal reported, “Among urban areas with a million or more people, Portland has the nation’s highest unemployment rate, according to figures released July 30 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Portland-Vancouver, Wash., metropolitan area had 8.8 percent of its workforce jobless in June.”

The donations that economic growth produces for nonprofit organizations like AGO also lagged, as AGO noted in its June 21 letter announcing it was shutting down operations. “The irony is not lost upon us: AGO’s short-term ability to continue its long-term mission to move Oregon toward a sustainable economy was harmed by the ‘slowdown’ in Oregon’s economy.”

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National Forests Have History of Multiple Uses

In January 2001, in one of the last acts of his presidency, President Bill Clinton designated nearly 60 million acres of national forest lands off-limits for logging and unavailable for the construction of new roads. Clinton’s act reversed decades of federal policy regarding the vision for, and management of, America’s national forests.

Noted Jerry Taylor, director of natural resource policy at the Independent Institute. “As environmentalist icon Gifford Pinchot, the first director of the U.S. Forest Service, wrote in a speech for Teddy Roosevelt in 1901, ‘Forest protection is not an end in itself; it is a means to increase and sustain the resources of our country and the industries which depend on them.’”

From such beginnings, U.S. national forests became a “multiple-use” resource. The federal government committed itself to accommodating the competing interests of recreationists, conservationists, and resource developers. This multiple-use philosophy held sway until it was reversed in the waning hours of the Clinton administration.

Bush Plan Restores Multiple-Use Balance

With the decision announced in July, the Bush administration restores that original multiple-use balance as federal policy. Under the Bush plan, governors are invited to submit their own proposals regarding national forest lands within their individual states. Governors who support strict roadless policies, such as former Clinton cabinet member Bill Richardson, the Democratic governor of New Mexico, can petition to leave the Clinton rule intact within their states. Others who oppose strict enforcement of a universal roadless rule, such as Republican governor Judy Martz of Arizona, can submit a proposal to return the national forest lands in their states to multiple use.

According to the July 12 news release from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is ultimately in charge of shaping the nation’s national forests policy, the U.S. Forest Service will adhere to the following five conservation principles in developing state-specific rules:

1. Make informed decisions to ensure the roadless rule is implemented with more reliable information and accurate mapping, including local expertise and experience.
2. Work with states, tribes, local communities, and the public through a process that is fair, open, and responsive to local input and information.
3. Protect forests to ensure that the potential negative effects of severe wildfires and insect and disease activity are addressed.
4. Protect communities, homes, and property from the risk of severe wildfires and other risks that might exist on adjacent federal lands.
5. Ensure that states, tribes, and private citizens who own property within roadless areas have access to their property as required by existing law.

Western Governors Support Multiple Use

Governors in the 12 states with the largest roadless sections have expressed a desire to return to multiple-use policies.

The July 14 Rocky Mountain News observed, “Most Western governors opposed the [Clinton anti-road-building] decision because it alienated entire communities, businesses, land managers, and people living closest to the forests. Little wonder it has been the subject of nine lawsuits in federal courts in Idaho, Utah, North Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska, and the District of Columbia.”

“[L]ike clockwork,” the article continued, “a number of environmental groups immediately warned of armies of chainsaw-bearing loggers razing the national forests. But a much less hysterical reading is that the U.S. may be returning to the sensible ‘multiple-use’ policy that had long guided management of most public lands.”

The July 15 Seattle Times noted, “Richardson and Oregon’s Gov. Ted Kulongoski [D] will be empowered to keep their pristine tinderboxes under a signature of their own. But judging by their responses, it’s not as appealing to support radical environmental policies when your office is on the line—such things are more conveniently accomplished through presidential fiat than persuading voters.”

If any one lesson can be learned from this history,” noted the Rocky Mountain News, “it is the need to restore basic integrity and local input to the process by which public-lands policy is established. Under the Bush proposal, each state would craft and implement its own strategic vision of roadless conservation, with the Forest Service of course having final say. Governors would be allowed to maintain roadless protections or they could seek some exemptions, but not on lands identified as national monuments, national recreation areas, wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, or national scenic and historic trails.”

Montana Governor Martz agreed with that principle. “State, tribal, and local governments are best equipped to make key decisions about the future of our public lands,” Martz told the Rocky Mountain News.

The old rule said that Washington, D.C., decision-makers knew better,” observed Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne (R), who had challenged the Clinton roadless rule in court in January 2001. “You’ll now be hearing from governors as to how it works best for their state, and that’s how it should be.”

“Common-sense environmentalists recognize the importance of striking a balance between environmental conservation and the use of resources to produce economic prosperity—which is itself protective of health and the environment,” commented Dr. Kenneth Green, director of the Center for Studies in Risk, Regulation, and Environment at the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute.

We also know the importance of local knowledge in environmental policy making,” Green continued. “Decisions made from afar, by people with little knowledge of local conditions or needs, and who bear no consequences for misjudgment, are bound to be inferior to decisions made at more local levels, by decision-makers who will bear the consequences of their actions.”
It is unfortunate that writers too often believe they get paid by the word. As a result, we end up with not only very long books, but bad overly long books. Excessive verbiage often confuses rather than clarifies.

Of course, those of you who have read my book reviews might accuse me of the same failing. Admittedly, my approach is to overwhelm my readers with an amount of information that will cause them to buy the book I review or dissuade them from buying it. At the very least, I aim to impart much of the message of the book, in case readers ignore my advice.

Imparting the total message of Putting Humans First is extremely difficult. Its density of thoughtful content defies its brief narrative.

Putting Humans First is the only book I have encountered that views today’s environmental movement from a historical and philosophical perspective and convincingly argues why we have been on the wrong track. Machan then lays out a simple blueprint for man’s future interaction with the planet and animal kingdom.

Putting Humans First should become the gold standard for warm and friendly human beings endeavoring to understand and explain why, though we may love animals and nature, they are intrinsically inferior to humans. They warrant “rights” only as we humans define them.

A Logical Argument

Author Dr. Tibor Machan, who is emeritus professor of philosophy at Auburn University, presents an irrefutable argument that will arm unbeatable ammunition anyone inclined to debate this topic.

Machan develops his argument in a logical manner. He describes most warm, fuzzy members of the animal kingdom as being driven by uncontrollable instinct that is often brutal to their own young, not to mention competing animal families. The phrase “dog eat dog” may no longer be accurate with respect to domestic pets, but it most assuredly applies in the wild with other mammals. Machan vividly describes unambiguous situations where an animal’s life must be sacrificed to save a human. Then he points out that “animal activists” and many “eco-activists” are not persuaded by this argument because they truly hate people.

He explains how public policy has already subjugated human rights to animal rights through the Endangered Species Act and wetlands legislation, which stifle human progress and property rights.

He then offers a lengthy philosophical argument, of which Plato and Aristotle would be proud, to explain why humans warrant extensive individual rights but animals only modest rights. He supports, as do I, the prevention of cruelty to animals, though neither of us defines as “cruelty” the humane ending of an animal’s life for medical and nutritional purposes.

Machan defines the flaws of environmental activism with skill equal to his assault on animal rights activists. Any student of recent history knows what Plato and Aristotle would have to say about the rise of environmentalism through the Endangered Species Act and the Endangered Species Act and the Endangered Species Act. Machan traces strong warning against collectivist societies from Aristotle and Plato thousands of years ago to Ludwig von Mises early in the twentieth century and Garrett Hardin more recently still.

For those of you who may make the mistake of not investing the time and money to spend a few hours with this book, let me share with you what Aristotle said in the 4th Century B.C. and what Garrett Hardin said in 1968.

“Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement cannot be expected to result in the best possible production of the pasture. It is obvious that no man will be willing to exert himself to the utmost in the common cause. What each man will be willing to exert himself to promote is the acquisition of a maximum of cattle for his own exclusive use. This maximum is not attained when the cattle are all equally divided among all. On the contrary, each man will attempt to get as many cattle as he can; and, in following this principle, will hardly go wrong in getting as many as possible for himself.” (Science December 13, 1968)

Addressing the Tragedy

The main thing we need to solve the tragedy of the commons, Machan says, “is a theory of justice fully informed by Aristotle and Hardin’s recognition of the problem.” He says libertarianism is the only such theory currently afoot, but he worries over its inability to become mainstream.

Machan points out that each succeeding generation spawns an intellectual elite convinced “they can make collectivism work,” regardless of past failures. He brilliantly portrays today’s radical environmentalism as a variant of socialism, in turn a variant of collectivism—the theory that the individual counts for nothing when compared to some greater collective whole, whether the state or mother nature.

“Yesterday it was socialism, today it is environmentalism,” Machan writes. Though a philosopher by trade, Machan proves to be a strong proponent of free markets, private property, and the rule of law. While we know this to be capitalism by definition, he proves its effectiveness as a mathematician might prove an equation in differential calculus. He writes,

“Governments use force to accomplish their goals. But force, unless used in self-defense—as the military is supposed to use it—screws havoc in its path, even when the ostensible results seem to be grand. And nowhere is this more evident than in environmental matters. When the laws and public policy favor the system of eminent domain and the use of publicly owned land and waters for whatever happens to be in quasi-democratic demand, the usual result is akin to a zero-sum game: the favored policy wins, the disfavored one loses. By contrast, in the free market, there are many disparate demands that get satisfied to a greater or lesser extent. This has vital implication for environmental policy.”

Machan concludes there is evidence for the environmental benefits of free markets all around us but, perhaps most clearly, in the contrast between what Soviet-style socialist central planning has done to the environment in eastern Europe and the comparatively less-harmful results arising from the far more capitalist, free market, private property-based system of the West.

There are gems of wisdom on nearly every page of this wonderfully short book. I will conclude with this one.

“Environmentalists need to be more optimistic about the benefits of managing environmental problems in a legal framework of individual liberty. What many in the environmental movement fail to realize is that the environmental problems that can be clearly identified rather than merely speculated about are generated by the tragedy of the commons.”

TIBOR R. MACHAN
PUTTING HUMANS FIRST

Putting Humans First: Why We Are Nature’s Favorite
by Tibor M. Machan
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004
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- The Heartlander,
  a monthly newsletter
- Free policy studies
- Invitations to events

$49 Members will also receive:
- 20 percent off admission to all events
- Any two of our four monthly newspapers (a $72 value!)

$99 Members will also receive:
- All four monthly newspapers (a $144 value!)
- Free Heartland books and major publications
- Recognition in The Heartlander and the Anniversary Benefit program

$29 Members receive:
- Membership certificate
- The Heartlander,
  a monthly newsletter
- Free policy studies
- Invitations to events

$50

$500

$1,000

$25

$100

$250

Other

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Please return this form to:
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19 South LaSalle St. #903
Chicago, Illinois 60603
Fax 312•377•5000

www.heartland.org