Environmental Extremism Takes Ugly Turn

By James M. Taylor

Environmental extremism took an ugly turn September 1 when activist James Lee, armed with two guns and several bombs, stormed Discovery Channel headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, took employees hostage, and attempted to force the channel to air environmental propaganda on global warming and other issues.

The assault ended in the late afternoon when police shot and killed Lee as it appeared he was preparing to detonate a bomb and kill some or all of the hostages.

Threatened to Detonate Bombs
Shortly before police ended the attack, Lee spoke on the phone with an NBC reporter.

Auditor Bashes U.N. Climate Panel

By James M. Taylor

The Amsterdam-based InterAcademy Council (IAC), a scientific body asked to audit U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) procedures, has determined IPCC improperly crossed the line into policy advocacy, is not transparent enough, is prone to conflicts of interest, and has made numerous alarmist assertions that are not supported by the scientific record.

IAC recommends structural reforms to fix IPCC’s flaws before the latter’s next report, due in 2014.

IAC includes the world’s top science academies. The United Nations itself
Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Climate Change are available on The Heartland Institute’s Web site. See and hear for yourself what many participants called the best conference they’d ever attended.

We’ve posted video and audio of each speaker at the conference, as well as PowerPoint presentations and other proceedings: **83 videos; 78 podcasts** (also available for download from iTunes).

In addition, the entire program of the conference is available, with links to individual PowerPoint presentations.

www.heartland.org
Idaho Citizens Criticize EPA Superfund Process

By Bonner R. Cohen

Residents of Idaho’s picturesque Silver Valley are up in arms over a plan by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prolong the cleanup of mining waste in the area for another 50 to 100 years and possibly longer.

Residents say they fear their communities will be turned into a never-ending Superfund site.

Project Keeps Expanding

The long-simmering dispute between EPA and local residents came to a boil August 9 at a public hearing in Kellogg.

Dan Opalski, cleanup director for EPA’s regional office in Seattle, tried to convince the audience of some 200 citizens the agency’s proposal was the best way to restore water quality in the region and reduce pollution left over from an earlier generation of mining. He said the plan was compatible with “responsible mining” and the cleanup project would create another 425 jobs in the area.

But EPA’s proposal is so vast that Opalski’s assurances fell largely on deaf ears. Under EPA’s plan the Superfund site would be expanded to cover 300 square miles of the Coeur d’Alene River Basin, cost $1.3 billion (in current dollars), and last for a yet-to-be-determined number of decades.

“We don’t want this thing to go on forever.”

It has already gone on for nearly three decades. EPA first put the site of the old Bunker Hill Mining Company on its Superfund National Priority List (NPL) in 1983. The company had mined and smelted lead and silver for a century, much of it at a time when mining practices were lax by today’s standards.

Lead Spread by Fire

A pivotal moment in Bunker Hill’s history occurred in 1973, when a devastating fire broke out in the mine’s smelter, which is used to melt ore in order to extract metals from it. The fire occurred in the smelter’s bag house, a filtration system designed to capture emissions, including those of lead oxide, so they don’t escape into the environment.

Bunker Hill’s owners at the time, who were based in Texas, did not complete the repair to the bag house for nearly a year, while an estimated 40 to 60 tons of lead oxide per month escaped into the air. Elevated levels of lead oxide can cause lead poisoning.

Punishing the Local Economy

Nobody seriously doubts the area underwent environmental degradation, largely as a result of the bag house fire. The question is whether EPA’s constantly changing cleanup plans will stigmatize the once-prosperous but now economically depressed region, causing businesses to stay away.

In the struggle to win over the hearts and minds of local residents, the agency often has been its own worst enemy. In the years following the initial 1983 NPL designation, for example, EPA assured local communities the Bunker Hill Superfund site would not be expanded beyond a couple of square miles. EPA now says the site should include 300 square miles.

With China aggressively pursuing precious metals all over the world, the mineral-rich Silver Valley could be in line for an economic rebound, which EPA’s prolonged stay in the area would place at risk.

‘Get Out of Our State’

EPA’s projection that the cleanup will cost $1.3 billion has been met with widespread skepticism. As the Spokane Spokesman-Review pointed out in an August 11 editorial, “It goes without saying that a cleanup plan projected to take possibly until the year 2100 or beyond is going to be revised multiple times. Any cost estimate made today will have been rendered a fiction by the time the job is over.”

“This is another federal government money pit that will do nothing but drive away business investment in the region and waste time and money,” said Wayne Hoffman, executive director of the Boise-based Idaho Freedom Foundation.

“We would like nothing more than for the federal government to leave us alone, get out of our state, and stop creating new schemes to meddle in our affairs,” Hoffman added.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.
NOAA Eliminates Some Competitive Fish Harvesting

By Krystle Russin

The federal government is eliminating open competition for certain species of West Coast fish and will instead allocate shares individually to fish harvesters, which they can fill at their leisure.

Environmental Goals Championed

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service claims the new system will help the environment by reducing inadvertent catches of nongame fish, improve fishermen safety by reducing risks taken by competing fishermen, and increase the income of fishermen by guaranteeing them a profitable catch season.

“Catch shares can stop the race for fishermen to get out on the water and catch as many fish as fast as they can until a quota is reached,” said Will Stelle Jr., NOAA Fisheries Service Northwest regional administrator, in a press statement.

Stelle and NOAA argue the annual race to fill an overall fish quota discourages fishermen from taking steps to minimize the incidental catch of nongame species.

The change, announced August 10, is expected to take effect early in 2011.

Creating a Corporate Oligarchy

Many fishermen and consumer advocates counter the new system eliminates healthy competition, encourages favoritism and government power, and creates a de facto corporate monopoly that will squeeze out individual fishermen.

“I don’t believe it’s going to work well for small fishermen. It will possibly work well for large, corporate fishermen.” fisherman Jeremiah O’Brien told ABC’s KEZI News in Eugene, Oregon.

“This could possibly eliminate the small guy, which concerns me,” O’Brien worried.

Harming Small Fishers

“The elimination of competition rarely favors small businessmen or the consumer,” said Karla Kay Edwards, a rural policy analyst at the Cascade Policy Institute. Edwards said changes originally intended to help business, at least from NOAA’s perspective, will end up hurting the small, family-owned fishing sector.

“The small fisherman is vital to the economy of coastal communities in Oregon, and we can only hope that they survive as this program is implemented,” Edwards added.

Richard Rowland, president emeritus of the Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, agrees the new policy favors large corporations at the expense of individual fishermen and smaller fishing enterprises.

The policy “is bound to create more problems than it solves,” Rowland said. “The solution is to get fishermen together and fashion a win-win solution based on an understanding of the common problem and human incentives like personal ownership and natural consequences and rewards.”

Krystle Russin (krystle@purepolitics.com) writes from Texas.

Montana Democrats Seek State Control of Wolf Populations

By Cheryl K. Chumley

Jon Tester and Max Baucus, Democratic Senators representing Montana, are fighting an August 5 federal court decision that restored gray wolves to the U.S. Interior Department’s list of endangered species.

Officials with the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks department say there are now more than 450 wolves in the state—and roughly 1,700 wolves in the Northern Rockies—and states should be able to authorize hunting to control the wolf population.

Developing a Regional Plan

Tester and Baucus have asked officials from Idaho and Wyoming to join Montana in creating a plan that would allow the states, instead of the federal government, to manage and control the species. Texas Rep. Chet Edwards has introduced H.R. 6028, which would amend the Endangered Species Act to prohibit gray wolves from being listed as an endangered species.

Tester and Baucus hope the cooperative formulation of a regional wolf management plan will induce Congress to support such an amendment of the ESA.

Tester and Baucus already have spearheaded passage of the Wolf Livestock Loss Mitigation Act, also known as the Wolf Kill Bill, which compensates landowners for livestock losses due to wolf attacks. The act, however, has been largely unfunded, so Tester and Baucus sent an August letter to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar asking for full funding.

“In the pursuit of finding a lasting solution, we strongly support state management and believe that it can be used to achieve a healthy population of gray wolves while balancing the needs of the communities in this region,” the senators wrote to Salazar. “To this end, we ask you to convene discussions between all stakeholders in the tri-state region in Montana this fall. Working through a collaborative process can bring resolution to this problem if all the relevant parties are engaged.”

State Oversight Debated

Meanwhile, environmental activist groups are fighting hard to prevent the delisting of gray wolves.

“There’s a lot of support for wildlife out here,” said Mike Leahy, director of the Northern Rockies Regional Office of Defenders of Wildlife. “People want their wildlife to be properly managed, and a better approach, one we would agree with, is to a stakeholder process in the region that would revisit and update the science used for an endangered species listing—the science that sets the threshold for putting them on the list.

“Our major concern is there is so much anti-wolf sentiment that over time, the counts will be lowered,” Leahy said. “We want protection for the wolves” at the federal level.

Jay Lehr, Ph.D., science director for The Heartland Institute, noted state-specific or regional plans can be just as effective, if not more so, than a federal plan.

“Fish and wildlife experts for the individual states often have a better knowledge of their native species and are better able to manage species of concern than federal officials,” said Lehr. “Northern Rocky Mountain wolf populations are healthy and there is no scientific basis for taking management authority away from state experts.”

Cheryl K. Chumley (ckchumley@aol.com) writes from Northern Virginia.
New York Senate Passes Fracking Moratorium Bill

By H. Sterling Burnett

The New York Senate has passed a bill to impose a nine-month moratorium on new permits for natural gas production through hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the state’s portion of the massive, multistate Marcellus shale rock formation. The bill passed by a 48-9 vote on August 4.

Fracking involves directing a high-pressure stream of water with small amounts of chemicals into shale rock to create fissures that allow natural gas trapped by the shale to rise to the surface. The method has been largely responsible for the surge in natural gas production nationwide—and the decline in prices—during the past few years.

If, as expected, the New York Assembly passes a similar moratorium after its summer recess and the governor signs it, drilling would come to a standstill in the state’s portion of the Marcellus shale deposit.

Fracking has been used in oil and natural gas production since 1949 and has been responsible for production of 30 percent of the nation’s domestic oil and natural gas reserves. The National Petroleum Council estimates 60 to 80 percent of all wells drilled in the United States during the next decade will require fracking to remain viable.

Activists Take Aim

Although fracking is a longstanding production technique, energy companies’ increased use has put it in the crosshairs of anti-petroleum interests and environmental activist groups. The groups claim fracking chemicals can enter the water table and endanger human health.

Studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Ground Water Protection Council, and Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission have found no evidence that fracking affects human health.

“This moratorium and other, similar ones being considered and enacted at state and local levels are totally ignorant,” said Gary Stone, vice president of engineering at Dallas-based Five States Energy. “By ignorant I mean they are based in ignorance of the method’s long, safe history and the numerous studies that have failed to demonstrate any harm to human health from current operations.

“These moratoria are a reaction to a problem that doesn’t exist, and they are causing serious economic damage not only to New York but to the country as a whole,” said Stone.

The battle over natural gas production is important because of the size of the possible gas field at issue. The Marcellus formation lies beneath more than 95,000 square miles of land stretching more than 600 miles from Ontario, Canada to Tennessee and from the Eastern U.S. seaboard to Ohio and Kentucky. By comparison, the portion of the lucrative Barnett Shale formation in Texas that is estimated to be capable of natural gas production stretches merely 127 miles and lies below approximately 5,000 square miles of land.

The Marcellus formation is considered the “Saudi Arabia of natural gas” and can play an important part in creating jobs, keeping energy prices low, and reducing foreign energy imports. The U.S. Energy Information Administration expects natural gas to account for 57 percent of new electricity generation capacity built by 2025. EIA predicts natural gas-fired electricity generation, which accounted for 16 percent of all generation in 2002, will account for 21 percent of the total in 2025.

‘Myths and Fears Have Taken Over’

New York’s proposed moratorium could have both short-term and long-term negative economic consequences, says energy analyst Tom Tanton, president of T2 & Associates.

“It is truly unfortunate that myths and fears have taken over the New York State Senate, rather than experience and science. Multiple reviews have shown hydraulic fracturing to be a safe and proven method to increase domestic energy supplies,” Tanton explained.

“Perhaps New York should look to its neighbors in Pennsylvania for a more reasoned approach to issues associated with this century-old technique,” Tanton said. “In the meantime, the unemployed in New York will face ongoing obstacles that are being eliminated in Pennsylvania.”

H. Sterling Burnett, Ph.D. (sterling.burnett@ncpa.org) is a senior fellow with the National Center for Policy Analysis.
Florida’s Ailing Economy Scales Back Everglades Deal

By Cheryl K. Chumley

The state of Florida’s plan to buy property from U.S. Sugar Corporation and use it to restore the Everglades is being scaled back because of the state’s growing budget woes.

Two years ago, when the South Florida Water Management District and Gov. Charlie Crist (I) first announced the idea, the plan was for the state to buy U.S. Sugar in its entirety for $1.75 billion and then shut down operations after six years, notes Judy Sanchez, director of corporate communications for U.S. Sugar.

Since then, economic realities have forced the state repeatedly to scale back the scope and pricetag of the proposed purchase.

Doubts About Prospects

After the initial $1.75 billion plan, “It went first to a real-estate-only purchase of 180,000 acres for $1.34 billion, then changed to phased purchases of an initial 73,000 acre purchase for $536 million with an option to acquire the remaining 107,000 acres,” Sanchez said.

“Now, [it is] scaled down to an initial purchase of 27,000 acres for $197 million, with an option to acquire the remaining land when the economy improves.”

Whether the state will ever exercise its option is debatable. Sanchez says it is feasible, and even probable, but Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon of Florida, says otherwise.

“It is possible,” Draper said. “There is an option for the state to buy more land. But I don’t think it’s likely at all.”

Sweetheart Bailout Alleged

The land deal has been marred by accusations of special-interest dealings between U.S. Sugar and Crist.

The Palm Beach Post reported on August 11 that U.S. Sugar’s rival, Florida Crystals, “alleged that the $1.75 billion buyout, including U.S. Sugar’s mill, railroad and citrus processing plant, was a sweetheart bailout.” U.S. Sugar was $550 million in debt at the time, but the company funneled political contribution dollars to Crist, according to an August 13 New York Times report.

Future Restoration Plans

“This scaled-down plan will focus not on water storage but on water quality improvements,” Draper said. “We’ve had a 20-year problem with water runoff, … and one of the strategies is to build storm water treatment areas. There have been six built so far.”

Calif. Board Recommends Reducing River Water Diversion

By Rachel Jurado

The California State Water Resources Control Board is recommending at least 75 percent of the water in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta System be allowed to flow freely into the Pacific Ocean, a dramatic increase over current water flow.

The board’s nonbinding recommendation concludes the current diversion — roughly 50 percent of the Delta System’s water for agriculture and cities from April through June of each year — is unsustainable.

Environmental activist groups hailed the recommendation, but farmers warned of negative economic and societal impacts if the recommendations are given the force of law by state agencies and the federal government.

State Water Policy Debated

Despite the board’s recommendations, the state’s budget woes are hindering implementation of a comprehensive water policy.

The state legislature voted to place Proposition 18, an $11.14 billion bond to pay for infrastructure improvements to aid in the containment and conveyance of water, on the November 2010 ballot. The public’s anxiety over the state’s growing budget deficit, however, prompted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) to encourage the legislature to push the vote back to the 2012 election.

Fearing Californians would reject the bond measure, the legislature agreed to postpone the vote. Without the bond funds, much of the state’s efforts to revise water flows and water policy will have to be postponed.

Economics and Scarcity

Chris Scheuring, managing counsel of the California Farm Bureau Federation, appeared before the board on behalf of the state’s farmers and submitted written comments before the board made its recommendation.

“[I]f, as the draft report suggests, the cost of protecting the public trust is to sacrifice much of the state’s economy, this may be a sign that it is time to begin to look at more comprehensive, rational, and realistic solutions to the state’s water issues,” said Scheuring in his written comments.

Federal Government Hiked Demand

Economist David Zetland, the Wanstrup Fellow at the University of California-Berkeley and author at Aguanomics.com, warns that even if funding is acquired, the Delta package will not prevent future water shortages.

Zetland notes California’s recurring water shortages can be better understood in light of federal involvement in making the delta the source of the Central Valley’s agricultural boom during the 1930s. “The first project to go in was the Central Valley Project. The feds took the lead in turning the delta into a major water exporter and water user. From a sustainability perspective it’s a problem because of demand. Can we continue to do this forever?” Zetland said.

Zetland explained, “The water supplies were very abundant at the start when they built these aqueducts, and then demand went up. We don’t have any solutions to manage demand. We’re not using any incentive or price mechanisms to get water where it’s most useful. We’re relying on bureaucratic mechanisms that were not designed to deal with scarcity.”

Rachel Jurado (rjurado@nd.edu) writes from Oak Brook, Illinois.
New Mexico Considers Greenhouse Gas Restrictions

By Bonner R. Cohen

A scheme to mandate a reduction of New Mexico’s greenhouse gas emissions is being debated in a Santa Fe hearing room, with the state’s economic future at stake.

In December 2008, two green groups—New Energy Economy and the New Mexico Environmental Law Center—filed a petition with the state’s Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) to impose limits on greenhouse gas emissions. The five-page petition targets coal and natural gas power plants and oil and gas facilities (including refineries, processing and treatment plants, and compressor stations) that emit more than 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) per year.

Under the plan, those facilities would have to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 3 percent per year from 2010 levels. The program would get underway in 2012 and would remain in force until either the state or the federal government adopted a CO2 emissions-reduction scheme.

The hearings before the EIB began in August and are expected to continue intermittently into October. They feature expert witnesses from both sides, subject to cross-examinations by their opponents.

State in the Crosshairs

“It is imperative that New Mexico step forward and begin to regulate greenhouse gases,” testified Steve Michel, chief counsel for Western Resources Advocates’ energy program, on behalf of the petitioners. “Frankly, we must all act as fast as we can, as significantly as we can, everywhere we can, if we have any hope of solving this problem.”

EIB also held hearings in the eastern New Mexico city of Clovis, allowing local citizens to express their opinion on the proposed rules. Most of the citizens speaking up at the Clovis hearings opposed greenhouse gas restrictions.

“If man-made climate change actually exists, it is a global issue, not a local one,” said local farmer Thom Moore.

Moore worried that greenhouse restrictions would cause fuel and fertilizer prices to skyrocket, which would further damage an already struggling economy. “I ask you to remember good intentions are only good for paving roads,” said Moore.

The controversy in New Mexico was triggered in 2005 when Gov. Bill Richardson (D) called for the state to lower its greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels by 2012, 10 percent below 2000 levels by 2020, and 75 percent below 2000 levels by 2050. With Congress refusing to impose a national cap-and-trade system, environmental activist groups are turning up the pressure on New Mexico to act on its own.

State Sen. Clint Harden (R-Clovis) spoke up at the Clovis hearings, saying the state legislature had rejected greenhouse gas restrictions and EIB should not seek to circumvent the legislature’s decision.

“The only significant impact will be a deeply painful economic impact on New Mexican energy consumers,” said Lehr.

Baller R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

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Auditor Bashes U.N. Panel

Continued from page 1

asked IAC to conduct the audit.

“We found in the summary for policymakers that there were two kinds of errors that came up—one is the kind where they place high confidence in something where there is very little evidence. The other is the kind where you make a statement ... with no substantive value, in our judgment,” IAC reported.

Don Easterbrook, emeritus professor of geology at Western Washington University, agreed. “The IPCC report is filled with statements of ‘90 percent certainty’ without even saying 90 percent of what or providing any basis for such statements. Yet those pronouncements of certainty were used over and over as though that had been scientifically proven somehow,” Easterbrook told FoxNews.com.

“In the last assessment, each Working Group used a different variation of IPCC’s uncertainty guidelines, and the committee found that the guidance is not always followed,” the IAC report continued.

“The Working Group II report, for example, contains some statements that were assigned high confidence but for which there is little evidence,” IAC noted. “In future assessments, all Working Groups should qualify their understanding of a topic by describing the amount of evidence available and the degree of agreement among experts; this is known as the level of understanding scale. And all Working Groups should use a probability scale to quantify the likelihood of a particular event occurring, but only when there is sufficient evidence to do so.”

IAC also faulted IPCC for its “slow and inadequate response to revelations of errors in the last assessment” and noted “complaints that its leaders have gone beyond IPCC’s mandate to be ‘policy relevant, not policy prescriptive’ in their public comments.”

IAC added, “accountability and transparency must be considered as a growing obligation, and this alone would require revisiting IPCC’s processes and procedures.”

“The InterAcademy Council report is too modest in its call for reform of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, but it is a vindication of what authors affiliated with The Heartland Institute have been saying for the past 15 years,” said Joseph Bast, president of The Heartland Institute and publisher of Environment & Climate News. “It is unfortunate that it took the academic community so long to recognize and admit the flaws in the IPCC process that led it to commit the greatest corruption of science in the past hundred years.

“Spokespersons associated with The Heartland Institute have been disputing the alarmist claims of the IPCC since 1995,” Bast added. “When our perspective was censored by the mainstream media, we circumvented them by distributing accurate information directly to approximately 200,000 of the nation’s policymakers and opinion leaders. During the past five years, Heartland produced and distributed millions of copies of books, videos, and reports and hosted four international conferences on climate change. In 2009, Heartland published Climate Change Reconsidered, an 800-page report written by 38 scientists from more than a dozen countries and containing more than 4,000 references to articles in peer-reviewed journals.

“Opinion polls and recent political events reveal that our efforts have paid off,” Bast said. “Most people don’t believe global warming is manmade or will be a disaster. Cap and trade is politically dead now and perhaps for years to come. The great global warming delusion is fading, and soon it will be largely forgotten. In this context, the InterAcademy Council report is a small but significant step toward sanity,” Bast added.

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

Coal Emissions Are Falling Dramatically, EPA Reports

U.S. coal-fired power plants are emitting substantially fewer smog-forming particles than they did just two years ago, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The new EPA data show switching from affordable coal to expensive alternative energy sources is unnecessary to reduce air pollution levels.

Emissions data for the first half of 2010 show the 850 coal-fired power plants regulated under EPA’s Acid Rain Program reduced their sulfur dioxide emissions by 36 percent and their nitrogen oxide emissions by 37 percent compared to the first half of 2008. Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides combine to form smog.

The decline in smog precursors is taking place independent of the economic slowdown, EPA data show. For each unit of power produced, coal-fired power plants in the first half of 2010 cut their sulfur dioxide emissions by 34 percent and nitrogen oxide emissions by 35 percent compared to 2008.

The 2010 data show strong progress toward meeting EPA’s goal of reducing sulfur dioxide emissions by 71 percent and nitrogen oxide emissions by 52 percent by the year 2014.

Even before the newly reported emissions cuts, EPA documented substantial and consistent improvements in the nation’s air quality. Prior to the 2008-2010 cuts in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, EPA reported emissions of the six most common air pollutants had fallen 54 percent since 1980 and 60 percent since 1970.

— James M. Taylor
Michigan Ponders its Future as an Energy Producer

By Bonner R. Cohen

Michigan, a state whose economy was driven for more than a century by its once-mighty automobile industry, now has a chance to reinvent itself and become one of the nation’s leading suppliers of energy.

Whether that happens will depend on decisions by Michigan lawmakers regarding the state’s abundant shale oil and gas deposits.

Increasing the state’s natural resource production could help cut the state’s unemployment rate, which is currently at 13.1 percent.

Although Michigan is rarely thought of as a significant producer of fossil fuels, the state’s 85-year-old oil and gas industry currently produces revenues of about $1.2 billion a year. Michigan ranks 12th nationally in natural gas production and 15th in crude oil production. The industry employs about 10,000 Michiganders.

Those figures could rise significantly if Michigan is able to make use of the substantial reserves of shale oil and gas that geologists know exist in the state.

Michigan sold $178 million in leasing fees at a single auction in May, which, as the Detroit News pointed out, “equaled the total amount of money the state has collected in leasing fees since the 1920s, a telltale sign that interest in shale drilling is heating up.”

Another auction is planned for October 26 in Lansing.

Forbes Harding, director of the Property Rights Network at the Midland-based Mackinac Center, says this hostility toward development is wrongheaded.

“State officials should be encouraging the development of [Michigan’s natural gas] resources, which would create jobs and provide a much-needed boost to the economy, rather than putting these resources off limits.”

Russ Harding, Property Rights Network, Mackinac Center

Two recent oil spills—one by Calgary-based Enbridge Energy in the Kalamazoo River, and the other by BP in the Gulf of Mexico—have given environmentalists an opening to attack oil and gas drilling in Michigan.

Groups such as the National Wildlife Federation, Michigan Land Use Institute, and Michigan Environmental Council have cited the accidents as examples of the perils of drilling.

Michigan State Rep. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) is advocating legislation that would allow voters to amend the state’s constitution to ban oil and natural gas production in state waters. Oil and natural gas production is already banned in Michigan’s portion of the Great Lakes, but Warren warns the legislature can change its mind and authorize production at any time.

An Economic Blessing

Rus Harding, director of the Property Rights Network at the Midland-based Mackinac Center, says this hostility toward development is wrongheaded.

Michigan’s natural resources can provide a way for the state’s residents to escape the economic doldrums that have befallen the state in recent years, he said.

“There are extensive natural gas resources in Northern Michigan,” Harding said. “State officials should be encouraging the development of these resources, which would create jobs and provide a much-needed boost to the economy, rather than putting these resources off limits.”

Harding, who was director of Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality from 1995 to 2002, noted, “Michigan has some of the toughest standards in the country regulating oil and gas development. Yet historically, natural gas wells in Michigan have been developed without causing environmental damage.”

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (bcohen@nationalcenter.org) is a senior fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

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Canada’s Global National News carried a story on July 16 indicating 2010 was the hottest year on record. A follow-up article in Victoria’s Times-Colonist newspaper (July 18, p. A12) made a similar claim.

The claims remind me of the children’s story “The Emperor Has No Clothes,” about a tailor who managed to convince the emperor and his entourage they were incapable of seeing the wonderful tunic he was sewing. When the emperor paraded in his new suit, a child exposed the scam by asking why the emperor was wearing no clothes.

Thus it is with climate. Although Victorians experienced a mild winter and spring, the past few months have been colder than usual. The Canadian prairies experienced a miserable winter, and things were not much better elsewhere in North America and Europe. However, a few weeks of warm weather in Europe and eastern Canada, and it becomes easy to sell the idea that temperatures are the highest they have ever been and that 2010 is on course to become the warmest year ever.

Is that so?

NASA temperature data underlie these stories. Consider the 10 warmest years as reported in Table 1. The data in the table are from http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/graphs/Fig.D.txt, but viewed on three different dates as indicated. Since data collected in August 2007 are available only through 2006, 2007 is not included in the earliest ranking given in Table 1.

NASA scientists have adjusted the data in ways that make more recent years appear warmer. Scientists have dropped weather stations and/or used varying methods for ‘adjusting’ the data. Thus, the number of years from the past two decades that appear in the 20 warmest years (only the top 10 are shown in Table 1) has increased from...
has 2009-2010 been the warmest period ever?

This question is the subject of much debate and analysis, as the climate continues to change in ways that are not yet fully understood. February 2009 marked the first time that a February was warmer than every month of the year, according to the National Centers for Environmental Information. The warmest year in the historical record, 2009, was followed by another warm year, 2010, and the coldest year since 1978. Notice in Figure 1 (above) that neither the last six months of 2009 nor the first months of 2010 have been falling, as they have been doing for decades. Rice yields are merely rising, as they have been doing for years.

Scientists have begun to question the notion that warmer temperatures are cutting rice yields, a claim made in BBC News. According to those reports, a new study showed rice yields have been dropping as temperatures warm.

BBC News reported, “Global warming is cutting rice yields in many parts of Asia, according to research, with more declines to come. Yields have fallen by 10 to 20 percent over the last 25 years in some locations.”

“This is the latest in a line of studies that suggest climate change will make it harder to feed the world’s growing population by cutting yields,” the BBC News story added.

Production Rising

But as has happened so often in recent years on the climate change issue, the media got it wrong.

The study cited by BBC News in fact shows only that the rate of increase in rice yields has slowed by 10 to 20 percent. Yields haven’t fallen at all, and are in fact increasing, as they have been doing for decades. Rice yields are merely rising at a pace that is a little slower than the steep rate of increase in previous years.

In addition, the study did not rule out factors other than global warming as possible causes of the moderation in the rise of rice yields after the spectacular increases of recent years.

Higher temperatures have not been shown to reduce the rate of increase in other crop yields, which in fact appear to be benefiting from warmer temperatures. In addition, as warmer temperatures open more land to cultivation, a slight reduction in yield growth per acre may be more than compensated by the increase in land available for use.

Crops Set Records

Many crops other than rice have continued to set production records as atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and global temperatures continue their moderate rise. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. corn, soybean, wheat, peanut, sugar beet, bean, cotton, potato, rice, sorghum, barley, canola, flaxseed, and sunflower production have all set records in the past few years.

Scientists have found warmer temperatures have always benefited global crop production. This has been especially true during the modest warming of the past century, as the moderate increase in temperatures has spurred a corresponding increase in global precipitation.

As a study of twentieth century Northern Hemisphere soil moisture published in the peer-reviewed International Journal of Climatology concluded, “The terrestrial surface is both warmer and effectively wetter. ... A good analogy to describe the changes in these places is that the terrestrial surface is literally becoming more like a gardener’s greenhouse.”

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

A 2010 study in Climatic Change reconstructs winter and spring temperatures for Stockholm for the past 500 years. The warmest and coldest years are reported in Table 2. Notice 1863 was the warmest winter/spring, and 1569 was the coldest.

Satellite data are arguably the most reliable data available, but these begin in December 1978. Notice in Figure 1 (above) that neither the last six months of 2009 nor the first months of 2010 have been the hottest on record (since 1978), and that temperatures since April have been falling.

Also note the highest temperatures occurred in 1998, and these coincided with an El Niño, while the recent high temperatures also coincide with (a weaker) El Niño event. Thus, they are the result of nonhuman factors.

G. Cornelis van Kooten (kooten@uvic.ca) is professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of Victoria Department of Economics and is coeditor of the Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics.
By James M. Taylor

The unusually cold temperatures and string of heavy blizzards along the U.S. Eastern seaboard last winter had nothing to do with global warming, scientists at the Earth Institute of Columbia University report in the peer-reviewed *Geophysical Research Letters*.

The snow anomalies were in fact typical of winters with the cyclical world-climate conditions of last year, the report noted.

**Media Claim Warming Connection**

Although one might logically assume global warming would produce fewer rather than more extreme cold weather events, environmental activist groups and the media frequently asserted the blizzards were another sign humans are creating a global warming crisis.

For example, *Time* magazine reported on February 10, in the wake of two East Coast blizzards, “There is some evidence that climate change could in fact make such massive snowstorms more common, even as the world continues to warm. As the meteorologist Jeff Masters points out in his excellent blog at Weather Underground, the two major storms that hit Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., this winter … are already among the 10 heaviest snowfalls those cities have ever recorded. The chance of that happening in the same winter is incredibly unlikely.”

On the same day, *The New York Times* added, “Most climate scientists respond that the ferocious storms are consistent with forecasts that a heating planet will produce more frequent and more intense weather events.”

**Ocean Cycles the Cause**

Columbia University scientists, however, report in the July 24 *Geophysical Research Letters* that El Niño—a cyclical warming of surface water in the eastern South Pacific—and colder-than-usual temperatures in the North Atlantic caused the unusually severe Eastern seaboard winter.

“An El Niño state is associated with positive snowfall anomalies in the southern and central United States and along the eastern seaboard and negative anomalies to the north. A negative NAO [North Atlantic Oscillation] causes positive snow anomalies across eastern North America and in northern Europe. It is argued that increased snowfall in the southern U.S. is contributed to by a southward displaced storm track but further north, in the eastern U.S. and northern Europe, positive snow anomalies arise from the cold temperature anomalies of a negative NAO. These relations are used with observed values of NINO3 and the NAO to conclude that the negative NAO and El Niño event were responsible for the northern hemisphere snow anomalies of winter 2009/10,” the scientists wrote.

“Snowy winters will happen regardless of climate change,” Richard Seager, a climate scientist at Lamont-Doherty and lead author of the study, noted in a Columbia University press release.

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

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The 70-something Lehr has completed the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon Championship in Kona nearly a dozen times; has more than 1,200 skydives to his credit; and recently attempted a rim-to-rim double hike across the Grand Canyon (and had to be airlifted out). Three weeks later, he succeeded in bicycling across the Rocky Mountains.

Lehr is available through The Heartland Institute for a limited number of speaking engagements across the country.

Contact Nikki Comerford at 312/377-4000, or by email at ncomerford@heartland.org, to schedule Jay Lehr to keynote your next event … and learn Lehr’s Laws for Living!
IPCC Coordinating Author Gary Yohe Not Objective

By James M. Taylor

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has announced the Coordinating Lead Authors, Lead Authors, and Review Editors for its Fifth Assessment Report, scheduled for release in 2013.

IPCC has been the subject of substantial criticism, from IPCC participants and outsiders alike, regarding its lack of scientific objectivity and its record of advocacy rather than dispassionate science.

The newly announced leaders for IPCC’s 2013 report, unfortunately, promise more of the same.

Gary Yohe, a professor of economics at Wesleyan University, has been appointed Coordinating Lead Author for IPCC’s important introductory chapter, “Point of Departure.” Coordinating lead authors decide which studies and points of view will be credited and cited in the report, and which will be ignored.

Objectivity, scientific expertise, and a lack of bias are vital for coordinating lead authors if the IPCC report is to have any meaningful value. Yohe has demonstrated none of these traits.

Calls for Tax Hikes

In a 2008 interview with the magazine Yale Environment 360, Yohe “argues that the uncertainties surrounding global warming... are no excuse for inaction.”

“As Yohe sees it, a prudent risk-management strategy dictates significant cuts in greenhouse gases and immediate planning to adapt to rising sea levels and other effects of climate change,” the article reports. “Such strategies can be fine-tuned later, he says, as the extent of warming becomes clearer.”

Yohe “dictates significant cuts in greenhouse gases” through substantial new taxes, the article notes. One of the new taxes Yohe would like to see is a 20-cent per gallon tax on gasoline that would steadily increase over time.

Said Yohe, “The fundamental thing is that a signal needs to be sent to the business community and to the world that from the U.S. perspective, carbon isn’t free anymore and that carbon should be more expensive next year than it is this year.”

Sending Compensation Overseas

Yohe argues the United States should commit to an agreement stronger than the Kyoto Protocol and should pay other nations to compensate for alleged climate change harms.

“[P]eople who argue against doing anything then have to guarantee that humans aren’t changing the climate. They can’t do that, so they can’t argue against enacting some climate policy.”

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Yohe added, “It is really dangerous to argue that uncertainty is a reason not to do something about this. For those who say climate change isn’t a problem I ask: Can you guarantee that you are right? Can you guarantee that humans are not the cause of climate change? Of course, they cannot.”

Yohe also told Scientific American he was concerned about losing the Arctic ice sheet. A month before Yohe’s interview, however, NASA scientists reported the recent decline in the Arctic ice sheet was due to a variance in local wind patterns, not global warming. Since Yohe’s 2007 interview, the Arctic ice sheet has been steadily increasing, as has the Antarctic ice sheet. The Arctic ice sheet grew 25 percent between 2007 and 2009.

And while U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have been steadily declining for the past decade, the cumulative emissions for the rest of the world—including nations that agreed to reduce emissions under the Kyoto Protocol—continue to rise. Yet in a 2006 interview with ABC News, Yohe said, “As long as they remain voluntary, meaningful cuts in greenhouse gas emissions simply won’t happen in the U.S.”

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

Ignoring Scientific Realities

In a 2007 interview with Scientific American, after global temperatures had been declining for nearly a decade, Yohe said, “The evidence over the last five years has essentially been moving in only one direction, and the new knowledge says that climate change is more of a problem than we thought even five years ago.”

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James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.
television producer and angrily criticized the Discovery Channel for not devoting enough air time to global warming.

“I have a gun, and I have a bomb. ... I have several bombs strapped to my body ready to go off,” Lee told the NBC producer.

After shooting Lee, police found several explosive devices strapped to Lee, with still more devices in a bag and box that Lee had brought with him.

“Attached to propane cylinders, he had pipes that contained shotgun shells. In addition he had a couple of pipe bombs strapped to it. They appeared to have some sort of firework-type material inside of them,” said Montgomery County Police Chief J. Thomas Manger.

Gore Movie as ‘Awakening’
Lee was first arrested for engaging in disruptive environmental protesting outside Discovery Channel headquarters in 2008. At the time, he explained he had had an environmental “awakening” after seeing Al Gore’s movie An Inconvenient Truth.

In the movie, Gore bemoans the fact that peaceful, democratic means have not motivated people to enact his desired global warming restrictions. “I used to believe in democracy,” Gore says near the end of the film.

History of Violent Rhetoric
In 2006, Grist magazine staff writer David Roberts wrote, “When we’ve finally gotten serious about global warming, when the impacts are really hitting us and we’re in a full worldwide scramble to minimize the damage, we should have war crimes trials for these bastards—some sort of climate Nuremberg.” The penalty imposed in Nuremberg for war crimes was death.

In 2007, Florida Gov. Charlie Crist invited Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to keynote a state-sponsored conference designed to rally public support for global warming legislation. During his remarks, Kennedy called the producers of conventional, carbon-based energy “traitors” and perpetrators of “treason,” and then demanded they be punished as such. The U.S. Constitution authorizes the death penalty as punishment for treason.

In 2008 NASA global warming activist James Hansen said CEOs of fossil energy companies “should be tried for high crimes against humanity and nature.” The penalty for high crimes against humanity is death.

Environment Manifesto
As Lee prepared to storm the Discovery Channel headquarters with his guns and bombs, he issued a manifesto and a list of demands, much of which reads like an environmental activist wishlist.

“Focus must be given on how people can live WITHOUT giving birth to more filthy human children since those new additions continue pollution and are pollution. ... Perhaps also forums of leading scientists who understand and agree with the Malthus-Darwin science and the problem of human overpopulation. Do both. Do all until something WORKS and is reversed!

“Find solutions for Global Warming, Automotive pollution, International Trade, factory pollution, and the whole blasted human economy. Find ways so that people don’t build more housing pollution which destroys the environment to make way for more human filth! Find solutions so that people stop breeding as well as stopping using Oil in order to REVERSE Global warming and the destruction of the planet!

“Saving the Planet means saving what’s left of the non-human Wildlife by decreasing the Human population. That means stopping the human race from breeding any more disgusting human babies!

“Develop shows that will correct and dismantle the dangerous US world economy.”

Ongoing Environmental Terrorism
Lee is not the first, or even the most threatening, environmental activist to engage in acts of terrorism. Unabomber Ted Kaczynski wrote an anti-technology environmental manifesto and targeted for death prominent people whose work conflicted with environmental extremism. Eco-terrorists have attacked businesses, laboratories, and homes of people they believe are harming the environment.

James M. Taylor (jtaylor@heartland.org) is managing editor of Environment & Climate News.
Book Is a Valuable Source of In-Depth Energy Information

Power Hungry: The Myths of “Green” Energy and the Real Fuels of the Future
by Robert Bryce

Review by Jay Lehr

Few science books are worth reading each and every page. Climatism, by Steve Gorham (reviewed here in March), is an exception. Power Hungry is not, but without doubt it contains more than enough great information to make it a terrific buy for anyone with a strong interest in the nation’s energy supply.

I recommend reading only about 20 pages a day, as it is very heavy on the numbers, but it’s well worth a fun 15-day investment.

Comprehensive Research

Robert Bryce spent four years researching every aspect of American energy from a fairly objective point of view. As one currently under contract to compile a four-volume encyclopedia of energy for John Wiley & Sons, I can tell you Bryce has done an outstanding job.

From time to time he throws in his personal politics—which too many authors are inclined to do—and he has too much respect for the global warming alarmists for my comfort, but these do not detract too much from the excellent analysis of various energy technologies.

A full 54 pages devoted to references illustrate the comprehensive research Bryce has done, as well as the quality of his sources. He is at his best destroying many of the myths regarding renewable energy, providing powerful mathematical proofs that anyone can understand.

He is also excellent on nuclear energy, and I will use one of his chapters as the basis for a future article on small-scale nuclear power generation in a future issue of Environment & Climate News.

Useful Information

To convince you of the value of the book, in the remainder of this review I will simply offer a surfer’s list of some of the wonderful nuggets of information this book contains:

• Natural gas supplies are bountiful, with a known 280 years of resources available at our present rate of consumption.
• The next time someone says we are addicted to oil, substitute the word “prosperity” for oil.
• Nearly 3 billion people relying on biomass energy would love to trade places with us.
• Humans cannot live near wind farms because of the low-level noise produced by their massive blades, which has palpable physical impacts.
• Each megawatt of deliverable wind energy requires 870 cubic meters of concrete and 460 tons of steel, whereas a gas-fired plant requires only about 3 percent as much.
• In order for the Chinese to build a planned 12,700 megawatts of new wind power, they will have to add 9,200 megawatts of new coal power as back-up.
• Denmark’s perceived leadership in successful wind power is a mirage. Denmark has not reduced carbon emissions, energy costs have tripled there, and the nation must export most of its wind power at below-market rates.
• The American Bird Conservancy estimates between 75,000 and 275,000 birds are killed each year by wind turbines.
• The United States, without strict government mandates, is already leading the world in reducing its carbon intensity and its energy use without doing any of the things environmental activist groups dictate.
• Each year, hundreds of thousands of people die in Third World nations from indoor air pollution caused by the burning of biomass. Power from coal, natural gas, and oil would improve living conditions and reduce pollution-related deaths.
• Although environmental activist groups strongly hype cellulosic ethanol, it is no closer to technological and economic viability than it was when first described in 1921.
• Ethanol cannot significantly reduce the demand for oil, because many products other than automotive fuel are extracted from oil.
• Batteries have improved, but not by the orders of magnitude required to enable battery-powered cars to compete with other forms of transportation.
• 2,000 tons of uranium can release as much energy as 4.2 billion tons of oil.
• Measured in units of output, wind and solar power are getting 15 times as much federal subsidy money as nuclear power.

Power Density the Key

The primary theme of this book is the importance of power density. As Bryce thoroughly documents, coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear power provide such power density while wind, solar, and biofuels do not.

You will not find a book on energy that makes this important point more strongly than this one.

Jay Lehr, Ph.D. (jlehr@heartland.org) is science director of The Heartland Institute.

Wind Driving Up Montana Power Costs

Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU) has filed a request to increase the price the utility charges its customers in Eastern Montana. MDU President Dave Goodin says the price increase is necessary for the utility to recover the higher costs of producing wind power and other renewable power.

The U.S. Energy Information Admin-istration reports the Montana-Dakota region is among the most favorable places in the nation to produce wind power. Even so, MDU customers will pay an extra $100 per year, if regulators grant the rate increase, for the modest portion of wind power added to the regional energy mix.

— James M. Taylor
Pebble Bed Reactors Are the Future of Nuclear Power

By Jay Lehr

Pebble bed nuclear reactors are still in the development phase and have yet to be placed into operation in any nation, but these reactors promise to eliminate many of the roadblocks that have prevented emissions-free nuclear power from generating a greater share of our electric power.

In the 1970s Dr. Rudolf Schulten conceptualized a way to produce nuclear power through the use of a large number of small, self-contained spheres that individually combine fuel, structure, and containment. Tennis ball-sized ceramic spheres, each containing a pebble-sized piece of uranium, would be tightly packed into a container in which heat-transfer fluid could be conducted at an extremely high temperature.

As revised and currently envisioned, a pebble bed reactor (PBR) producing 120 megawatts of electricity might contain as many as 360,000 of these pebbles in a reactor core cooled by a semi-inert gas such as helium or perhaps carbon dioxide or nitrogen.

**Inherent Safety**

The technology’s major attraction would be a dramatically reduced need for safety features to preclude or combat a possible meltdown. The technology’s own safety features, known as Doppler broadening, work as follows:

As the small amount of uranium inside each self-contained sphere increases in temperature, it absorbs more and more neutrons in its individual sphere, which reduces the number of neutrons available for subsequent fission. This caps the power of the reactor, in what is called a negative feedback.

This Doppler broadening occurs at around 900 degrees centigrade, which effectively caps the potential temperature in each sphere at that 900 degree level. The ceramic-coated spheres, meanwhile, will not melt at temperatures below 2,000 degrees centigrade, thus precluding the chance of a meltdown.

When helium is used as the coolant, it will directly turn low-pressure turbines without intervening losses from heat exchangers. Helium is chemically inert, with the additional benefit that it cannot be transformed into a radioactive element.

**Safer, More Efficient**

The inherent safety features of pebble bed reactors make unnecessary the additional, redundant, costly safety features currently required for other nuclear power plant designs. That reduces costs and increases safety.

The use of gas as a coolant also significantly reduces the problem of a cooling liquid absorbing radioactive material in some type of accident. There also will be no need for piping, which can become brittle over time and result in ruptures, to carry the cooling fluid. In the pebble bed the helium-filled space between the pebbles acts as the piping.

Also, because of its ability to operate at higher temperatures, a pebble bed reactor can be as much as 50 percent more efficient than conventional nuclear power plants. Thus pebble bed reactors deliver a great deal more electrical power from each pound of fuel.

**Precision, Ease of Use**

The pebble bed systems also can be temperature-controlled very precisely by altering the flow of gas coolant through the system. This allows the system to operate in a narrow range of radioactive output.

Conventional light-water reactor nuclear plants control the system by inserting nonradioactive rods around the nests of radioactive rods, altering the density of radioactivity and thus its output. These systems are more complicated and less efficient than pebble bed reactors.

Another advantage of the pebble bed design is that the reactors do not have to be shut down periodically to refuel by replacing spent fuel rods with new fuel rods. In the pebble bed design there is always an opening at the bottom of the container through which spheres can be removed while new ones are added at the top. The spheres that are removed are tested for radioactivity. If the spheres are still active enough, they are transferred to the loader at the top.

As with conventional nuclear power plants, the pebble bed reactor is in a container with walls two meters thick. The reactor is in turn enclosed in a containment structure built to withstand the crash of any large airplane.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the pebble bed reactor is its modular capability. Additional pebble bed units can be added as needed. Economies of scale can be realized, and several reactors can share control equipment.

**Let’s Look at the Science**

**What causes climate change?** Is it man? That’s one theory. But few people realize it’s not the only one. At least six other theories also enjoy support in the scientific community. As confidence in the theory of human-caused global warming erodes, this dispassionate account by THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE reviews the theories and their contributions to our understanding of climate change.

Available for free online at heartland.org.

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Jay Lehr, Ph.D., (jlehr@heartland.org) is science director of The Heartland Institute.
Fort Worth Testing Natural Gas Emissions

By Cheryl K. Chumley

In what is being hailed as an intensive study with national ramifications, Fort Worth, Texas has begun air and source pollution tests on hundreds of natural gas drilling sites.

The ultimate goal is to facilitate natural gas drilling, and the tests are aimed at ensuring drilling can be done without exposing residents to hazardous levels of pollution.

“This is really the first comprehensive test any city has done,” said Brian Boerner, environmental management director for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. “It is a scientific, statistically valid test, ... and yes, it will have national implications.”

The tests will take place at 650 different pad sites in Fort Worth, Boerner said, and will include between 1,500 and 1,800 wells. Two basic tests are planned: point source tests at about 75 percent of the sites and ambient tests to monitor air quality.

“The information will help us model the exposure potential in four different scenarios,” Boerner said. “Then, they will use that for rulemaking, ... and this will become the foundation of studies that will be done in the [rest of the] nation.”

Prior Surveys Unreliable

Jason Lamers, manager of media and public affairs for the city of Fort Worth, said city council members decided to go ahead with the tests because prior surveys have given mixed results and citizens have been confused about which numbers to believe.

“Several months ago, maybe a year ago, there were some reports concerning levels of benzene related to gas production sites. It was a private survey that was conducted by a private citizen who paid himself to have it done. But there was media exposure, and concerns were raised.”

Fort Worth City Council members approved a more comprehensive test to gauge not only the level of pollutants leaking from the physical sites but also the level that escapes into the air.

National Implications

Depending on the results—which Boerner said would be ready for public release in March 2011—the national view of natural gas drilling could undergo a dramatic shift.

“A lot of it is going to impact land-use restrictions for oil and gas [extraction],” Boerner said, foreseeing big changes on the local and state regulatory fronts if pollution emission levels are shown to be minimal. “It’ll change what you can do, what you can’t do, the setback requirements, ... [and] how you’re allowed to extract or maintain rights.”

Lamers expects the results to cast favorable light on the pro-drilling movement. “Fort Worth has been dealing with natural gas issues for years, and we’ve been kind of on the forefront of technology,” Lamers said. “We’ve changed our gas ordinance several times. Fort Worth has been kind of a model to other states, and I think people are looking to us to see what’s going on.”

Cheryl K. Chumley (ckchumley@aol.com) writes from Northern Virginia.

Ohio Challenges EPA Ban on Chemical that Kills Bedbugs

By Cheryl K. Chumley

With bedbug infestations making a comeback in Ohio and across the United States, Ohio Department of Agriculture officials are petitioning the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to rethink its ban on residential use of Propoxur, a chemical that shows promise in battling the blood-sucking pests.

Bedbug Infestations Rising

“Most householders of this generation have never seen a bedbug. Until recently, [bedbug sightings] also were a rarity among pest control professionals,” explained Michael Potter, extension entomologist for the University of Kentucky’s College of Agriculture, on the University of Kentucky Entomology Web site.

Infestations were common in the United States around the time of World War II, Potter observes. But “with improvements in hygiene, and especially the widespread use of DDT during the 1940s and ’50s, the bugs all but vanished. Immigration and international travel have undoubtedly contributed to the resurgence. Changes in modern pest control practice, and less effective bedbug pesticides, are other factors suspected for the recurrence.”

Propoxur Effective

Scientists at the University of Kentucky have shown in recent studies that Propoxur is very effective at killing bedbugs. EPA has approved the chemical for use in agricultural and commercial settings, but not in homes. The Ohio Department of Agriculture has asked EPA to loosen its restrictions on home use of the chemical.

“We were receiving reports from pesticide management professionals in the state that they were having trouble controlling bedbugs,” said Matt Beal, an official with the Ohio Department of Agriculture who is petitioning EPA to allow the use of Propoxur in homes. “We looked at the data from Dr. Potter that showed Propoxur was controlling bedbugs, at least in his study.”

EPA Won’t Budge

EPA Director Lisa Jackson told Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland (D) the agency would not change its mind regarding home use of Propoxur. Strickland has asked EPA to reconsider that determination.

Beal said the state is awaiting final word from the EPA.

Dale Kemery, public information officer for EPA in Washington, DC, said the agency will not change its mind regarding home use of Propoxur.

“EPA denied the request,” Kemery said. “It harms the nervous system of children, and it’s not approved for indoor use.”

Cheryl K. Chumley (ckchumley@aol.com) writes from northern Virginia.
West Virginia, EPA Clash over Mountaintop Mining

By Bonner R. Cohen

Environment officials in West Virginia and the state’s influential coal industry are locking horns with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over the Obama administration’s crackdown on mountaintop removal mining.

In the latest dustup involving coal, EPA has imposed more stringent reviews for permits allowing mining operations to use mountaintop removal to get at valuable low-sulfur coal reserves. Under the procedure, hilltops or mountaintops in Appalachia are blasted away to allow men and machines to extract the coal efficiently.

The dirt, rocks, and other debris are shoveled into nearby valleys, a process known as valley fill. Some of the valley fill winds up in streams, triggering known as valley fill. Some of the valley fill winds up in streams, triggering

West Virginia’s new policy rather than impose federal guidelines. In an August 12 story, Hoffman told the Charleston Gazette he is not “trying to pick a fight” with EPA, but added if federal officials didn’t find the state’s new policy acceptable, “I guess we’ll have to see what happens.”

For its part, the National Mining Association (NMA) is picking a fight. NMA has sued EPA over the agency’s mountaintop removal policies. DEP may not be far behind. The state agency is reported to have retained outside lawyers in anticipation of legal action.

EPA—no stranger to either controversy or lawsuits—likewise appears to be girding for a fight. In April the agency announced new electrical conductivity guidelines designed to force coal operators to reduce discharges of chlorides and dissolved solids that could harm aquatic life. DEP criticized EPA’s initiative as an “overbroad, generic criterion ... to set unattainable limits,” while saying its alternative new guidance “will result in changes that are markedly different from the way mining has been conducted for the past 30 years.”

The ball is now in EPA’s court, and analysts say if the agency decides to press the matter, utility customers will see the results in their electric bills.

Coal is America’s most plentiful natural energy resource,” said former Virginia Sen. George Allen, chairman of the American Energy Freedom Center. “Affordable, reliable electricity generated by clean coal technologies is essential for our quality of life.

“Unnecessary burdens imposed on American coal will mean fewer jobs, a less competitive country, higher electricity prices, and a lower standard of living,” Allen added.

Bonner R. Cohen, Ph.D. (@cohen at the National Center for Public Policy Research.

California Accuses 2 People of Fraud in State’s E-Waste Program

By Thomas Cheplick

The State of California is accusing two people associated with the Tung Tai electronics and metal recycling company of submitting fraudulent reimbursement claims as part of the state’s e-waste recycling program. State officials have rejected more than a third of Tung Tai’s recycling claims—totaling $1.6 million— and arrested John Chen and Jason Huang.

The arrests highlight ongoing problems with California’s program for recycling electronic waste. As the state seeks to recycle more electronic products, it is unclear just how much fraud is taking place.

“The problems with the program are in terms of the e-waste coming from out-of-state persons who want to get the money that comes from the advanced recycling fees.”

HILARY NIXON, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF SAN JOSE

were likely to occur because the state was one of the first to set up this type of program and did not have the benefit of seeing what does and does not work elsewhere in recycling e-waste.

“The problems with the program are in terms of the e-waste coming from out-of-state persons who want to get the money that comes from the advanced recycling fees. But this type of fraud is not quite as rampant as some of these original articles have indicated,” Nixon said.

“Is it the best policy?” Nixon asked. “I don’t know one way or another, though most other states looked at extended producer responsibility programs. California really was the frontrunner here, and they went with their advanced recycling fee, which is a relatively expensive program to administer, to monitor, and to manage.”

Thomas Cheplick (thomascheplick@yahoo.com) writes from Cambridge, Massachusetts.
Each month, Environment & Climate News updates the global averaged satellite measurements of the Earth’s temperature. These numbers are important because they are real—not projections, forecasts, or guesses. Global satellite measurements are made from a series of orbiting platforms that sense the average temperature in various atmospheric layers. Here, we present the lowest level, which climate models say should be warming. The satellite measurements are considered accurate to within 0.01°C. The data used to create these graphs can be found on the Internet at http://vortex.nsstc.uah.edu/data/msu/t2lt/uahncdc.lt

**GLOBAL AVERAGE**

The global average temperature for August was 0.51°C above normal.

**NORTHERN HEMISPHERE**

The Northern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.68°C above normal.

**SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE**

The Southern Hemisphere’s temperature was 0.34°C above normal.

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