



The Order of the Earth

News, Views and Musings About Our Planet

December 2008

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UPDATES

Groups Sue to Stop Drilling in Allegheny Forest and Rimrock

November 20 email — A coalition of environmental groups and Forest Service employees are working to prevent the oil industry from destroying a pristine stretch of Pennsylvania's Allegheny National Forest. Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, the Allegheny Defense Project and Sierra Club filed suit in federal court today calling on the Forest Service to conduct mandatory environmental review and allow the public to weigh in on oil and gas projects in the forest, including one adjacent to Rimrock Overlook.

Bush Tells Wildlife Staffers to Ignore Global Warming

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility 10/14/08

(Excerpt) Top Bush administration officials have forbidden wildlife agencies from analyzing the effects of greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants or any other project on species and habitat, according to documents released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility.

These directives are designed to block the Endangered Species Act from being used as a legal tool for addressing global warming.

In a recent series of memos, the Interior Department, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency have ruled that since no single source of greenhouse gases will by itself cause detectable climate change, therefore there can be no official review of possible effects on wildlife or their habitats ...

Activists, Lawyers Secure File Access In Domestic Spying

Lisa Rein Washington Post, 10/28/08

(Excerpt) The 53 political activists wrongly classified as terrorists by the MD State Police may bring lawyers to review their files and take home copies, the agency said yesterday in a sudden shift in policy. State police spokesman Gregory Shipley issued a news release on the policy change an hour before the activists were scheduled to protest in front of the agency's headquarters. Over the past month, activists were notified they could view the criminal intelligence files that police gathered in 2005 and 2006 under the administration of former governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R). But they were told they could not bring a lawyer or make copies before police purged the information ...



Some Friends of Rimrock (FOR), a coalition of recreation and conservation groups devoted to protecting the Rimrock Scenic Overlook section of Allegheny National Forest for future generations, greet visitors at the Rimrock Overlook and Picnic Area on November 1. Get more information at www.saverimrock.com. Photo by Iona

Rimrock Trilogy

Patriotism Written in Stone

By Reg Darling Warren PA

It used to be called Sam's Rocks — named for its nineteenth-century owner, Samuel Morrison — until the Forest Service decided to call it a "scenic overlook" and change its name to Rimrock after the Allegheny River was dammed. Rimrock was once owned and specially loved by Chief Cornplanter who, when he realized Seneca possession of their Allegheny land was doomed, sold it to the white man he trusted above all others, James Morrison, Samuel's father.

But I've only known it as Rimrock. I first heard about Rimrock as a teenager when the Kinzua Dam was being finished. Tales about immense numbers of rattlesnakes being removed from dens there were commonplace. While it's likely there was an element of truth in those tales, it's equally likely they had a direct relationship to an interaction between alcohol and testosterone.

Seething masses of venomous vipers were one of those special horrors holding lurid fascination and an opportunity for verbal displays of abstract, courageous woodsmanship for manly men. I never went to Rimrock in those first days of its new identity. My hunting, fishing and forest wandering mostly centered twenty miles south of Rimrock in ancestral territory on both sides of the border between Warren and Forest counties.

I left Warren, the place of my birth and childhood, the morning after my high school graduation in 1967. During college years I often sought respite from the various tensions of the times in brief, impulsive forays into the woods accessible from Aunt Gert's camp in Mayburg and with Hartie, my cousin-in-law and brother-in-spirit, from his forest-edge home in Tiona, halfway between Mayburg and Rimrock. The myriad ways my consciousness was rooted in the forests of the Alleghenies were mostly unconscious. I attributed the ease, wholeness and healing I found there to a generic sense of the contrast between wild, forested land and the baffling lunacies of a society mired in absurd war and

stifling inhibitions supported by hollow simulations of spirituality.

When I returned to Warren I did so with little sense of returning home; I was merely following the happenstance of a job offer. A few months later, a civil service test led to a much "better job" (the good job turned progressively weirder, but that's another story).

My sense of home had gone into a healthy hibernation while the exuberant liberations of my adolescent soul reveled in sex, drugs, rock and roll, political outrage and art. As that flush of multifaceted liberations settled into balance with the grim realities and simple sanities of trying to live well in the world, I began to find — in the elegant horizons, fertile forests and ancient rocks of my native territory — a new sense of what it means to be native to a place. Though the groundwork for such a realization had been laid in earlier, more youthful wanderings, its new blossoming began at Rimrock.

Rimrock was a place of new beginning for the very simple reason that it was known and accessible. I didn't need a topographical map, pack frame, or time off work to breathe in its wonders, and I

(Continued on Page 14)

Methane Time Bomb

By Steve Connor The Independent

September 23 (excerpt) — The first evidence that millions of tons of a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide is being released into the atmosphere from beneath the Arctic Sea bed has been discovered by scientists.

The Independent was passed details of preliminary findings suggesting that massive deposits of sub-sea methane are bubbling to the surface as the Arctic region becomes warmer and its ice retreats.

Underground stores of methane are important because scientists believe their sudden release has in the past been responsible for rapid increases in global temperatures, dramatic changes to the climate and even the mass extinction of species.

Scientists aboard a research ship that has sailed the entire length of Russia's northern coast have discovered intense concentrations of methane — sometimes at up to 100 times background levels over several areas covering thousands of square miles of the Siberian continental shelf.

In the past few days, the researchers have seen areas of sea foaming with gas bubbling up through "methane chimneys" rising from the sea floor.

They believe that the sub-sea layer of permafrost, which has acted like a "lid" to prevent the gas from escaping, has melted away to allow methane to rise from underground deposits formed before the last ice age.

They warned that this is likely to be linked with recent rapid warming in the region.

What If Power Towers Came Your Way?

By Lisa Scherer Marianna PA

Sometimes in life we need scenarios to create a better picture in our minds of a situation. Here, I will give you some examples of what I believe will happen when high-voltage transmission lines come to a town near you — dipping low and high amidst homes, schools, farms and business — upsetting American lives and creating chaos in the ecosystem.

A 50-year old man kisses his wife good-night and, after waiting for her to fall asleep, he rolls over and breaks into an uncontrolled sob. He stands to lose the family home by way of eminent domain (the home once his father's was to be inherited by his young son) ...

A nine-year-old girl with leukemia sits in the beautician's chair, waiting to have the remaining clumps of her hair removed. The leukemia came, her doctor believes, after only six months of the family living next to a high-voltage transmission line whose EMF's (electromagnetic fields) have been linked to childhood leukemia ...

The nine-year-old girl's hairdresser opens

her electric bill to find her electric rates have sky-rocketed due to the building of the new transmission line two miles away. Her heart grows heavy. She fully grasps the fact that she will not be able to afford a gift for her son for Christmas because she's already counting change to avoid foreclosure on her house ...

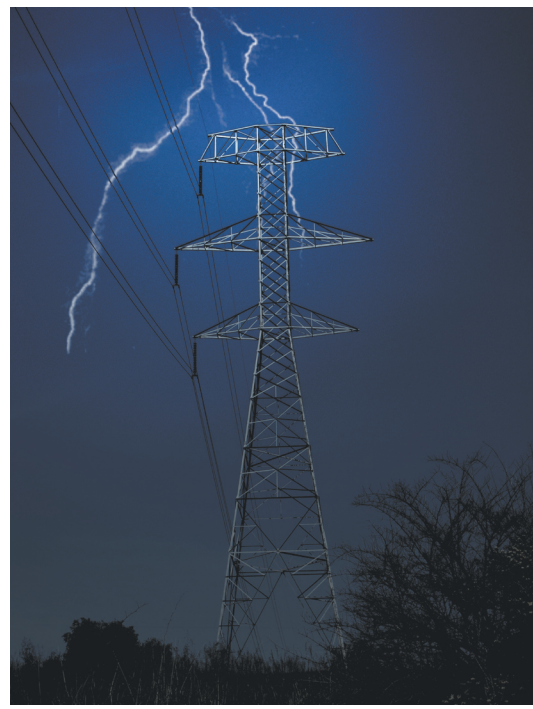
A ten-year-old boy wakes at 3 a.m. in a coughing fit. His tired mother wakes to comfort him. His chronic asthma is heightened by the pollution from additional generation plants needed for the new high-voltage power lines ...

An elderly man carries out buckets of muddy water from his basement. A basement that never flooded when it rained until hundreds of trees that worked as anti-flood reservoirs were removed from his property for a high-voltage power line ...

A driver runs over a rabbit that was forced onto the roadway from its wild habitat because of the construction of a high-voltage transmission line that is underway ...

A bird follows suit of the rabbit, while the tree that contains her nest of fledglings is

(Continued on Page 13)



Power comes in many forms. Enhanced photo by Lisa Scherer.



Not all young people aspire to be soldiers and learn how to kill people. Photo from The World Can't Wait — Drive Out the Bush Regime. [Ed.: We did!]

I Am Not Your Soldier

"I am NOT Your Soldier" Tour Started November 19th in Atlanta, Georgia.

What is this? A nationwide effort, beginning November 2008, to reach high school students with the truth about military recruiters and the wars that they are recruiting for and to give them the arguments and tools to talk to their peers. We are looking for teachers and students to help arrange classroom presentations and school assemblies which

include:

- A short presentation by a World Can't Wait youth organizer and either an Iraq/Afghanistan war veteran or a military family member;
- An open discussion;
- A 10-minute video clip of testimony by Iraq veterans from the March 2008 Winter Soldier hearings about what they witnessed and perpetrated (see page 10);
- Footage of high school students

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Endgame by Derrick Jensen

Hailed as the "Philosopher Poet" of the ecological movement, Derrick Jensen passionately explains how our industrial civilization, and the persistent and widespread violence it requires, cannot last. He weaves history, philosophy, psychology, environmentalism, economics and literature into an intricate pattern of truth and resistance. The 2006 Press Action Award called Jensen's two-volume *Endgame* "the best work of nonfiction in 2006. *Endgame* is the most important book of the decade and could stand as the must-read book of our lifetimes."

A few years ago, I had an interesting conversation with George Draffan. We were talking about civilization, power, history, discourse, propaganda and how and why we all buy into the current unsustainable system. George said he really likes the social and political model called "the three faces of power." He said, "The first face is the myth of American democracy, that everyone has equal power and society or politics is just the give and take of different interest groups that come together and participate, with the best ideas and most active participants winning. This face says that the losers are basically lazy.

The second face says it's more complex than that, that some groups have more power than others and actually control the agenda, so that some things, like the distribution of property, never get discussed.

The third face of power is operating when we stop noticing that some things aren't on the agenda and start believing that unequal power and starvation and certain economic and social decisions aren't actually decisions, they're 'just the way things are.' At this point even the powerless perceive unjust social relations as the natural order." He paused before he said something that has haunted me ever since: "Conspiracy's unnecessary when everyone thinks the same."

George also said, "The three faces of power were developed as conflicting descriptions of reality, but I'm starting to see them as a progression over time, as the story of history.

"At some point we were all equal. The social structures of many indigenous cultures were set up to guarantee that power

remained fluid.

But then within some cultures, as power began to be centralized, the powerful created a discourse — in religion, philosophy, science, economics — that rationalized injustice and institutionalized it into a group projection.

At first the powerless might not have believed in this discourse, but by now, many thousands of years later, we're all deluded to some extent and believe that these differentials in power are natural. Some of us may want to change the agenda a little bit, but there's no seeing through the whole matrix. Power, like property, like land and water, has become privatized and concentrated. And it's been that way for so long and we believe it to such an extent that we think that's the natural order of things.

It's not.

Just today I came across an article in *Nature* magazine with the title "Catastrophic Shifts in Ecosystems." Conventional scientific thought, it seems, has generally held that ecosystems — natural communities like lakes, oceans, coral reefs, forests, deserts, and so on — respond slowly and steadily to climate change, nutrient pollution, habitat degradation and the many other environmental impacts of industrial civilization. A new study suggests that instead, stressors like these can cause natural communities to shift almost overnight from apparently stable conditions to very different, diminished conditions. The lead author



of the study, Marten Scheffer, an ecologist at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands, said, "Models have predicted this but only in recent years has enough evidence accumulated to tell us that resilience of many important ecosystems has become undermined to the point that even the slightest disturbance can make them collapse."

It's pretty scary. A co-author of the study, Jonathan Foley, a climatologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, added, "In approaching questions about deforestation or endangered species or global climate change, we work on the premise that an ounce of pollution equals an ounce of damage. It turns out that assumption is entirely incorrect. Ecosystems may go on for years exposed to pollution or climate changes without showing any change at all and then suddenly they may flip into an entirely different condition, with little warning or none at all."

For example 6,000 years ago, great parts of what is now the Sahara Desert were wet, featuring lakes and swamps that teemed with crocodiles, hippos, and fish. Foley said: "The lines of geologic evidence and evidence from computer models

shows that it suddenly went from a pretty wet place to a pretty dry place. Nature isn't linear. Sometimes you can push on a system and push on a system and, finally, you have the straw that breaks the camel's back."

Once the camel's back is broken, it often cannot or will not heal the way it was before.

Another co-author, limnologist Stephen Carpenter, past president of the Ecological Society of America, said that this understanding — of the discontinuous nature of ecological change — is beginning to suffuse the scientific community, and then he continued, "We realize that there is a common pattern we're seeing in ecosystems around the world. Gradual changes in vulnerability accumulate and eventually you get a shock to the system, a flood or a drought, and boom, you're over into another regime. It becomes a self-sustaining collapse."

After I read the article, I received a call from a friend, Roianne Ahn, a woman smart and persistent enough that even a Ph.D. in psychology hasn't clouded her insight into how people think and act. "It never ceases to amaze me," she said, "that it takes experts to convince us of what we already know."

That wasn't the response I'd been expecting.

She continued, "That's one of my roles as a therapist. I just listen and reflect back to clients things they know but don't have the confidence to believe until they hear an outside expert say them."

"Do you think people will listen to these scientists?"

"It depends on how much denial they're in. But the bottom line is that what they're describing is no big surprise. It's what happens when a person is under stress: she can only take so much before she falls apart. This is what happens in relationships. It happens in families. It happens in communities. Naturally it will be true on this larger scale, too."

"What do you mean?"

"We work as hard as we can, even overextend ourselves, to maintain our stability and, when the pressure gets too much, something's got to give. We collapse. Sometimes that's bad, sometimes it's good."

There was silence while I thought about the fact that some collapses are unnecessary — the breaking down of prisoners under torture, the systematic dismantling of self-esteem under the grinding regime of an abusive parent or partner, ongoing ecological apocalypse — while others can be healing.

She continued, "It's obvious why people try to maintain healthy structures that make them happy. It's not always quite so obvious why we, and I include myself, seem to work just as hard to maintain structures and systems that make them miserable. We're all familiar with the notion that many addicts have to hit rock bottom before they change, even when their addiction is killing them."

I asked, "When do you think the culture will change?"

"This culture is clearly addicted to civilization," she said. "So I think the answer to that question is another one: How far down does it have to go before it hits bottom?"

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From the Editor



Dear Friends,

Well, well. We have made it through our first year of newspaper production! It has been quite an experience.

For those of you who have followed us the entire year, you will notice that we have finally turned into a "real" newspaper, although with a sacrifice of all-color pages. When our generous benefactor shows up, we'll return to color. Or when I get more ads. You'll know.

I am amazed at the wonderful people who are devoting themselves to saving precious pieces of this planet, like the group working day and night to halt the drilling and despoliation of Allegheny National Forest featured on page one. We joined them for a day of exploration and enlightenment. What an incredible horror is going on in your forest and mine! It was shocking to see the damage in real life.

I am also grateful for our new voices this month: Lisa Scherer, who picked up her pen to express her own distress over a situation which may engulf her and her family if the ruling powers prevail. And Erin Thomas who picked up her camera and went to explore for herself the effects of mountaintop removal coal mining practices. Also Loris Boutwell and Chris Soto, who contributed their knowledge. And thanks to Matt Johnson for help proofreading this time.

For the Earth,

Iona



Photo by Terry Darling

5,000 Years of Empire: Ready for a Change? Message from the Hopi Elders

To my fellow swimmers:
There is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.
They will try to hold onto the shore.
They are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.
Know that the river has its destination.
We must let go of the shore, push off into the river, keep our heads above water.
At this time in our history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves, for the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.
The time of the lone wolf is over.
Gather yourselves. Banish the word struggle from your attitude and vocabulary.
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.
We are the ones we've been waiting for.

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25 copies = \$20; 50 copies = \$35; 100 copies = \$65
200 copies = \$125; 300 copies = \$175 Thank You!

The Order of the Earth News, Views and Musings

Our Goal: To create a hugely successful newspaper that will report the story of people around the world working to protect their land bases, strengthen local communities and achieve 90% greenhouse gas reductions by 2030.

Our Mission: To inspire and encourage readers to think seriously, act intelligently and be peaceful, compassionate, courageous and creative.

The Dream: Humans can co-exist with Nature and, once they do, both will flourish.

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Masterhead: We say "Volume 8" because Iona started producing a newsletter with the same name seven years ago. In 1995 Iona wrote a tiny booklet called "The Order of the Earth" and, with friends helping, made and gave away 11,000 of them. This is an expansion of the concept.

Contact Us: HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania; 814-259-3680, ionaconner@pa.net, www.theorderoftheearth.com.

DEADLINE FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS:
10TH OF THE PREVIOUS MONTH

First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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I no longer believe we can use the system to change the system. Let it all fall apart. I no longer want to live in their world so I must create/find my own.

--- Kim Stenley

10th Wetlands Convention

The 10th Ramsar meeting in Korea, second ever in Asia: 2,000 delegates from 165 nations attend

By Pyong Roh
Daegu, Korea



This photo was taken of a spoonbill as it was just beginning to land into a marsh near Ft. Myers, FL. The marshlands are a vital part of their ecosystem, as are all wetlands around the world. Photo by Scott Mahon, www.scottmahon.com.

The 2008 Ramsar Convention, or Environment Olympics, was held in Chanwon City, Gyeongang Nam Do, an industrial area close to Busan, October 28th to November 4th under the theme of "Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People." The 10th meeting of the conference of the contracting parties to the Ramsar convention on wetlands is the second held in Asia. The first one was in Kushiro, Hokkaido, Japan in 1993.

This meeting is the largest ever Ramsar convention with over 2,000 environmental experts and policy makers from 165 countries, international bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participating.

Delegates discussed various subjects such as wetlands and agriculture, wetlands and resources, activities of Japanese NGOs to preserve wetlands, evaluation of Ramsar wetlands in America, water resources of Himalayan mountain areas and communities, cultural aspects of wetland management, monitoring of wetlands and evaluation.

On Sunday many delegates

visited the wetlands around Changwon City. I joined the group to go to Upo Wetland which has three swamp areas, which is located in the northern part of Changwon. Upo Wetland is the largest natural continental wetland in Korea which is located at longitude 128 degrees east and latitude 35 degrees north. It was designated by the Ministry of Environment of Korean Government as an Ecological Conservation Area in July 1997 and was registered in March 1998 as a Ramsar site for conservation. This wetland is about 854 hectares (2,110 acres) and holds water in an area of about 231 hectares (571 acres) in monsoon seasons.

Upo Wetland is a shelter and

habitat for many kinds of animals and plants. Many migrating birds have been coming to this wetland since this area was designated as the ecological conservation area. Some of them are storks, spoonbills, white-naped cranes, whooper swans, kyak snipes, black tailed godwits, red starts, common herons, Chinese owls and pigtail waterfowl.

When we got there, there were flocks of birds in the swamp area. I have never seen this many birds in my life. This swamp is a good sanctuary for the wild birds and small creatures.

I visited many different booths representing various government agencies and NGOs from many countries. I stopped by a booth of Green Korea.org.

A staff explained to me about the nature of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which is the result of an armistice treaty in July 1953. The whole length is about 155 miles from the east to the west of the Korean peninsula along the 38th parallel line and is about two and a half miles wide.

For 55 years this huge area has been preserved and not touched by human beings because it has been a buffer zone between South and North Korea.

Upo became a paradise of wild life. Wetlands are widespread along the DMZ and the civilian-controlled areas have a variety of shapes and sizes. Since this area has been free from human interference for more than half a century, the river sides of the DMZ

turned into wetlands through natural succession. And the wetland of the DMZ is a stable habitat for endangered species of plants and animals such as red crowned cranes and white-naped cranes.

This area is a kind of a disguised blessing for wildlife and it should be preserved. International communities have to coordinate to make this area as the international peace natural park and a sanctuary for wildlife. There is no place like this in the world.

The final plenary session of the conference adopted the Chang Won Declaration which was drafted by Korean delegates to preserve wetlands throughout the world emphasizing their importance. And Korea, host country, set up the Korea Fund to support a variety of projects to preserve wetlands in developing countries.



Pyong Roh is a nature-loving cosmopolitan man and a citizen of the Universe who tries to obey the law of nature. He is our only overseas correspondent. Watch for further news from the other side of the world.

Pranksters Distribute Fake New York Times Declaring 'Iraq War Over'

The Yes Men identified as team behind the joke pages

By Ed Pilkington
The Guardian/UK via Common Dreams.org

(November 12, 2008) — The U.S. defense department yesterday declared the end of the Iraq war and the immediate withdrawal of all troops, prompting an admission from Condoleezza Rice that the Bush administration knew all along that Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction, according to *The New York Times*.

On second thought, that introductory paragraph needs a little clarification. *The New York Times* proper didn't report the end of the Iraq war. But a spoof 14-page "special edition" of the newspaper, circulating free on the streets of Manhattan today, did carry those items. It was printed in a form that was so high quality and technically accurate that many New Yorkers were nonplussed, backed up by an entire *New York Times* Web site that equally faithfully mimicked the original.

Dated July 4, 2009 and boasting the front-page motto: "All the news we hope to print" in a twist on the daily's famous phrase "All the news that's fit to print," the fake paper looks forward to the day the war ends and envisages a chain of events that would be manna from heaven for American liberals.

In one story, ExxonMobil is taken into public ownership. In another, evangelical churches, the backbone of the Bush-supporting Christian right, open the doors of their mega-churches to Iraqi refugees.

The organizers of the high-quality and evidently expensive satire have cloaked themselves deliberately in a layer of mystery. They are connected at least to some degree to a group of activists calling themselves the Yes Men, a left-wing group that seeks to expose what it claims to be the "nastiness of powerful evildoers" through sophisticated pranks.

When *The Guardian* contacted the Yes Men, it received a swift response from a spokesman for *The New York Times* spoof going by the name of 'Wilfred Sassoon.' He said that the Yes Men had helped with distribution but that the paper itself had been produced by a number of anonymous writers from various New York dailies, including a couple from *The New York Times* itself.

"The idea behind it was to get people to exercise their imaginations," 'Sassoon' said. "We have just elected a new president and we have for the first time in eight years a chance to see real change happen. But it won't happen unless we keep the pressure up on politicians to do what they were elected to



Fake New York Times: The product of pranksters called The Yes Men.

do." The project, he said, had taken about six months and had been funded by a large number of small donors.

A main target of the prank is clearly *The New York Times* itself. The spoof contains an editorial apologizing for the paper's "botched reporting" of the run-up to the Iraq invasion, and a column from Thomas Friedman in which he declares that he has repented of his earlier backing of the war and decided never again to write for this or any other paper.

The New York Times said it was "in the process of finding out more" about its imitation. That, at least, could be taken at face value.



One-Year Anniversary Fundraiser

We have made it through our first year of publishing "The Order of the Earth: News, Views and Musings," but our price increased along with our size and we need your help to maintain our monthly pace. We will be running a "Gratitude Page" next issue and anyone who contributes can create their own message to share with our readers.

Please send your tax-deductible check payable to "The Order of the Earth" and mail it to HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap, Pennsylvania 17255. Be sure to include your message!

Thanks to all the wonderful people who contribute their work, ideas, time and enthusiasm to help make this paper so successful.

Feds Let Oil and Gas Companies Destroy National Treasure



Bill Belitskus, founder of Friends of Rimrock, stands in front of equipment used to build a new road in Allegheny National Forest so that oil trucks and drilling equipment will have easy access to extract more fossil fuels from the ground. Photo by Terry Darling.



Members of Friends of Rimrock were shocked and dismayed to discover on November 1 that a wetlands area had been bulldozed to create this new road in the national forest for oil trucks and drilling equipment. Photo by Terry Darling



The stone pit on Forest Road 267, adjacent to the Snyder Brothers crude oil condensate tank farm facility. The Forest Service allowed the oil and gas company to drill an oil and gas well in the bottom of the stone pit, which means the stone pit does not have to be restored now and actually can be taken off of the Forest Service's maintenance backlog. Now Snyder Brothers is using the stone pit for storage of road culvert pipes. Photo by Terry Darling



One of the tank farms in Allegheny National Forest, PA where valves were opened by "disgruntled employees" of Snyder Brothers. 45,000 gallons of oil poured out, overflowing the shallow containment bank, entering Indian Run, the North Fork, Chappel Fork and finally reaching Allegheny Reservoir. Is this what you expect to find in YOUR national forests? Photo by Terry Darling

(Cut Out and Copy)

PETITION TO PROTECT RIMROCK FROM OIL & GAS DRILLING

We, the undersigned, oppose oil and gas drilling at Rimrock Scenic Overlook and Picnic Area. We urge our elected officials and the personnel at the Allegheny National Forest to take immediate action to protect Rimrock, now and for future generations, from the impending devastation of oil and gas drilling.

Print Full Name	Signature	Address

Mail signed petitions to: Mary Belitskus, 117 West Wood Lane, Kane, PA 16735

TOUR WITH FRIENDS OF RIMROCK

**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 13
11:00 A.M.
RAIN OR SHINE
SEE THIS HORROR
FOR YOURSELF —
YOU WILL NOT
BELIEVE YOUR EYES!**

**DRESS FOR THE WEATHER;
WEAR STURDY SHOES;
BRING BAG LUNCH**

**PLEASE RSVP:
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814-778-5173
FOR DIRECTIONS
GO TO
SAVERIMROCK.COM**

The Battle for Blair Mountain

By Erin Ann Thomas
Alexandria VA

String-town Appalachia is a barrage of small, white sign posts that popped up on the left-side of the road before I was conscious of crossing a town line. On my way to Blair Mountain, the towns of Madison, Washington Heights, Low Gap, Green View, Ramage, Ottawan, Jeffrey, Clothier, Sharples and Five Block charged by in fifteen miles on West Virginia Route 17. All indicated they were "unincorporated," meaning there is either too little interest in forming a township or too few citizens to lead it. The residents pay their taxes to the state and identify themselves according to the county they live in. Few side streets cut into these towns, which are hardly more than an interruption between the road and the sheer rise of forest stacked on forest above. This growth nudges its way back into civilization, evidenced by telephone poles covered with vines, gracing the road like leaf-wound crosses.

Earlier that day on a similar stretch of mountain road in neighboring Boone County, I had counted one store, seven gas stations, twenty-four churches, four coal operations and ten flea markets. These outcrops of industry were laid out on cars and lawns: old shoes and clothes, empty Coke and beer bottles, ceramic figurines, knives and rusted ax heads. In a strip of towns with so few mercantile institutions, some of these products had likely made many stops up and down the highway in rummage sales throughout the years. Each time one peeked out of the trees, I craned my neck from the driver's side to snatch a glance, but the river-cut path hurled me around its contours. No time for pausing, insisted the locals, tailing me although I was doing 50.

This stream of chapels, flea markets, mines and woodland depicts Appalachia: an area marked by isolation, religion and independence, but also poverty and exploitation as a result of the natural resource that once earned the area the title of "El Dorado." The extraction of this black gold for the last hundred years has been the key economic factor behind the existence and perpetuation of these towns, the impetus behind the population surge and subsidence.

Twenty miles into coal country, I reached the town of Blair, the historic site of coal mining's most significant debacle and a current battleground for coal mining's most devastating controversy. Approaching the city limits, the steady flow of houses began to thin; large patches of lawn spread between.

Past two white chapels and across from an abandoned store, I found what I was looking for. Alongside the road, posted with no more ceremony than the town signs before it, was a bronze-cast plaque marked, **The Battle of Blair Mountain:**

In August 1921, 7000 striking miners led by Bill Blizzard met at Marmet for a march on Logan to organize the southern coalfields for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Reaching Blair Mountain on August 31, they were repelled by deputies and mine guards under Sheriff Don Chafin, waiting in fortified position. The five-day battle ended with the arrival of the U.S. Army and the Air Corps. UMWA organizing efforts in southern West Virginia were halted until 1933.

In Sheriff Chafin's report the miners numbered 9,000 and his own forces 2,500. In the official account in army history, the total of both sides was listed as 10,000 to 20,000. The reality was that there was no time for counting in a battle that broke forth like water. Sheriff Chafin, paid \$32,000 a year by the coal companies to keep the unions out of Logan, hastily recruited the "good citizens" of the county: lawyers, bankers, preachers, and farmers to take up arms.

The strikebreakers were threatened to do so on pain of losing their jobs. The miners in a seemingly joint impulse pulled their guns and army uniforms from their trunks, raised their American flags, and marched on

Logan County with Bill Blizzard, a hot-headed minor UMWA official in the lead.

This fairly direct summary of the Battle of Blair Mountain fails to mention that UMWA organizers Fred Mooney and Tom Kinney had fled the state after a failed attempt to dissuade the miners from fighting. Mother Jones, once dubbed "the most dangerous woman in America" for her role in labor history, had also tucked her tail under her bustle at the threats of the national government (or some claimed at bribes from the mining companies). A day before the battle, Philip Murray, vice president of UMWA, arrived from Washington to try to avert the conflict and was told that the attempt would be "like sweeping the Atlantic Ocean with a broom."

Mining wages had plummeted after the end of the First World War and miners struggled to unionize the coalfields of West Virginia to ensure their wages. These attempts were countered by Baldwin-Felts private detective agents (hired thugs that operated under the sanction and funds of the mining companies) who in turn operated under the sanction of many leading officials of the state government.

A showdown was sparked between Baldwin-Felts agents and local law enforcement in the city of Matewan in southern West Virginia when the agents unlawfully turned unionized miners out their homes.

The ensuing gunfire felled seven detectives, two miners and Cabell Testerman, the mayor of Matewan. Sid Hatfield, the chief of police, shot one of the Felt brothers. This womanizing, gun-slinging, outlaw-turned-lawman became the symbol of miner resistance and the object of revenge for mining companies and the detective agency.



This is how wonderful the forests look in the areas of West Virginia where mountains are blown to smithereens to get cheap, dirty coal out. Photo by Erin Thomas

Months later, while Hatfield and his new wife Jessie (Testerman's widow) were approaching the McDowell County Courthouse, Hatfield was gunned down by Baldwin-Felts agents before he reached the steps. His assassination was the immediate impetus for the uprising. After months of living in the squalor of tent colonies, evicted miners were only too eager to rally against an establishment that offered them no fair recourse.

With red bandanas tied around their necks (forever after giving the term "redneck" national currency), miners marched towards Logan County, singing:

**Every little river must go down to the Sea
All the slaving miners and our union will be free
Going to march to Blair Mountain
Going to whip the company
And I don't want you to weep after me.**

Chafin and his men had cleared forest and dug trenches at the peak of Blair Mountain;

miners approached through the underbrush, dodging bullets from machine guns and rifles above, making little progress due to the thickness of the forest and the constant stream of ammunition. A day later, the federal government gave into Chafin's plea for help and sent infantry troops and the Army Air Service of twenty-two planes. When the federal army began to arrive by train, Bill Blizzard called off the assault.

The miners believed the intervention by the national government would bring the needed attention to the conflict to answer their concerns.

Caching their guns against future conflict, the striking miners returned home waving their flags and expressing confidence in Uncle Sam. It was not until twelve years later in 1933 that the National Industrial Recovery Act granted all miners the privilege to join unions without retribution. Immediately after the battle, membership in the UMWA dwindled by the thousands across the United States. In terms of casualties, the impact of the Mine Wars is difficult to determine. Estimates of the number killed range from twenty to fifty; no official count was taken because the miners packed out their dead.

This sign is the only visual memorial of the Battle of Blair Mountain, an event that marks history as the largest citizen uprising since the Civil War and the only time the U.S. government sent the Air Force out on its own territory.

Beyond, Route 17 climbs to the summit of Blair, a mountain that rises gently upward into green carpet over suffocating carpet. Here among the ferns, pods and rot that accumulate thickly, providing fertile ground for wild ginseng, there are bullets and signs of conflict still



Author Erin Thomas pauses for a rest during her exploration of Blair Mountain, West Virginia. She made this journey to learn more about mountaintop removal coal mining, through which whole communities and ecosystems are destroyed. This trail leads to Blair Mountain. Photo by Patrick Thomas, Erin's brother

trimmed over his upper lip. The other had slightly more stomach under a white shirt and over a pair of jeans, a course beard bristled just over the end of his chin.

I asked if there were any other memorials for the Battle of Blair Mountain in the area.

The bearded one answered, "Just the sign there, if it's still there. Been stolen like three or four times."

I learned later his name was Melvin, born in Blair and raised by his grandpa. Ralf was his cousin and had come for a visit. Their pickup trucks were parked idly side by side in the driveway, content like the two men to spend the afternoon under the tin overhang. Ralf, a retired school teacher, left Blair for college and spent the majority of his life in another community. Melvin was a veteran miner of thirty years and had spent his life in the bellies of the surrounding hills.

The Battle of Blair Mountain was more than local color for these men; it had entered their collective history. Next to an empty lot by Melvin's home stood the home that used to belong to Melvin and Ralf's grandmother. From the watch post of the front room window, their Uncle Odie had peered out at the miners marching past along the path of the old railroad behind the white church house.

Chronicling his own observations, Odie filled in the gaps with the daily *Charleston Gazette*, forming a firsthand account of the war on a pile of loose sheets of paper that the family has kept for over eighty years. Now, ironically, after the rich history associated Spruce Fork Ridge, Blair is once more disputed territory.

Melvin told me the UMWA had some land out on Blair Mountain where they planned to build a historical visitor's center, "But they'll probably lose it in the end. Coal companies do what they want. You're poor, what can you do about it?" He grinned and shrugged to his cousin.

In actuality, the UMWA doesn't own any land in the area, but has an agreement with Massey Energy, which has leased the land for extraction, to set aside a number of acres for a memorial. Despite Melvin's faith in the labor union, the UMWA's role in the preservation of this historical site has been criticized.

Currently, Arch Coal and Massey Energy hold or lease land in the area near Blair. From 1980 until 1999, the union branch of Arch Coal strip-mined 5,000 acres along Spruce Fork Ridge (the mountain chain including Blair), obliterating a portion of the historic site until equipment complications halted operations.

During this period, UWMA held its tongue as the company provided jobs for union men. The non-union branch of Arch has recently reactivated their digging and plans to mine over

1,800 acres of the ridge; Massey holds a permit to 1,200 acres. Neither of the operators are union and the UMWA has been accused by local journalists of leveraging for jobs.

Regardless, the UMWA supported the recommendation in 2005 by the West Virginia Archives and History Commission for the National Park Service to designate 1,600 acres of Blair Mountain as a preservation area. This is the fourth or fifth attempt to declare Blair a historical site since 1980 and each time the proposal has been rejected as a result of technicalities or suits by the mining companies. Currently, Blair Mountain is listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Places and locals have lobbied the state to protect the area.

Amateur historian and city resident, Kenny King, was the first to trace the steps of the striking miners searching for clues along paths where his grandfather may have marched. A coal worker himself, King supports underground mining and feels like the coal under Blair can be retrieved in a manner respectful to the historic site. In 2006, he led an archeological team headed by Harvard Ayers from Appalachian State University. Together, they documented four battle sites, collecting over 1,000 artifacts covering a stretch of ten miles that they believe has not been disturbed since 1921.

There are other West Virginians that would back the coal companies. In string-town Appalachia, job opportunities are scarce. Blair Mountain contains \$12,000,000 worth of coal, most of which will land in the hands of out-of-state CEO's. But even in West Virginia, miners make competitive wages, between \$60,000 and \$80,000 annually. Yet according to Melvin and Ralf, most of the miners who work at Blair aren't local. They drive two hours to work, careening through the curving roads at break-neck speeds, passing slower moving cars on tight corners. Their investment in the area is limited and any scruples associated with strip-mining a historic site are outweighed by a fat paycheck.

Since the Battle of Blair Mountain, many aspects of the coal industry have changed. Besides the improved wages, the bargaining power of coal miners has increased due to a shortage of labor. Young miners can move between jobs if they feel companies are not treating them fairly.

That said, some power relationships are slow to change, and coal companies in West Virginia still use coercive tactics against local populations near where they mine. The valley beyond the mountain in front of Melvin's home used to be called "Ma and Pa Hollow" by the locals, who would hunt in the woods for raccoon and squirrel.

One night, Ralf decided to go

Continued on page 12

Bridging Our Past, Connecting Our Future: Land Trust Alliance Rally 2008

By Christina Soto
Land Trust Alliance magazine,
Saving Land

"You in this room continue to inspire me and cause me to be hopeful for my grandchildren's future," said Peter Hausmann, chair of the Land Trust Alliance. He was welcoming the more than 1,700 people brought together by Rally 2008, the National Land Conservation Conference held annually by the Alliance.

This year's crowd of land conservationists in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania had many learning experiences to choose from including 33 seminars, 129 workshops, 12 field trips to conserved areas, inspirational plenary speakers, networking receptions and government partner sessions.

"You can come to Rally and get a PhD in land conservation in four days," said Alliance President Rand Wentworth.

Among the many special events at this year's Rally was the historic announcement of the inaugural group of 39 accredited land trusts. "At a time when the public is demanding increasing accountability from nonprofit organizations and government, including land trusts, the new independent accreditation program provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land protection the public is looking for," said Tammara Van Ryn, executive director of the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance. "Now land trusts can join museums, hospitals, universities and other nonprofit institutions that demonstrate that they deserve the public's trust through rigorous accreditation programs."

Also featured at Rally were four prominent plenary speakers, each of whom offered their unique stories of why land conservation means so much to them.

The Honorable Michael DiBerardinis, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, urged the crowd to "connect land conservation to sustainable communities." He added, "We have to understand the values of the people we work for. That's what civic engagement means." DiBerardinis made this observation about the people he works for: "Here's what I learned about Pennsylvanians: They care about the environment and conservation, about clean air, open space, protected watersheds, healthy habitats for hunting and bird-watching. There is a deep connection to the land and to the waters."

Timothy LaSalle, CEO of The Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania, also educated attendees about the many benefits of organic farming and healthy soil. "Without healthy soils you can't have healthy people," said LaSalle. Turning to the subject of global warming and the fact that soil is an excellent carbon sink, LaSalle stated: "The beauty is the soil wants the carbon." He worries about world hunger and offers a path towards a solution: "Improve the soil, feed the world."

There wasn't a dry eye in the ballroom as Martha Teichner finished her story of, as she described it, "some woods on a lake in Northern Michigan and a land trust ... a story about memory and love and loss ... of



The Costello family of Friendship Farms provided delicious local food to Rally field trip participants. The farm is primarily a rotational grazing operation for Black Angus cattle on over 236 acres of land. The Costello family has farmed the land since the 1960s. They also operate a natural bread bakery and a native plant nursery. The farm was protected by Westmoreland County Agricultural Land Preservation in 2003. The preservation of the farm was jointly funded between the county and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Environmentally-friendly farming is utilized, including range-fed beef with no hormones and fresh made breads and pastries with natural ingredients using family recipes. Photo by Francesca Dalleo

rediscovery, suspense and finally a joy that seems to me like sunlight." The Emmy Award-winning newswoman wove the tale of her family's love for Deer Trail Cottage and the surrounding woods at Lime Lake in Leelanau County, Michigan, a place that, she says, "formed my entire identity." Through a miraculous string of events, Teichner was able to protect the property many years later with the Leelanau Conservancy. Named in honor of her beloved parents, the Teichner Nature Preserve will protect the legacy of her family for all time.

Chuck Leavell, a member of the Rolling Stones, an author and a well-respected conservationist, charmed the crowd with his humorous stories, reflected on the many benefits of land conservation, then sat down at the piano to entertain like only he can. Passionate about forestry and the environment, Leavell expressed his deep concern for conservation in America, coming, as he says, "from one of the fastest-developing areas in the U.S."

"Folks, we're going to have growth in this country whether we like it or not," said Leavell. "But the question is: Will that growth be rapid, rampant and reckless ... or can it be smart, strong and sustainable?"

Ticking off the list of the benefits of land conservation, Leavell described how it "helps maintain a clean and plentiful water supply, improves our air quality, minimizes flood damage, keeps prime forest and agricultural lands productive, supports our tourism and recreation industries, and preserves our tremendous natural and cultural history."

His call to action? Educate landowners: "I know this crowd already knows this, but we need to do a better job getting this message out to other landowners: This is your land, your dec-

sion — but consider the legacy you will leave and consider the options we all have."

All the Rally speakers had one thing in common: their tremendous respect for the people they were addressing. As Martha Teichner put it so eloquently: "To all of you in this room who make happy endings like mine possible, thank you. You're not just making deals — land conservation is about so much more than land. It's about the deepest of emotions; the most powerful of family stories."

Rally also featured a time to recognize the talented conservationists and land trusts that make a significant impact in their communities.

The Land Trust Alliance congratulated these award winners:

Laurie Wayburn, co-founder and president, Pacific Forest Trust, California: Kingsbury Browne Conservation Leadership Award and Kingsbury Browne Fellowship at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

Little Compton Agricultural Conservancy Trust, Rhode Island: National Land Trust Excellence Award.

Jane Rau, co-founder of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, Arizona: National Conservation Volunteer of the Year Award.

Rich Erdmann, executive vice president and general counsel, The Conservation Fund, VA: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Realty — National Land Protection Award.

With more than 737 first-timers at Rally, we know that there is a growing hunger to learn how to make our conservation work more effective and successful. The Land Trust Alliance has opened the path to learning through our in-depth trainings, conferences and online Learning Center. We hope to see you at Rally 2009: The National Land Conservation Conference, next year in Portland, Oregon.



Oil & Gas Drilling Accountability Project

We are pleased to provide you with this timely report on potential oil and gas development in the Marcellus Shale formation in northeastern Pennsylvania and southeastern New York. Oil and gas leasing is taking this region by storm and we have been deluged with calls, emails and letters from residents seeking information. Requests range from What is the difference between deep and shallow gas drilling to How to negotiate mineral leases and surface use and damage agreements to How to organize to What kind of regulations and laws exist to protect water and air quality from oil and gas development.

We hope that this report will help address many questions about the Marcellus Shale. We also encourage readers to review our landmark publication, "Oil and Gas At Your Door? A Landowner's Guide to Oil and Gas Development." The guidebook is available on-line at

<http://www.earthworksaaction.org/LOGuidechapters.cfm>.

We also suggest that residents of the region contact these organizations for more information on getting organized and informed about the issues surrounding oil and gas development:

Catskill Mountainkeeper

P.O. Box 381
Youngsville, NY 12791
(845) 482-5400
info@catskillmountainkeeper.org
catskillmountainkeeper.org

Damascus Citizens for Sustainability

P.O. Box 147
Milanville, PA 18443
DCS@mailhosts.net
www.damascuscitizens.org

Northeast Ohio Gas Accountability Project

Mark Scoville
scoville.neogap@cox.net
440-546-7015

Supreme Court Blasts Whales, Supports Navy

November 15 email: Hi, folks!

Most of us are still riding high from the election results.

What this election will mean for education, jobs, the environment, the economy cannot be underestimated. There's a great big eight-year mess to be cleaned up. Let's hope that the country can start moving in a better direction.

The breeding season is winter for them. What this means is they will be disrupted, driven off, disoriented and/or permanently harmed by military activities over the next two months.

To get involved you can contact any of the following organizations that fought this action in court, including:



I'm writing to pass on a ruling that once again illustrates that the Supreme Court is in place to make powerful decisions on more than one issue.

The ocean's whales and other marine mammals lost a big one courtesy of the current court ruling. The court ruled that the Navy can continue to use intense sonar waves during exercises. These waves have been proven to kill marine mammals and do serious damage to whales. Here's a link to an article about the ruling:

http://www.latimes.com/news/printition/front/la-na-scotus13-2008nov13,0,4895838_story

The U.S. Navy will be taking full advantage of this ruling until the new administration gets in office.

The Pacific Grey whale uses the waters off of Southern California and western Mexico for

Natural Resources Defense Council

<http://www.nrdc.org/>

International Fund for Animal Welfare

<http://www.ifaw.org/splash.php>

League for Coastal Protection

<http://lcp.sanmateo.org/>

Cetacean Society International

<http://csiwhalesalive.org/>

Ocean Futures Society

<http://www.oceanfutures.org/>

Thanks people!
Brett Snyder
Adams County PA
Environmental Task Force

In shallow men the fish of little thoughts cause much commotion. In oceanic minds the whales of inspiration make hardly a ruffle.
Paramahansa Yogananda

In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists. --Eric Hoffer

A Solar Gold Rush Is Spreading From California to New Jersey

By Dara Colwell
AlterNet.org

October 30 (excerpt) — Solar power is exploding in America, particularly in California. San Luis Obispo's Palm Theatre and Berkeley's Shotgun Players are now the first solar-powered theaters in the country; FedEx's distribution center in Fontana has a solar system covering

20,834 square feet; and Google's Mountain View campus boasts America's largest corporate solar installation. True to its pioneering spirit, California is leading the way — but that's not to say other states aren't tagging quickly behind.

"California has a comprehensive approach to solar. We have an aggressive, proactive environ-

ment that allows legislators to go ahead and do things — the mentality is definitely here," says Andrew McAllister, director of programs at the California Center for Sustainable Energy (CCSE), a nonprofit dedicated to facilitating clean energy technologies and practices. McAllister muses that the state's energy crisis several years ago, when deregulation led

to unpredictable electricity prices, goaded California into collective action. "Worldwide, solar is still driven by policy more than any other factor and what makes California attractive is its political commitment to taking the lead."

In America, most of the policies that affect the solar industry are created at the state level. California is now poised to become the

world's second-fastest-growing solar market behind Germany. In 2005, the California Public Utilities Commission approved \$300 million for statewide solar rebates, tripling the original sum in order to bolster the market; since its Million Solar Roofs program kicked off in 2006, California has installed more solar panels than in the previous 10 years all told.

Farmer Touts Wind Power in Frederick County MD

By Meg Tully
Frederick News-Post Staff

DICKERSON, Maryland — Carlos Fernandez turned to wind power two years ago after a storm knocked out his electricity for seven days.

His horses refused to drink rain water so he used a costly gas-powered generator to pump water from the well.

That spurred him to look into wind power.

Since then, he has installed three big wind turbines and three smaller ones on his 25-acre farm just north of the Frederick/Montgomery County line. With them, he has reduced his electricity bill by two-thirds.

He also became the owner of Potomac Wind Energy, a company that sells and installs wind turbines and provides wind assessment surveys.

He invited the Frederick County Commissioners to tour his farm on Monday and see the turbines up close.

The commissioners are set to discuss a new zoning regulation that will set up a permitting process for wind and solar power.

Fernandez was able to get his



Carlos Fernandez of Potomac Wind Energy explains one model of a windmill generator during a tour of his property near Dickerson, Maryland. Photo by Skip Lawrence

turbines permitted as accessory structures since the county's zoning ordinance doesn't address them. But since then the county has refused to issue new permits as officials worked on the zoning amendment.

Fernandez has been talking with 12 to 15 Frederick County residents who are waiting for the new ordinance so they can buy wind turbines. Most of them are in the Thurmont area.

Commissioners David Gray, Kai

Hagen and Jan Gardner attended the farm tour, as well as Friends of Frederick County Executive Director Janice Wiles.

All three commissioners have said they support adding wind power generators to the zoning ordinance. Gray said he was impressed to learn how the Fernandez family found a better way to power their farm.

"This arose out of a true need of running this farm and to be independent of power outages," he said.

"So to my mind it shows the very practical opportunity that awaits somebody so far with the technology that we've got."

Fernandez told the commissioners that the permits are especially crucial because the Maryland Energy Administration has a Windswept grant program that gives individuals, businesses and local governments grants to purchase small wind turbines.

But county residents are ineligible for those grants because they can't prove that they have complied with local zoning rules.

"For example, the Skystream would qualify for about \$4,700 of grant money, which is literally free money, to offset the cost of putting one up," Fernandez said.

The Skystream turbine, which costs \$15,000 to \$20,000 installed, is one of the three large wind turbines on his property. It is 33 feet tall with three blades on top of it and generates about 400 kilowatts per month with a 12 mph average wind speed (the average in Maryland).

Fernandez recommends the Skystream for residential customers because it generates AC current and does not rely on a battery, so it is less likely to break down than

more complicated systems.

He told the commissioners that he thinks the proposed Frederick County ordinance is better than one recently passed in Carroll County because it allows more than two wind turbines on a property if the owner can prove that many are necessary to produce power for that home.

But he suggested the commissioners consider allowing wind turbines in a front yard if that site would produce the most power. Their proposal would allow turbines in back yards only.

"If you're going to invest in something, you want to put it in the best site possible so that it produces some power," he said.

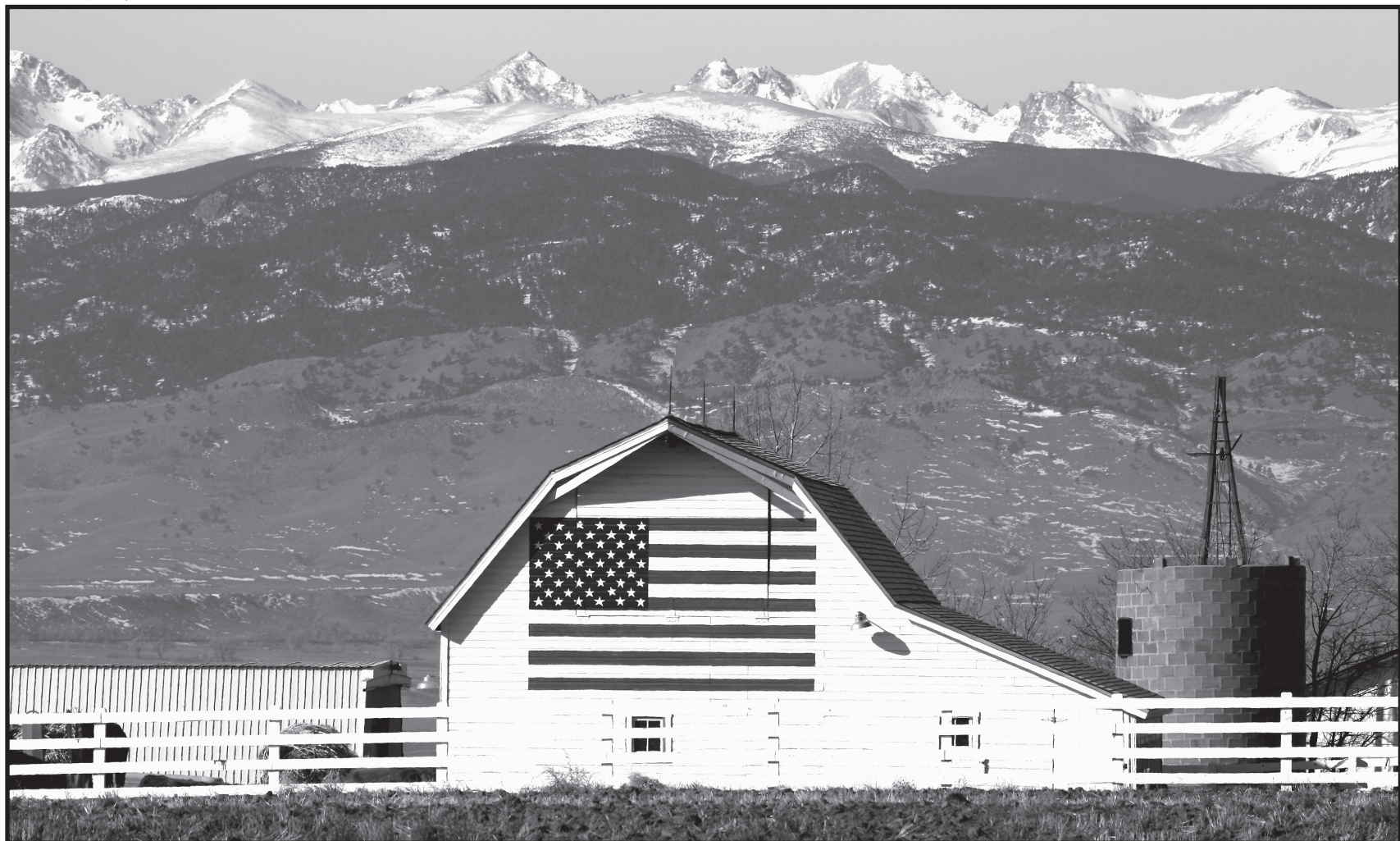
None of Fernandez's turbines are visible from the road.

When Fernandez bought his turbines, he estimated it would take 30 years to get his investment back through energy savings.

"But within a year, the rates had doubled, so it is now 15 years," he said. "And I'm convinced in two years it's going to double again."

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American Flag Barn, Boulder CO. I have taken several photos of this barn but this year I believe it is even more symbolic after the recent election. Our country surrounds itself with natural beauty and with the right decisions, we can continue to enjoy and protect this beautiful Earth. Scott Mahon, www.scottmahon.com



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Conclusion The Long-Term Perspective (continued) (See ipcc.org for 11/07 Synthesis Report.)

There is *high confidence* that neither adaptation nor mitigation alone can avoid all climate change impacts; however, they can complement each other and together can significantly reduce the risks of climate change.

Adaptation is necessary in the short- and longer-term to address impacts resulting from the warming that would occur even for the lowest stabilization scenarios assessed. There are barriers, limits and costs, but these are not fully understood. Unmitigated climate change would, in the long term, be likely to exceed the capacity of natural, managed and human systems to adapt. The time at which such limits could be reached will vary between sectors and regions. Early mitigation actions would avoid further locking in carbon intensive infrastructure and reduce climate change and associated adaptation needs.

Many impacts can be reduced, delayed or avoided by mitigation. Mitigation efforts and investments over the next two to three decades will have a large impact on opportunities to achieve lower stabilization levels. Delayed emission reductions significantly constrain the opportunities to achieve lower stabilization levels and increase the risk of more severe climate change impacts.

In order to stabilize the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere, emissions would need to peak and decline thereafter. The lower the stabilization level, the more quickly this peak and decline would need to occur.²⁰

Table SPM.6 and Figure SPM.11 summarize the required emission levels for different groups of stabilization concentrations and the resulting equilibrium global warming and long-term

sea level rise due to thermal expansion only.²¹ The timing and level of mitigation to reach a given temperature stabilization level is earlier and more stringent if climate sensitivity is high than if it is low. [Ed.: Please go to www.ipcc.org to see Table SPM.6 and figure SPM.11.]

Sea level rise under warming is inevitable. Thermal expansion would continue for many centuries after GHG concentrations have stabilized, for any of the stabilization levels assessed, causing an eventual sea level rise much larger than projected for the 21st century. The eventual contributions from Greenland ice sheet loss could be several meters, and larger than from thermal expansion, should warming in excess of 1.9-4.6°C (3.42-8.28°F) above pre-industrial be sustained over many centuries. The long-time scales of thermal expansion and ice sheet response to warming imply that stabilization of GHG concentrations at or above present levels would not stabilize sea level for many centuries.

There is high agreement and much evidence that all stabilization levels assessed can be achieved by deployment of a portfolio of technologies that are either currently available or expected to be commercialized in coming decades, assuming appropriate and effective incentives are in place for their development, acquisition, deployment and diffusion and addressing related barriers.

All assessed stabilization scenarios indicate that 60-80% of the reductions would come from energy supply and use and industrial processes, with energy efficiency playing a key role in many scenarios. Including non-CO₂ and CO₂ land-use and forestry mitigation options provides greater flexibility and cost-effectiveness.

Low stabilization levels require early investments and substantially more rapid diffusion and commercialization of advanced low-emissions technologies.

Without substantial investment flows and effective technology transfer, it may be difficult to achieve emission reduction at a significant scale. Mobilizing financing of incremental costs of low-carbon technologies is important.

The macro-economic costs of mitigation generally rise with the stringency of the stabilization target. For specific countries and sectors, costs vary considerably from the global average.²²

In 2050, global average macro-economic costs for mitigation towards stabilization between 710 and 445ppm CO₂-eq (equivalent) are between a 1% gain and 5.5% decrease of global GDP. This corresponds to slowing average annual global GDP growth by less than 0.12 percentage points.

Responding to climate change involves an iterative risk management process that includes both adaptation and mitigation and takes into account climate change damages, co-benefits, sustainability, equity and attitudes to risk.

Impacts of climate change are very likely to impose net annual costs which will increase over time as global temperatures increase. Peer-reviewed estimates of the social cost of carbon²³ in 2005 average U.S. \$12 per ton of CO₂, but the range from 100 estimates is large (-\$3 to \$95/tCO₂). This is due in large part to differences in assumptions regarding climate sensitivity, response lags, the treatment of risk and equity, economic and noneconomic impacts, the inclusion of potentially catastrophic losses

and discount rates. Aggregate estimates of costs mask significant differences in impacts across sectors, regions and populations and very likely underestimate damage costs because they cannot include many non-quantifiable impacts.

Limited and early analytical results from integrated analyses of the costs and benefits of mitigation indicate that they are broadly comparable in magnitude but do not as yet permit an unambiguous determination of an emissions pathway or stabilization level where benefits exceed costs.

Climate sensitivity is a key uncertainty for mitigation scenarios for specific temperature levels. Choices about the scale and timing of GHG mitigation involve balancing the economic costs of more rapid emission reductions now against the corresponding medium-term and long-term climate risks of delay.

FOOTNOTES:

²⁰ For the lowest mitigation scenario category assessed, emissions would need to peak by 2015 and for the highest by 2090 (see Table SPM.3). Scenarios that use alternative emission pathways show substantial differences in the rate of global climate change.

²¹ Estimates for the evolution of temperature over the course of this century are not available in the AR4 for the stabilization scenarios. For most stabilization levels global average temperature is approaching the equilibrium level over a few centuries. For the much lower stabilization scenarios (category I and II, Figure SPM.11), the equilibrium temperature may be reached earlier.

²² See footnote 17 in report for more detail on cost estimates and model assumptions.

²³ Net economic costs of damages from climate change aggregated across the globe and discounted to the specified year.

The Examined Life: On Material Gifts

By Marion Stuenkel
Madison WI

What on earth have I done with all the gifts I've been given? What happened to them? Where did they go after the holidays? Come to think of it, what did Joseph and Mary do with that gold, frankincense and myrrh the Three Wise Men gave their baby? Did they sell those gifts to finance their flight from Herod? Did they give them to the poor? Did they leave them behind after resting under a palm tree because the gifts were so rich they feared being assaulted? Did they become offerings to their religious leaders? Did they give them as gifts to the extended family? Did they sell them to update Joseph's carpentry business, fix the roof of the house, buy Mary finery or household goods? I think if they had put even the gold aside for Jesus' education we would have heard of it. Imagining where Jesus' baby gifts went is easier than admitting where I think most of mine are.



Most of my gifts are in landfills. You might respond that if I had been given gold it wouldn't be in a landfill — well, no, except that very thin necklace chain that broke when I didn't know about pawnbrokers and didn't think about fixing because I had another quite like it. The dishes with the gold filigree pattern might still be in the cabinets of the cousin to whom I passed them on. The gold plated demitasse spoons I sold to an antique store might be beloved in someone's home. Nothing I was ever gifted is in a museum because I was born when products were manufactured, not handmade, not one-of-a-kind but mass-produced collectibles. The toys of my childhood were unbreakable, that is eternally non-biodegradable plastic. I was given facsimiles to entertain and distract rather than utensils and tools to learn to use through play.

My mother coveted labor-saving devices. Time-and-motion-study results measured her movements. One didn't let a toddler stir eggs for a cake using an electric mixer, let alone have a child slow you down. I did have a functional small shovel with which I helped my Dad shovel coal into the furnace which heated our house — until we modernized with a gas burner. That shovel was not a material gift anyway. It was the shovel from the fireplace set, with which my Dad defied my mother by letting me proudly use it working beside him.

My favorite material gifts were books.

I loved owning books, prided myself on my library, made bookshelves the center pieces of my décor. Though hoarding books is socially acceptable I could no longer justify the destruction of trees and pollution of water to make paper for objects most of which were read only once then sat on a shelf for forty years as symbols of my self or projected identity. By the time I took them to the library and used bookstores most were no longer even recyclable, rather were shredded or bound for the landfill to make space for new editions. Even though the books my father gave me are gone, as are my college history texts, the meaning and stories are still mine.

Socrates wrote, "... The unexamined life is not worth living..."

The resources used to make my gifts seem to have been largely wasted. I don't think the transient pleasure, temporary distraction, entertainment and gratification by ownership of all these manufactured goods was worth the dirt in which they are now planted, the barren fruit of consumption. I've communicated with varying degrees of success that I should be given no more stuff. This is hard because refusing to accept stuff feels like a rejection of the sentiments of and thereby the people who give it.

Refusing to give stuff feels even worse — as though I am communicating I don't feel sentiment and am not a generous, caring person.

How did resource-wasting consumption-driven stuff come to be the primary representation of love, friendship and respect? 'Material gift' equals 'emotion' is such an iconic equation, such an integral symbol in our culture.

Can I follow through and neither give nor receive stuff?

Marion Stuenkel is a Kyoto-compliant, anti-nuclear activist modeling simple living for her grandchildren, practicing intentional income-reduction-war-tax-resistance, and eating local food.

Thoughts on Nuclear Energy

Now that Obama is president-elect, I feel it is important that we get people to let him know how we all feel about nuclear energy. It must not become a part of his energy fix! There was a woman on C-Span talking about how much water it takes to keep these plants cool and that there is a real danger of short supplies now and in the future.

If you could get that information to accompany a blog, editorial, newspaper article, etc. that would be great. I feel this is also a national security issue. What do

you think?
Love, Jeannette Bartelt
Frederick, Maryland
[Ed.: Send in your comments! Here's a related one I found this month: *20 Dead on Russian Nuclear-Powered Submarine: MOSCOW (New York Times, November 11, excerpt) — At least 20 people have died and 21 been injured in an accident onboard a Russian nuclear-powered submarine in the Pacific Ocean, a Russian naval officer said Sunday ...*]

Canadian Botanist Sees Roles for Trees as Medicine



Trees in Scotts Park, Erie PA. Photo by Terry Darling

By Jim Robbins
The New York Times

MERRICKVILLE, Ontario, August 12 (excerpt) — Diana Beresford-Kroeger pointed to a towering wafer ash tree near her home.

The tree is a chemical factory, she explained, and its products are part of a sophisticated survival strategy. The flowers contain terpene oils, which repel mammals that might feed on them. But the ash needs to attract pollinators and so it has a powerful lactone fragrance that appeals to large butterflies and honeybees. The chemicals in the wafer ash, in turn, she said, provide chemical protection for the butterflies from birds, making them taste bitter.

Many similar unseen chemical relationships are going on in the worlds around us. "These are at the heart of connectivity in nature," she said.

Ms. Beresford-Kroeger, 63, is a native of Ireland who has a bachelors degrees in medical biochemistry and botany, and has worked as a PhD-level researcher at the University of Ottawa school of medicine ... She calls herself a renegade scientist, however, because she tries to bring together aboriginal healing, Western medicine and botany to advocate an unusual role for trees.

She favors what she terms a bioplan, re-foresting cities and rural areas with trees according to the medicinal, environmental, nutritional, pesticidal and herbicidal properties she claims for them, which she calls ecofunctions ...

"Her ideas are a rare, if not entirely new approach to natural history, said Edward O. Wilson, a Harvard biologist who wrote the forward for her 2003 book, *Arboretum America*. The science of selecting trees for different uses around the world has not been well studied."

More About Trees

By Al Fry
Garden Valley MD

In past issues we touched on how we can get uplifting 'vibes' from trees, so now let's start looking into how we can benefit from the use of various parts of trees.

We all remember that myrrh gum was a precious commodity around two thousand years ago. This is simply sap from a larger bush in an area that has few larger trees. What makes the sap from most trees valuable is the fact that it can draw together wounds of the body and kill the bacteria.

We see this when a tree is injured and the sap runs to the wound. The simple secret of using tree sap is in using higher-proof booze like rum to dissolve the sap. Then it can be mixed in with other herbs to make a poultice over the wound. By taping the wound together a day or so the cells have time to knit the wound together. Aloe vera, plantain and a bit of cayenne are sometimes mixed with slip-

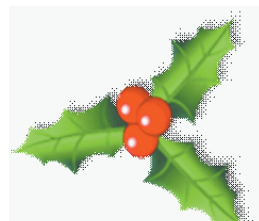
pery elm poultice for even greater effect.

Slippery Elm bark is available in most health food stores and is the most wonderful substance in the world for healing stomach and intestinal problems as far as I'm concerned.

I have spent sleepless nights in agony before getting my hands on some slippery elm tea — and getting complete relief in minutes. I know people who had dysentery that the usual medical potions would not even slow down. One cup of the jelly tea mix of slippery elm bark stopped the problem cold.

Please realize that this line of experience is in no way meant to point toward self-treatment or avoiding doctors.

Later we might explore 'tree lore'



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SAVING ENERGY

By Iona

Well, friends, you are now getting an inside peek at “The Order of the Earth” studio, the non-working side, the side of my office where I run up and down the stairs, as does the warm air. Or, now I can say, “... as the warm air *used to*.” Thankfully we have passive solar heat on the main floor and my husband uses the upstairs would-be bedroom for his office. We both use space heaters as we work during the day and we haven’t turned on the house heat yet.

In our quest to save energy, I decided to drag out all the large pieces of fabric I had saved over the years and make window quilts.

This is not exactly a “window quilt” but a “stairwell quilt.” Frankly, I never heard of such a thing, but here it is, maybe the first in the world. It is made from an old bedspread and some leftover organic cotton from our former clothing business. The total cost was \$7 plus tax for the dowel. The supports for the dowel are scrap 2 x 4s.

The project ended up taking about ten times longer than I expected because I had to piece things together and the organic backing was a knit, which meant that it sagged, therefore I had to stitch every 8” or so to hold it together. I started out quaintly tying bits of yarn through all three layers (this includes the quilted layer of the bedspread) but then I finally said, “The hell with this,” and switched to my sewing machine. Still it took WAY longer than planned and I was eager to get back to this edition of “OE News.”

John keeps wanting to figure out how to eliminate the holes up top where the tabs are and, even though I am reluctant to use common phrases, I warned him: “Don’t even go there!” This was never intended as a lifelong project, nor was it to be perfect.

So now you see a bit of my office. The ugly sofa bed came with the house. The quilt is from a bedspread I didn’t like. The best part of these photos is the built-in bookcase holding a few past issues of “OE News.”

Haiku for Earth
By Theresa Darling

Root

Fed near the surface
culture obeys whim and war.
People like dogs and sheep.

Storm

Staying alive now
I run to find quick shelter
inside the darkness.

Animal Sense

Waking before dawn
I feel the gift of hunger
rumbling in my loins

Wild

Fight or flight? These eyes
hands, fingers, heart are savage.
Justified, my love.

Need

I drive into town
to buy coffee and sugar.
I come home alone.

Theresa’s poetry has appeared in “Green Hills Literary Lantern,” “Baily’s Beads” and “Hellbender Journal: The Activist Journal of the Allegheny Defense Project.” She is currently working on her first full-length poetry collection.



Letters to the Editor

Hi Iona,

I was in a huge crowd on 14th and U Street in Washington, D.C. last night after going out from an election night viewing party into the street.

This happened at 11:00 p.m. when the results from California came in. Huge crowds of people started gathering in the streets around 11:00 and were still revelling at 2:00 in the morning. It was like a Mardi Gras or something. The streets were jammed with cars and buses and traffic came to a halt. I was not sure how I would get home, not having enough money for a cab. I finally got on a bus surrounded by crowds. Some people came onto the bus and ran around inside. The driver started honking his horn. There were people dancing and fireworks despite light showers.

Bill Boteler
Washington D.C.

Dear Editor,

Tsunami is a Japanese word meaning harbor waves. Japan is an island nation which has experienced many tsunamis in the past. This word is for describing natural phenomena but nowadays this Japanese word is used for even social and economic events. A few days ago Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, said, “This financial crisis is a once-in-a-century tsunami.” Many countries are suffering from the credit crunch and the economic

downturn. Korea is not an exception. Many people worry about an economic recession.

Several years ago, a tsunami hit Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar and a part of India, but there were not many casualties of wild animals. Human beings are the most intelligent of animals but they cannot predict natural disasters precisely. We have lost basic senses to know the warning signals.

The intelligent people of banking systems made financial derivatives to attract innocent investors. They built sand castles on a turtle and decorated the castles to lure investors. The turtle could not bear the weight of the castles, which collapsed.

Nature does not manipulate the law of nature but human beings are smart enough to twist the basic laws of economics.

Financial engineering without sound capital is a very dangerous financial game, I think. When the basics are ignored, we become the victims of a disaster.

The plants have to have sunlight, water and carbon dioxide to produce carbohydrates. We cannot produce nothing only with manipulating numbers. This is a plain and simple truth.

Let us go back to the basics and obey the law of nature to prevent further catastrophe in the future.

Pyong Roh
Daegu, Korea

Hello Iona,

[Ed.: After telling Doris that we usually go for a hike on Thanksgiving Day and then eat out.]

That sounds nice to go for a hike and have dinner out. My parents instilled into me an enjoyment of taking long walks. Sometimes when my aunts, uncles and cousins visited on Sunday afternoons we all took long hikes in the woods — a lot of good memories!

It was great growing up on a small farm way out in the country. I feel sorry for people who haven’t had this opportunity.

Doris Emery
Marron, Pennsylvania

Hi Iona,

I finally got October’s issue to open. It was so well set up. I especially like the local ads and your page 14 story about what two people can do to help reduce global warming (you and John).

Tell me more about the window quilt idea, with maybe a photo.

And what about your former weather-snake business — why did the sewed cotton tube need to be filled with sand and not another product?

You have no TV? Do you listen to radio then? Do you read at night only by fireplace light? Do your clothes smell smoky?

That photo of The Mountain State was very interesting. Most Third World countries with mountains look like that too — Haiti for

one.

(Iona’s reply)

OK. Here goes: First, thanks for the compliments. I soak them up!!

I’m ready to begin my window quilts tomorrow. Well, the first one isn’t really a window quilt. It’s going to be a half-wall drape to block the warm air in my basement from creeping up the stairs to our already-passive-solar-heated living room where neither one of us hangs out during the day. The second may be a similar down comforter on which I’ll sew tabs to block off John’s upstairs office so that when he runs his little space heater in his room, the heat will stay in. In other words, we’re each walling ourselves in with our heaters so the heat doesn’t travel to where it’s not needed and we don’t need to turn on the house furnace.

John may opt for a very pretty wooden/glass door the previous owners left in the garage IF ONLY we can figure out how to hang the darn thing! His choice. I love to sew and am pretty good so I don’t care. But the door would look nicer.

Moving along — window quilts. I have two ugly polyester twin bedspreads I got at a garage sale years ago when we had a second bedroom. I have nicer ones in the loft, where the twin beds now live. So I’m going to use that as the “quilt” and cover it with nice, thick organic cotton fabric that’s left over from

our organic cotton, non-sweatshop clothing co-op days. To avoid damaging the nice wood moldings, I’m planning to place little nails on the perpendicular edges of the moldings and attach elastic every foot or so. I’ll put these up and take these down every day over our two semi-large, old picture windows.

Now — the house came with a REAL automatic window quilt that never worked and it’s way over our heads. I’ll bring in a tall, tall ladder and jury-rig rope pulls so we can manually move it up and down. It hasn’t budged in the four years we’ve been here.

Remember, all of this is rock-bottom imagination and salvaged materials lying around. I will have to buy one or two dowels for the office-space blocker drapes but we’ll create holders for them out of scrap wood.

Right, no TV. I haven’t had one for about 25 years; John since the day I moved in with him in 1990. I don’t think our clothes smell smoky. I love the smell of fire smoke. Its’ not like cigarette smoke.

Weather snakes — I use sand because we once lived in a 250-year-old farmhouse and so did a few mice. If I used beans or anything edible I’m afraid we might see mice here. Sand is also heavy enough to stay put. Occasionally fine sand dust leaks out so I’ve started doubling up on the fabric.

A faithful and curious reader from the Midwest

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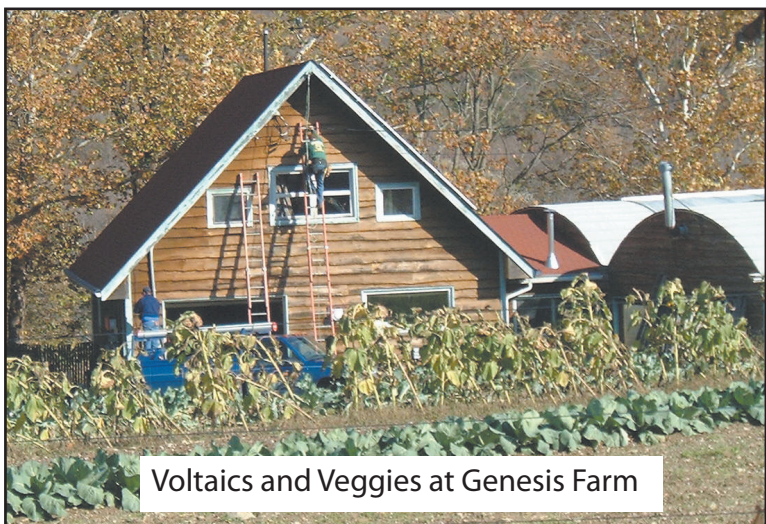
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December 5-7: Holding the Dark, Calling the Dawn: A Retreat Into Deep Time. Begins with dinner at 6 p.m. Friday and ends with Sunday lunch. In the Christian calendar, the four weeks leading up to Christmas mark the holy time of Advent. In the Jewish calendar the dark nights of winter before Hanukkah prepare for the ancient Hebrew Festival of Lights. The return of Sun’s light through this seasonal period in the northern hemisphere touches on the deep psychic experiences of loss and recovery, death and rebirth, longing and hope. Join us as we open these traditions to “deep time” and the primary archetypal energies they unlock for living into the uncertainties of the 21st century and for facing into the “holidays” with a commitment to reclaiming their sacred meanings. Led by Miriam MacGillis, founder and director of Genesis Farm. Cost: \$225 includes lodging and all meals.

December 20: Circling the Sun with Gratitude/Winter Solstice — Seasonal Celebrations at Genesis Farm: For over 25 years we have gathered to mark Earth’s seasonal passages around Sun, our precious mother-star. Join us as we celebrate and deepen our own personal journeys through the endless cycles of birth, life, death and rebirth awakened in the times of solstice and equinox. 7-9 p.m. Pre-registration required. Free. Donations are welcome. Bring a dessert, beverage or snack to share. Led by Lori Gold and other Genesis Farm staff.

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Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan

‘We were told we were fighting terrorists; the real terrorist was me.’

By Aaron Glantz

In March of this year, a courageous group of veterans brought the war home, at a historic event held in Silver Spring, Maryland, inspired by Vietnam veterans a generation before. “Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan” convened more than 200 soldiers who have served in the so-called “War on Terror;” like their fellow soldiers before them, who shared stories that laid bare the nightmare of Vietnam, these veterans bore witness to the crimes that have been committed in Americans’ names during the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The hearings lasted four days; in their testimony, soldiers described how the discarding of the military’s rules of engagement and its systematic dehumanization of Iraqi and Afghan civilians has led to horrible acts of violence against innocent men, women and children.

“These are not isolated incidents,” was a common refrain, even as the episodes they described seemed exceptionally brutal. For many of the veterans, it was the first time they had told their stories.

Now, the searing testimony has been compiled in an important new book: *Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan, Eyewitness accounts of the Occupations*, edited by Aaron Glantz and published by Haymarket Books. I strongly encourage you to buy the book for \$16, preferably through the Web site of Iraq Veterans Against the War, which organized the Winter Soldier hearings and continues to hold similar events in cities across the country. All proceeds of books purchased through IVAW will go to support its crucial work.

The following excerpt comes from Michael Prysner, a corporal in the Army Reserve who came home in February 2004.

When I first joined the army, I was told that racism no longer existed in the military. A legacy of inequality and discrimination was suddenly washed away by something called the Equal Opportunity Program. We would sit through mandatory classes and every unit had an EO representative to ensure that no elements of racism could resurface. The army seemed firmly dedicated to smashing any hint of racism.

Then September 11 happened and I began to hear new words like “towel-head,” and “camel jockey,” and the most disturbing, “sand nigger.” These words did not initially come from my fellow lower-enlisted soldiers, but from my superiors: my platoon sergeant, my first sergeant, my battalion commander. All the way up the chain of command, these viciously racist terms were suddenly acceptable.

When I got to Iraq in 2003, I learned a new word, “haji.” Haji was the enemy. Haji was every Iraqi. He was not a person, a father, a teacher or a worker. It’s important to understand where this word came from. To Muslims, the most important thing is to take a pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj. Someone who has taken this pilgrimage is a haji. It’s something that, in traditional Islam, is the highest calling in the religion. We took the best thing from Islam and made it into the worst thing.

Since the creation of this country, racism has been used to justify expansion and oppression. Native Americans were called “savages,” the Africans were called all sorts of things to excuse slavery, and Vietnam veterans know the multitude of words used to justify that imperialist war.

So haji was the word we used. It was the word we used on this particular mission I’m going to talk about. We’ve heard a lot about raids and kicking down the doors of people’s houses and ransacking their houses, but this was a different kind of raid.

We never got any explanation for our

orders. We were only told that a group of five or six houses was now property of the U.S. military, and we had to go in and make those families leave their houses.

We went to these houses and informed the families that their homes were no longer theirs. We provided them no alternative, nowhere to go, no compensation. They were very confused and very scared. They did not know what to do and would not leave, so we had to remove them.

One family in particular, a woman with two small girls, a very elderly man, and two middle-aged men; we dragged them from their house and threw them onto the street. We arrested the men because they refused to leave, and we sent them off to prison.

A few months later I found out, as we were short interrogators and I was given that assignment. I oversaw and participated in hundreds of interrogations. I remember one in particular that I’m going to share with you. It was the moment that really showed me the nature of this occupation.

This particular detainee was already stripped down to his underwear, hands behind his back and a sandbag on his head. I never saw this man’s face. My job was to take a metal folding chair and smash it against the wall next to his head — he was faced against the wall with his nose touching it — while a fellow soldier screamed the same question over and over again. No matter what his answer, my job was to slam the chair against the wall. We did this until we got tired.

I was told to make sure he kept standing up, but something was wrong with his leg. He was injured, and he kept falling to the ground. The sergeant in charge would come and tell me to get him up on his feet, so I’d have to pick him up and put him against the wall.

He kept going down. I kept pulling him up and putting him against the wall. My sergeant was upset with me for not making him continue to stand. He picked him up and slammed him against the wall several times. Then he left. When the man went down on the ground again, I noticed blood pouring down from under the sandbag. I let him sit, and when I noticed my sergeant coming again, I would tell him quickly to stand up. Instead of guarding my unit from this detainee, I realized I was guarding the detainee from my unit.

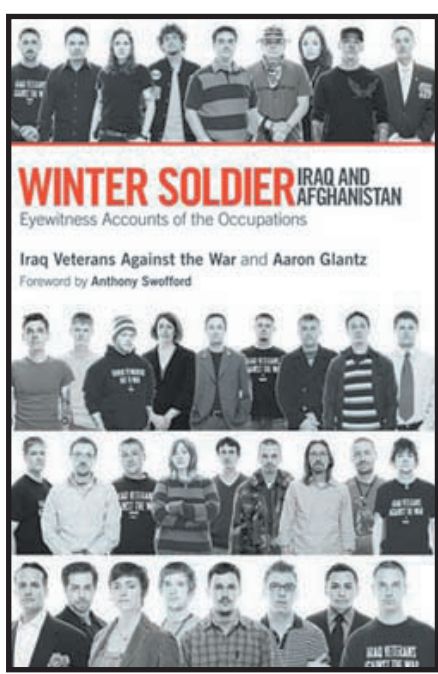
I tried hard to be proud of my service but all I could feel was shame. Racism could no longer mask the reality of the occupation. These are human beings. I’ve since been plagued by guilt. I feel guilty any time I see an elderly man, like the one who couldn’t walk who we rolled onto a stretcher and told the Iraqi police to take him away. I feel guilty any time I see a mother with her children, like the one who cried hysterically and screamed that we were worse than Saddam as we forced her from her home. I feel guilty any time I see a young girl, like the one I grabbed by the arm and dragged into the street.

We were told we were fighting terrorists; the real terrorist was me, and the real terrorism is this occupation. Racism within the military has long been an important tool to justify the destruction and occupation of another country. Without racism, soldiers would realize that they have more in common with the Iraqi people than they do with the billionaires who send us to war.

I threw families onto the street in Iraq, only to come home and find families thrown onto the street in this country, in this tragic and unnecessary foreclosure crisis. Our enemies are not 5,000 miles away, they are right here at home, and if we organize and fight, we can stop this war, we can stop this government, and we can create a better world.

*Aaron Glantz is the author of two books on Iraq: **The War Comes Home: Washington’s Battle Against America’s Veterans** and **Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan** (Haymarket). He edits the Web site **WarComes-Home.org**.*

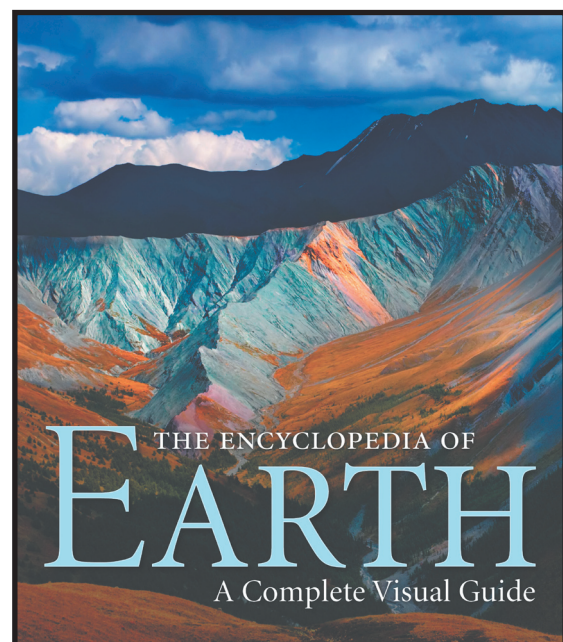
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Review by Iona

This is just the sort of book I love — sensational photos and artwork, charts and graphs, Nature at its best with succinct explanations of what’s going on and why it’s important. It may well be the most beautiful book I have ever seen. At only \$39.95, every home, school and church should own one of these glorious books, *The Encyclopedia of Earth: A Complete Visual Guide*.

I have always been curious about how things work but this is the ultimate — how every ecosystem on our beloved planet works. With 1,700 color illustrations, 1,000 maps and 200 detailed drawings and cut-aways we can explore places we’ve never seen and will never see.

This book is awesome in the true, not trite, sense of the word.

The Rockfalls and Landslides, Weathering and Erosion sections teach us what’s under the soil, what happens below the surface. Great schematics and carefully labeled pictures help us understand much of the science we have either never learned or forgotten.

Mountain Grassland and Shrubland — the most glorious field of purple alpine flowers I have ever seen — and will never see in “real life” made my heart leap for joy with their sheer burst of life. They grow in California’s Los Padres National Forest, not in Shade Gap, Pennsylvania.

So I sit here in my easy chair roaming the countryside and writing this book review, trying to convince you that this is a book you should own. Especially with the natural world being in such a precarious position these days due primarily to global heating and overpopulation. Travel is not something we should be doing any more, nor can most of us afford the trips that would take us to these enchanting places.

Now, if you are hooked on weather reports, there’s an entire section for you, Air — dust devils, trade winds, monsoons, high pressure, low pressure — can you visualize these? Do you know how or why they occur? With this encyclopedia in hand, you will learn.

Light and Color are covered as they relate to Moondogs (mock moons) and Sun Pillars, Mirages and Red Skies.

Ah — Oceans and Seas — perhaps my favorite ecosystems of all — Water, Tides, Currents, Waves, Seas, Gulfs and Straits are all carefully discussed with equally precise drawings, photos, maps and satellite images.

Winter Trees: A Book for All of Us

Review by Iona

Since most people seem to have forgotten that they are intimately connected with Nature and Earth’s ecosystems, I’ll recommend this child’s book to all.

Winter Trees by Carole Gerber (\$15.95) is a simple and beautiful story about a boy and his dog, although it could as easily be about a girl and her dog if the pronouns were changed.

The minimalist yet elegant drawings by Leslie Evans add to the tranquility of a walk in the snow discovering the uniqueness of common trees.

Here is science and serenity delivered through poetry and pictures.

After taking a walk through the snowy woods, using his senses of sight and touch, the boy learns how to identify seven popular trees during wintertime; that’s more than I can do.

At the end of the book you will see seven clearly-drawn silhouettes of bare-branched trees. These sketches help us compare and contrast the shapes and branch formations of common American trees.

This is a lovely little book. The message is clear. Trees count. And it’s fun to

I am blown away by this book!

Rivers of every continent and how people use them or protect them. Curliques of water wrap around, embracing forests — it’s hard to imagine how Nature can be so bold and beautiful. If we only took time to appreciate the gifts given so freely and taken away so greedily by mankind. Every major river’s watershed is shown, as are Tidal Wetlands and Salt Marshes, like the ones the people gathered at the 10th Ramsar Convention in Korea are working to preserve (see story on page 3).

Do you know what a Mangrove ecosystem is? I really didn’t understand it at all — until I read about it here:

“Found throughout the tropics and subtropics, mangroves are tree-dominated, coastal saltwater wetlands that develop as mud is trapped around the extensive root systems of the trees. There are about 70 species of mangrove trees, but the greatest diversity of species is found in the mangroves of the Indo-West Pacific region.

“Mangrove trees have a complex aerial buttress root system, which supports the trunk in the soft mud. The roots also absorb oxygen from the air, as mud has little or no oxygen.”

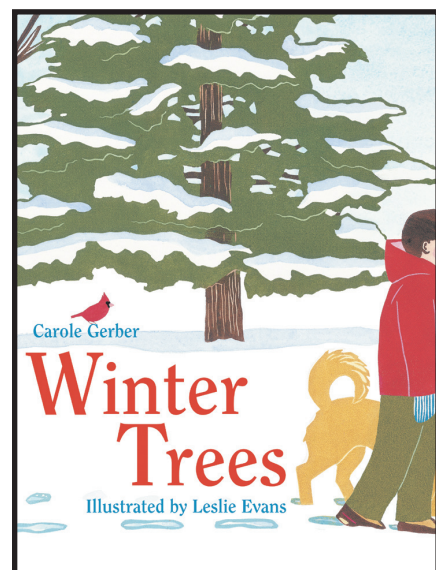
The underwater photo shows the “nursery” for tiny fish created by the tangle of mangrove roots nurture young members of the food chain. To see all these little fish in a school sheltered by mangrove roots gives one a clear sense of the community of Nature. WOW!

And the book is full of communities, including people of many lands interacting with their natural resources, making a living — each culture in its unique way. The good, the bad, the ugly are all here for us to understand better.

Toward the end of the 608 beautiful pages comes brutal destruction by humans — too many forms to mention but most of which we cover in this newspaper during the course of a year.

The final chapter is GLOBAL CONSERVATION, aptly named because nothing else is working. These are global crises and they must be solved everywhere, by everyone — either sooner or later.

The photo on the very last page solidifies the idea of a global conservation community. Nine pairs of hands — mostly children’s, mostly dark — are drumming around the circular Sri Lankan drum, the rabana. The caption wraps up the book: “Sri Lankan children create sounds together, sharing an experience and a purpose.”



learn about them in any type of weather!

Keeping in mind all the work “The Order of the Earth” and its readers have done to promote the No Child Left Inside legislation, *Winter Trees* provides a natural companion or sequel for young readers.

Your little friends will like this book and chances are good that their parents will read it to them and maybe even take the child by the hand after a snowfall and go for a walk through the neighborhood naming Winter Trees.

INDIVIDUALS HAVE INTERNATIONAL DUTIES WHICH TRANSCEND THE NATIONAL OBLIGATIONS OF OBEDIENCE. THEREFORE (INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS) HAVE THE DUTY TO VIOLATE DOMESTIC LAWS TO PREVENT CRIMES AGAINST PEACE AND HUMANITY FROM OCCURRING.

Nuremberg War Crime Tribunal, 1950

INFLAMMATION: FORERUNNER OF ILLNESS

By Loris Boutwell
Tiger GA

With so much interest and discussion on Global Warming, it's time to address the very real danger of Inflammation.

Many doctors are beginning to realize its potent relationship to Dis-Ease and Illness.

I found a simple but powerful remedy through Dr. Victor Bono (a naturopath who lived in Sanford, Florida) as my family

and I did. He heard of a Catholic priest in the late 1800s who had a clinic in Bavaria and healed many persons who traveled to get his wonderful remedy which addressed every kind of sickness.

Here goes!!

Wet two wash cloths under your cold water faucet (**never** use ice in **any** form); wring out then place first one on bare navel, cover with dry towel. Second one goes on back of neck; cover

with dry towel. Put bowl of cool water next to bed or chair to keep packs cool for at least two hours. They remove inflammation from every organ; take away pain, stress and insomnia. Try it as it works! Do daily.

Loris Boutwell is a retired reporter who believes in natural remedies. She worked for The Palm Beach Post-Times in Florida and several other newspapers. Now she writes for us!

Val's Vegetarian Column

By Valerie Stanley, Laurel MD

Vegan Desserts: Baking Without Eggs

A few weeks ago, I was trying to find some delectable vegan treats to send to my son, Ben, who is a freshman at Boston University, for his birthday. I texted him to find out if he wanted cake, cookies, muffins or doughnuts. He texted back, "Doughnuts would be nice." Simultaneously, I was searching the Internet for a Maryland sanctuary that could take a cow we will call "Jewel," whose owner had tired of her now that she could no longer produce calves. (More about Jewel next month!). My searching for vegan-friendly places led me to Brunie's Bakery, whose doughnuts had won "Best of Baltimore" for vegan baked goods. I was not disappointed and neither were my husband or daughter or office mates who sampled the assorted doughnuts created by Brunie's owner, Tamara Gabai.

I called Tamara out of the blue; she cheerfully promised to make me two dozen vegan iced doughnuts that I could pick up the next day at 3:30. She promised to pack the dozen going to Ben in a box suitable for Fed Ex shipment and a dozen for the rest of my family. There were some with maple icing and chocolate swirls and they received rave reviews from all who tried them! The iced doughnuts survived the 500 + mile trip to Boston thanks to Tamara's packaging. Ben loved them!

You can visit Brunie's online at www.bruniesbakery.com. Tamara says her specialty is vegan cakes, i.e. cakes which do not contain either eggs or dairy products. I can't wait to try Brunie's cakes! Tamara also explained that, traditionally, eggs not only bind the ingredients together but they are used to make baked goods rise and become light and fluffy. I thank her for the following site which shows one how to substitute any recipe ingredient with a vegan alternative — http://www.veganwolf.com/vegan_cooking_substitutions.htm.

I have found that Energee Egg Replacer is a good product one can buy to substitute for eggs; Energee is good in cookies and other baked goods where eggs would be used as a binder. (See my special offer below!) For baked goods where the goal is to have a 'light and fluffy' texture, or to have the baked good rise, either vinegar or baking soda will substitute for eggs.

Why choose not to use eggs? There are numerous reasons — see *Order of the Earth* October 2008 — which explain that: "An egg producer may consider not disposing of his hens, even though their egg-laying abilities have run their course. He knows that he can get egg production to resume as before by inducing the birds to molt via a forced starvation — up to 14 days (from "101 Reasons Why I'm Vegetarian"). Also, think of what happens to the millions of male chicks hatched each year on egg laying factory farms; there is no 'use' for male chicks in such a setting, as only the hens, which are used to produce eggs, are valued. Male chicks are routinely 'thrown away' onto piles with other male chicks where they die of starvation or suffocation. When the 'useful' life of a laying hen is over, these birds (worn out from living cramped five to a cage the size of a folded newspaper and undergoing forced molting) are sold to be made into soup.



My Special Offer

To make it a bit easier to find and use a common egg replacer made by Energee, I am offering to ship a full size box of Energee Egg Replacer to the first five people who email me requesting this product. The product is yours for free but I may ask you to reimburse me for shipping. My email is valjoanst@yahoo.com. I'd love to hear from you!

Next Month: "Cheesey Sauces" Without Milk

ORGANIC TERRORISTS?

At approximately 6:25 p.m. on August 30, 2008, Minneapolis Police, Minnesota State Troopers, Ramsey County Sheriffs, Saint Paul Police and University of Minnesota Police pulled over the Earth Activist Training Permaculture Demonstration Bus (Permbus) by Exit 237 on Interstate 94.

Initially the police told the people on the bus to exit. When the people on the bus asked if they were being detained, they were told that they were, but police were unable to provide justification. When asked why they pulled the bus over, the police refused to answer.

On heightened alert for terrorist activity in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area due to the Republican National Convention, area police apparently felt that one bus, three people, three dogs, three chickens and a box of worms were a threat to national security.

After the incident Stan Wilson said, "If the combined law enforcement of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Ramsey County and the State of Minnesota can pull over and impound a vehicle and home used to teach organic gardening and sustainability, one has to wonder what it is our government really fears. After all, we seek to teach people that the real meaning of homeland security is local food, fuel and energy production. For that we have had our lives stolen by government men with guns."

If this is the new face of terror in the heartland, then who isn't potentially a terrorist in the eyes of the "terror warriors?"



Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

--Marcel Proust

USDA CHANGES COULD ENDANGER FOOD SUPPLY

Union of Concerned Scientists

Union of Concerned Scientists and independent experts agree that if food staples such as corn and rice are engineered to produce drugs and other chemicals, they are very likely to contaminate the food supply and pose serious human health and environmental risks for years to come.

Now, as the clock winds down on the current administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has joined the ranks of federal agencies rushing through new regulations that weaken protections for human health and the environment. The agency's proposed regulations could significantly weaken restrictions on genetically engineered crops that produce pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals — greatly increasing the likelihood that vaccines, hormones, plastics and other substances could end up in our nation's food supply. Write to the USDA today and demand stronger — not weaker — regu-

lations for these dangerous crops!

Contact the USDA today by submitting comments like the ones below:

I am writing to oppose the USDA's proposed regulations for oversight of genetically engineered crops that produce drugs and industrial chemicals.

The USDA is going in the wrong direction on pharma crops. Rather than weaken current regulations, the department should protect the food supply from pharma crops — by instituting a ban on the outdoor production of these drugs and industrial chemicals in crops that are also human food staples, like corn and rice.

Pharma crop regulations are already too weak; yet this proposal will remove the mandatory requirements that are currently in place and instead allow agency



officials wide discretion to declare certain pharma crop substances as low risk and therefore subject to minimal control.

I urge you to withdraw these weaker pharma crop regulations and instead adopt a ban on the outdoor production of these substances in food crops. This is the only way to adequately protect the food supply.

**Contact: Jennifer Palembas
Food & Environment Program
Union of Concerned Scientists
jpalembas@ucsusa.org
202-331-5435**

EATING GM FOOD COULD LOWER YOUR FERTILITY

By Sean Poulter
The Daily Mail/UK

November 12 (*excerpt*) — Genetically modified (GM) corn has been linked to a threat to fertility in an official study that could deliver a hammer blow to controversial 'Frankenstein Food.'

A long-term feeding trial commissioned by the Austrian government found mice fed on GM corn or maize had fewer offspring and lower birth rates.

The trial has triggered a call from Greenpeace for a recall of all GM food crops currently on the market worldwide on the grounds of the threat to human health.

Most of the research on GM crop safety has been conducted by biotech companies, such as Monsanto, rather than outside independent laboratories.

GM advocates have argued that the fact the U.S. population has been eating some types of GM food

for more than a decade is proof of its safety.

However, these reassurances have been turned on their head by the study commissioned by the Austrian Ministries for Agriculture and Health, which was presented yesterday at a scientific seminar in Vienna.

Professor Dr. Jurgen Zentek, Professor for Veterinary Medicine at the University of Vienna and lead author of the study, said a GM diet effected the fertility of mice.

GM expert at Greenpeace International, Dr. Jan van Aken, said: "Genetically Engineered food appears to be acting as a birth control agent, potentially leading to infertility.

"If this is not reason enough to close down the whole biotech industry once and for all, I am not sure what kind of disaster we are waiting for.

"Playing genetic roulette with our food crops is like playing Russian roulette with consumers and public health."

ORGANIC TRANSITIONS: BEYOND GLOOM & DOOM OF ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, CLIMATE CHANGE, PEAK OIL

By Ronnie Cummins

Organic Consumers Association

October 14 (*excerpt*) — The Organic Consumers Association (OCA) is happy to announce a new grassroots-powered campaign called Organic Transitions, inspired in part by the UK's fast-growing Transition Towns movement. Organic Transitions is designed to mobilize organic consumers and local communities to start planning and implementing "transition" strategies so as to survive and thrive in the turbulent times ahead, with organic food and farming providing the healthy cornerstone for a new, more localized and sustainable green economy.

First the bad, or shall we say the really bad, news. Not since the Great Depression have Americans been challenged by anything comparable to the current unfolding disaster: economic meltdown, global warming, climate chaos, escalating energy and resource costs, looming shortages, endless war, biodiversity erosion and deteriorating public health — metastasized and abetted by a corporate elite and indentured federal government that apparently doesn't know what to do, or, worse, doesn't care. Even with likely regime change, we are in very deep trouble, according to leading scientists, economists, agronomists and public health experts.

Fortunately a critical mass of people are waking up to the fact that we must get organized and find holistic solutions, not mere band-aids, for our crises. Millions of us are heartened by the indisputable fact that organic, green, commonsense solutions for all of our life-or-death problems are at hand, including appropriate technology and innovative public policy and legislation. We don't have to wait for Washington bureaucrats or corporate marketers to tell us what to do. We can join together with our fellow/sister citizens and begin the absolutely essential process of organizing Organic Transitions committees and campaigns in our local areas, starting with local organic food buying clubs, house parties and study circles

We still have a strategic window of opportunity to take back control over our political, cultural

and economic institutions; to create millions of urban and rural green jobs; to transform our educational systems; and to make a smooth transition from fossil fuels, climate chaos and resource wars to a renewable, peaceful, solar-based agriculture and economy. But time is of the essence.

There is no longer any doubt that we must quickly move away from fossil fuels and greenhouse gas pollution if we are to avoid climate catastrophe. Likewise there is no doubt that we are quickly running out of cheap oil and other essential resources such as water, forests, wetlands and plant and animal biodiversity. You are likely familiar with the term 'Peak Oil,' the notion that global oil production has peaked and will now become inexorably more expensive and scarce, even as global demand continues to rise. **What you may not realize is that we stand on the cusp of Peak Everything, where nearly all of our essential natural resources are reaching their limits.**

We obviously can no longer afford trillion-dollar bailouts for Wall Street speculators, nor trillion-dollar wars for oil and empire in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is temporarily enough food, fiber and fuel on the planet to feed, clothe and shelter everyone (that is, if these necessities are distributed equitably) but the days of fossil fuel-intensive, chemical-intensive agriculture, transportation, utilities and housing are drawing to an end

There's a silver lining in the collapse of our energy-intensive, chemical-intensive, hyper-consumerist society. We're likely to be a lot happier and healthier after we make the Organic Transitions we need. Most of us will not be making as much money as we once did, or buying as many consumer products, but as we green and reallocate our economy and our politics, we're likely to be a lot healthier, less alienated and less stressed-out. We'll certainly be driving and flying less, and millions more of us will be involved in organic gardening and farming and other green jobs.

OCA's belief is that we'll likely be happier and more at peace with ourselves, our local communities and the Earth.

The Battle for Blair Mountain

(Continued from page 5)

-ther up the mountain taking their time, and I charged up, falling over when I couldn't run no more, and they passed me right up. I had to catch up after I caught my breath. That's the last time I ever went."

Back when Ralf was seventeen the slope facing Melvin's house was much more imposing. Blair Mountain rises 1,200 feet, a height similar to what the rest of the peaks in Spruce Fork Ridge likely once were. Arch Coal, in their first strip-mining permit, extracted seven seams of coal, removing 300 feet of the top in the process. This method of strip-mining is aptly called mountain top removal (MTR). It reduces these Appalachian Mountains covered with the densest hardwood forest in the world to rolling plains. As you look up, you can see sky through the top of the trees that run along the top of the ridge along the road. This is because there is no forest left behind them.

In the times of the Mine Wars, Blair was a sizable community. At one point, there was a picture house down by the creek next to the sign. Until the early nineties, Blair consisted of 200 residences, large for a string-town twenty miles along a two-lane road into mountain country. Melvin claims that not long ago, 300 people lived here. Now there are 75. Part of this may have to do with the change in mining practices.

Back in the Seventies when most coal mines were deep mines, mining across West Virginia employed around 120,000 workers. Now that massive equipment is used to remove tons of dirt in large scale strip mines, mining employs 15,000 West Virginians. String-towns were set down initially to house the miners who worked in the hills above. Now that there are fewer opportunities for mining employment and more for education, the young people have moved down into larger cities. Many of the deep miners who worked in the mountains around Blair have begun die.

Marvin gestures loosely across the street and down the row of houses alongside his own. "Miners used to live all up and down the street but most of them don't make it much back retirement. Miner's Silicosis." He nods knowingly.

In Blair's case though, lack of employment and the passing of older residents are not the immediate factor in the decline of the town's population. When Arch first began mining along Spruce Fork Ridge, it bought out two-thirds of the residents to prevent what companies call "nuisance suits."

"Some felt lucky to get \$30,000 out of a house they'd lived in all their life that retailed for \$10,000 in the books," Melvin told me.

After looking for homes in lower communities nearer the cities, many residents of Blair found they couldn't buy a lot for the amount they'd cleared on their house and ended up deeply in debt. Back in Blair, in the early Nineties their abandoned homes were set fire during the night. The company never accepted responsibility for the conflagrations although there was little doubt among the residents who was responsible. The message sent by the flames was clear. The company wanted them to "get out" — they were no longer welcome on their own land.

Mountain Top Removal involves heavy blasting of the layers of bedrock between coal seams. Across the state of West Virginia, three million pounds of ammonium nitrate are used every day. In metric tons this equals the power of 31 atomic bombs a year. The impact of this sort of activity on the residents living below is like living in a war zone — sounds of explosions that send stray rocks into people's yards and occasionally through their houses, coating everything near with black dust.

"You could hear the blasting like it was right here. You can set out here at like 4 o'clock and it's somethin' like night. The wife is sweeping off the porch, and then like a half an hour later she's doin' it again."

Arch and Massey are gearing up to resume operations on the

ridge in front of Melvin's house and along the ridge behind that contains a 31-foot seam of some of the best low sulfur coal in the country, worth billions of dollars.

Since Arch executed its first permit, coon hunting in Ma and Pa Hollow is no longer possible for local residents. But in the Fifties, deer moved into the area. The terrain behind Melvin's house is covered with Walnut, Hickory, Beach, Chestnut and Buckeye trees plus White Oaks, which are especially good for deer. Hunting with guns is forbidden in the area, so Melvin tracks game through the woods with his bow and arrow. Some hunters have felled bucks with six-point racks. After Arch and Massey are finished with the ridge, there will be no trees or deer left and Melvin will be surrounded by gutted land and the few animals that can be supported by a fringe of forest on either side.

According to the Surface Mine Control and Recovery Act (SMA-CRA, passed in 1977), mined lands have to be returned to within 50 feet of the original contour but mountain top removal sites are given exception provided they put the land to public use.

Proponents of mountain top removal often site "flat land" as a boon to a largely mountainous wilderness with little level sites



The remains of a family's house that was washed away by the runoff caused from blasting mountaintops in West Virginia to obtain coal. Photo by Erin Thomas

than before mining started."

Similar propaganda is spouted in elementary schools across coal country even as the children's families are being forced out of their homes.

Mining inevitably disturbs more than just land. Before Arch came into town, there was a post office and two grocery stores. Even the mainstay of mountain country — churches — are closing down. Melvin told me that the preacher that ran the Blair Baptist Church across the street closed down his congregation just one month before. Now Melvin will not only go fifteen miles

Boone County before the forty West Virginian counties refused to secede from the Union and formed their own government. He once owned all the property currently being mined out by the Arch and Massey coal companies and parted with the land for a nickel an acre. With pockets stuffed with \$500 Mullins walked away feeling like a rich man. "If we woulda kept it, we'd be coal barons just like the Rockefellers," Melvin joked.

A trail at the peak of Blair leads to the strip mining operation on the other side of the mountain, an area so large that it constitutes one of the largest permits for strip-mining ever issued. Leaving Melvin and Ralf with my best regards, I set out for the road. At the first trail I saw, I parked my car on a shoulder and headed into the woods.

Just as I lost sight of the road, I was surprised to find the walls of a home collapsed in a limp pile like wet cardboard across my path. I glanced down into the ravine along the side of the trail where the entire contents were splayed out — carpet slung on the side of the river bed, a mattress down in the gully, a couch end up with springs to the air. Piles of smaller objects spread along both sides: a tire, a hair brush, shoes, an ice cream carton, a coiled hose, and a child's Fisher Price keyboard. On the other side of the bank a toilet was smashed; shards of white ceramic mixed in with tree bark and the green leaves of ground creepers. A jar of peanut butter had settled high up in the woods. My eye caught a sheet torn from a photo album. I brushed away flaked mud from a Polaroid snapshot of a small blonde girl bending over a birthday cake blowing out her candles, a man, presumably her father, standing behind.

Emotion flushed into my blood, pushing so hard up under my rib cage that I could hardly breathe. I stepped carefully down the side of the gully looking for clues: a pink princess lunch box, a red toy monster truck, a pile of full Coke bottles bearing the date of March 2008.

Above the houses that line the highways in string-town Appalachia are homes tucked up into the woods where residents lived for generations before coal companies came into town, prompting the lower development. I wondered where this home, washed into the riverbed, once perched, but more deeply — who had lived there and why they had left all their belongings.

In the process of mountain top removal, companies destroy stream beds, filling them with millions of tons of excess rubble; 724 miles of stream have been smothered in West Virginia in direct violation of the Clean Water Act of 1977, which forbids dumping waste in streams, wetlands and waterways.

Just this year, the Bush administration altered this clause to remove any legal obstacles to continued mountain top removal. One of the major contentions against MTR is that diverted run-off from the buried streams causes flooding. During the particularly bad flood years of 2001-2002, 15 West Virginians were killed and property damage totaled over \$150 million.

"It's not a stream unless it runs 365 days a year," Ralf had said earlier, shaking his head in irony. President of West Virginia Coal Association, William Raney, once claimed that coal companies were filling in "dry hollows." The

ravine below the trail was dry but the spoiled carpet and couches had evidence of water damage; the objects flung on either side of the gorge proved to me that a significant amount of run-off had barreled through.

The trail leading to the other side of Blair is just beyond where I discovered the obliterated home. The forest, like impenetrable walls of green, crouched on either side of the trail, with every respiring breath threatening to close in. Puddles of water bubbling with frogs blocked my path. Leaning into the growth, I collected several ticks on my pants. Unlike the more genteel plant-life of New England forests, these trees and shrubs (some with leaves of almost pre-historic dimensions), proclaimed reproduction boldly as their primary raison d'être. I realized what an uphill march it must have been for those old-time miners, pushing through branches obscuring their view, stepping over the rotting logs and dodging machine-gun fire above.

Several miles up, the trees began to thin partly due to altitude but mostly because they were a façade for an emptiness behind them.

I stepped through the trees to the end of a ridge that dropped down into pasture of hydro-seed, a grass engineered for commercial purposes that is mixed with tackifier and fertilizer, such that it could grow on a park bench.

The layers of earth that had been displaced and terraced and the valleys that had been filled by massive machinery and men were smoothed over into the distance. The bare land rolled on, dipping and then climbing after thousands of acres, to another line of forest that made a dark stripe on the top of this incredible expanse of pale green — Ralf's tumbleweed.

In a few years, much of the ridge could look the same. If Massey keeps its promise and sets aside a certain number of acres for a visitors' center, it will be an island of dense green in a wilderness of grass. These surroundings will be a vast misrepresentation of the sort of forest the striking miners had pushed through to reach the summit.

Perhaps, as in Mingo County, coal companies will invest in a golf course. In deference to local history, they could name it after the Mine Wars and a heroic march to a mountain called Blair. For those who drive their golf clubs twenty miles through a twisting mountain road, the largely deserted landscape and the empty golf course of close-clipped lawn won't contain the same element of defiance I sense in the empty plots next to the homes in Blair. I can only hope that this range of level ground where mountains once stood will retain an air slightly eerie in my memory of the miners who fought and the people who once lived here.

Erin Ann Thomas graduated from George Mason University with an MFA in Creative Non-fiction in May 2008. She has published poetry in "Goodfoot" and "Kalliope." She currently teaches writing at Northern Virginia Community College.

"OE" is for sale in PA at:

- **Alternative Choices**
Green Castle
 - **Appleby's Drug Store**
Mount Union
 - **Bric-a-Brac**
Huntingdon
 - **Burnt Cabins Campground**
 - **Dott's Store**, Dott
 - **Gap Mini-Mart**
Shade Gap
 - **Little K's**, Shade Gap
 - **Miller's Diner**
Mill Creek
 - **Neelyton Post Office**
 - **Sandy Ridge Market**
Orbisonia
 - **Webster's Bookstore**
State College
- And in New York at:
- **60 Main Coffee Shop**
New Patz
 - **Magnolia's Cafe**
Patterson



If you look carefully between the trees, you will see parts of the mountains that have been devastated through mountaintop removal to extract coal. Many people are working to eliminate coal as a fuel source. Photo by Erin Thomas

for development. A mall would probably be of little benefit to a town like Blair where heavy blasting and muscling on the part of the mining companies have run out all of the residents. On one parcel of reclaimed flat land in the Appalachians of West Virginia, they have built a prison.

Concerning the efforts to reclaim the portion of Spruce Fork Ridge, already decimated by strip mining, Ralf expressed his frustration, "They put the grass out there, but what's it good for? I call it tumbleweed. It just keeps the ground intact. It can't support any wildlife. They defend it by sayin' they got a golf course out in Mingo, but how's that supposed to make me feel better? You gotta have a rich guy to come out and play on it."

He was referring to the Twisted Gun Golf Course that was constructed over the top of the Mingo Low Gap surface mine, which is touted on the Web site for the Mineral Information Institute as being one of reclamation's poster-children "Until this reclamation program, the counties of Mingo, McDowell and Logan did not have an 18-hole golf course due to the great expense of course development in the region's mountainous terrain." On the introduction page of the Web site, the Institute makes this disclaimer: "Mining inevitably disturbs land. Modern mines reclaim the surface during and after mining is completed, returning the land to useful purposes The reclaimed mine lands are often more attractive to wildlife and human uses

for a candy bar, but if he wants any preaching, too.

There used to be a convenience store next to Melvin's home and now he cuts the grass on the empty plot. When he told me this, I realized for the first time why the long spaces between the homes in Blair were so striking. The lawns were mowed — apparently by the remaining residents of Blair. I remembered the strip of grass beside the Blair Memorial sign, a stretch of land at least one-eighth mile from any homes.

I wondered what would motivate people to go so out of their way. It could have been in remembrance of their neighbors who had sold out to the coal companies. Perhaps it was to assert the appearance of a township against the forest that would take over eventually, or at least until the company filled the valley and covered it with another sort of grass. To me, these plots of mowed lawn spoke of the silent resistance of those who had been deprived of voices through economics and the corruption of the local governments, who still favor out of state coal companies over their own citizens. Two-thirds of Blair had been burned to the ground and the empty ground bore testimony to that fact. The effect created a ghostly sense of absence.

Like many of the mountain lands of West Virginia, The Spruce Fork Ridge used to belong to the people who lived there. Melvin and Ralf's "two time" great grandfather, John R. Mullins, crossed the mountains into

CLIMATE CRISIS COALITION

Call to Action: December 6 — New Day for Earth

On Saturday, December 6th, concerned citizens around the world will be participating in the fourth annual Global Day of Climate Action. This important day will be midway through the annual U.N. climate conference, taking place this year in Poznan, Poland. The Climate Crisis Coalition's (CCC) international ally, The Global Climate Campaign is synchronizing demonstrations around the world to call on world leaders to take urgent action on climate change. CCC is calling on friends and allies to participate in any way they can.

This year, actions in the U.S. are particularly pertinent because the U.N. conference is going to set the parameters for the all-important post-Kyoto treaty to be signed in December, 2009 in Copenhagen. And with the hoped-for dawning of a new era in Washington, this will represent a last chance for the U.S. to clearly reverse its obstructionist role and set the tone so that a significant, strong and binding treaty can be

negotiated. The perils our planet faces demand no less.

CCC will provide an online network where people can learn about events taking place across the country and where groups and individuals can register new events. With our all-consuming elections behind us and a growing number of citizens eager to keep President-elect Obama and the new Congress focused on the climate crisis, CCC is convinced that it is not too late for significant actions to take place on or around December 6th. Many are all ready in the works.

What You Can Do

Rallies, teach-ins, forums, vigils, movie showings and other gatherings of all types are encouraged. CCC will publicize and report on these actions through postings at the Climate Action 12/6/08 site: www.climatecrisis-coalition.org/Dec-6-Call-to-Action.html.

The Issues

CCC is urging participants to concentrate on four demands.

1. Binding and enforceable climate legislation in the U.S. within the first 100 days of the new Congress that will curtail greenhouse-gas emissions. The U.S. must exert leadership toward reaching an effective post-Kyoto treaty.

2. Reduced levels of atmospheric CO₂. Our allies at 350.org, inspired by climate scientist James Hansen and author Bill McKibben, make a compelling case for a drastic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, not just to level off atmospheric concentrations that are already far too high, but to reduce them to a level where the earth and life as we know it has a fighting chance.

Top climate scientists have come up with the number of 350 parts per million: that must be our goal and our rallying cry.

3. 100% carbon-free electricity within 10 years. Al Gore has is-

sued a five-part plan to re-power America with a commitment to producing 100% of our electricity from carbon-free sources within 10 years. This is a goal that must be embraced by all.

4. Pricing carbon pollution will create powerful incentives for our economy to rely upon energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, both of which will reduce emissions, create green jobs and promote economic and social equity. This involves gradually-increasing carbon taxes on the use of coal, oil and gas, with revenues used to reduce other taxes or distributed directly to individuals on an equal basis. Any revenue directed toward developing green energy must be for truly renewable sources — excluding nuclear power and 'clean' coal.

CCC and its allies are planning a major petitioning campaign to Congress and the Obama administration requesting that equitable carbon pricing be an essential component of a new comprehensive climate bill that needs to be

enacted in the first 100 days of the 111th Congress. The Web site where groups and individuals can support this effort, sign the petition and send letters to Washington was launched on November 20th.

We have remarkable opportunities at a unique juncture in our history. Any help that you can offer will be appreciated. Please let us know by email if you can assist with the Global Day of Action or with our Carbon Pricing Initiative. To make a contribution which would be especially appreciated, go to www.climatecrisis-coalition.org/donation.html.

Together, with allies around the world, we can make December 6th an event that helps move us toward a New Day for the Earth.

Tom Stokes, CCC Coordinator: tstokes@kyotoandbeyond.org
Ezra Small, Project Organizer: esmall@kyotoandbeyond.org
Climate Crisis Coalition
P.O. Box 125, South Lee

Not Your Soldier

(Continued from page 1)
protesting military recruiters; and

• A short survey that students take to give us all a sense of what they think. Why? Over 1 million Iraqis have been killed, according to John Hopkins University and over four million have been forced to flee their homes. Almost 5,000 U.S. military have been killed in combat with tens of thousands of grave injuries. Both presidential candidates promised to escalate the war in Afghanistan and U.S. Special Forces have recently killed civilians in Pakistan and Syria. Iran and other countries are projected targets of the global War on Terror begun by the Bush administration. The war crime of torture is being carried out by U.S. forces under the direction of the highest levels of government.

Both Senators McCain and Obama promised to increase active duty U.S. military by around 90,000 troops.

Where are they going to get these troops to fight all this?

They are in high school now.

Parents and students tell us that in high schools across the U.S. military recruiters are given free reign to prey on the youth. They pull up in their hummers, walk right into classrooms and give presentations that make war seem like a video game. They stalk students at school and at home, making false promises and even (as has been documented recently on Democracy Now!) threatening students with jail time if they decide not to enlist. In particular they target poor and rural youth, inner city youth of color and immigrant youth (with promises of citizenship). In fact, all this is mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires high schools to give students' personal information over to the military.

People recruited into the U.S. military know about the lies recruiters told them about the job skills training and education benefits that enlistees will never receive. Recruiters don't tell youth about the one third

of female GI's that report being raped while in the service or about the post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide rates of returning veterans. The U.S. armed services will spend over \$5 billion dollars in 2008 for recruiting. According to the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), "The U.S. military's recruitment policies, practices and strategies explicitly target students under 17 for recruitment activities on high school campuses."

But what this tour aims to expose is even bigger. What are youth being

recruited to do? Is the U.S. military of 2008 spreading freedom and democracy? What does it mean to be "patriotic" and "support the troops?" How can you prioritize the lives of people in one country or the world? Is the military the place

to be if you're looking to "have an experience," "get some discipline and structure," "give your life a purpose?" Or is joining the military harmful to oneself and to people throughout the world?

These are the questions the tour will explore with high school students. We want to learn from the students and we know we will have many different points of view in the audience.

We look forward to stirring up some debate which all too often doesn't happen in the name of being "balanced" and avoiding controversy.

If you find this situation unacceptable and think that schools should be places of learning and not cheap labor depots for the U.S. military, then help bring this tour to your school! Help bring this tour to your campus and be part of awakening the consciousness and activism of a new generation struggling to figure out what to do with their lives.

For more information or to set up a classroom presentation, school assembly or debate at your school, contact us at 347-385-2195 or The World Can't Wait — Drive Out the Bush Regime at www.worldcantwait.org.



Towers Coming?

(Continued from page 1)

toppled . . .

A mother and father of a 16-year-old son stand next to a hospital bed, three years after the high-voltage power line is built, each holding his blue-veined young hand. The cancer-stricken boy drank from the family spring where herbicides sprayed along the transmission line corridor worked their way downhill and contaminated their water . . .

Six months later, this same mother and father learned that traces of herbicides had been found in their cows, which drank from the pond below the corridor. "But hundreds of our cows have gone to market over the years," the mother cries, knowing that many people ate the contaminated beef and may be going through the same gut-wrenching loss of an innocent child, like she did . . .

A hunter cuts open his deer and is not aware that the animal had eaten chemical-laced grasses along the high-voltage transmission line corridor. Tonight his wife makes venison meatloaf for the family of six . . .

A hungry fisherman is unaware of the added and unseen, poisonous, particulate matter in the air that comes from the power plant upstream. The particles fall all around him and settle into the water in which his fishing rod sits . . .

A bass, with even higher traces of mercury stored in its fat, comes close to the fisherman's line. A bird dips down to drink from the heavily-polluted river that has extreme doses of nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. The bird is later found with mutated offspring . . .

I'm quite certain that someone will try and prove these scenarios will never happen and I'm certain that someone may even try and create their own scenarios of what would happen if the power companies don't get their way and the lines are not approved.

The issue isn't whether or not we "need" electricity, it's whether or not we "need" these lines. The drive of these proposed high-voltage lines along the National Corridor is simply to spread cheap electricity around. And by spreading it around, we abandon alternatives to clean energy, weaken motivation for energy conservation, continue on the same destructive path for our planet and, as a result, we

exhaust any plans for future green jobs.

Utility companies' upper echelons must surely be high-fiving each other at this prospect, as they must be high-fiving each other about the profits they know will be had with approaching deregulation.

At a time when we should be working to preserve our planet, power companies are instead knowingly planning to further destroy it, by scarring hillsides, tainting water, polluting air, and causing insects and wildlife to search out the already-limited wild spaces to live.

So don't be fooled by the clever wording of these large companies, like 'rolling blackouts,' 'strained,' 'overtaxed,' 'gridlock,' etc. They are merely 'words' to convince the better part of the public that these lines must be built in order to keep our TVs on. And be careful of the nature-friendly names they give some of the proposed projects too, like "Path" (Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline) and "TrAIL" (Trans-Allegheny Interstate Line). These projects are anything but nature-friendly.

Let's not stand idly by and let the future of our children's children be spent for the benefit of large companies anymore and for money like the Green County, PA commissioners settled for (\$750,000) in the "TrAIL" agreement, which won't be near enough to clean up the pollution and contaminated water the new line brings to their communities.

May compassionate humans who care enough to come forward in great numbers and stay the fight, stop the towers for a better tomorrow.

Continue to write letters to the editor and to your elected officials and keep those signs posted in your yards.

This fight is far from over!

Lisa Scherer is a gardener, artist, volunteer and mother of two boys.

Ed.: PA Commissioners approved the agreement between Green County Commissioners and AP (see below). We are writing to Governor Rendell to express our opinions.

Governor Edward G. Rendell
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: 717-787-2500
Web site: www.governor.state.pa.us

Less EMF: The EMF Safety SuperStore, www.lessemf.com

STOP THE TOWERS

Power Company Wins One, Ignores Public Evidence

November 18 email — The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) gave a partial ruling at its public meeting last week.

Amazingly, they completely ignored an entire year's worth of evidence in the form of public input hearings, technical evidentiary hearings and briefs, not to mention a detailed 364-page Recommended Decision by their own administrative law judges that unequivocally suggested a complete denial of all TrAIL Co

applications. Instead of listening to two men who spent more than a year collecting and weighing the facts in the case, they issued a 4-1 ruling in favor of the 502 Junction and 1.2 mile line to the south. They also issued a "Stay" for the Prexie facilities and are encouraging the "Collaborative" process to go forward.

Four of the five Commissioners ruled in favor of TrAIL Co, with only Commissioner Christy voting to deny the applications.

Commissioner Christy was the only Commissioner that took the time to attend the hearings and listen to the facts. He stated "As a PUC Commissioner, balancing the interests of the public with that of our utilities is my primary responsibility. It is clear that customers in western Pennsylvania will receive little in return for the siting of these lines in their back yards except upward pressure on the price they will pay for generation and transmission. Only the

stockholders, generation owners and perhaps customers in Eastern PJM will benefit. I cannot support a project that imposes all of the costs and none of the benefits on one segment of the public. I would like to make it clear that my comments should not suggest that I am opposed to the construction of new, large, high-voltage electric transmission projects in the Commonwealth.

"Transmission-line-siting cases present two fundamental issues

to this Commission — whether the need for the line exists and whether the proposed route is the best of all alternatives considered. It is painfully apparent from the record that TrAILCo did not come close to meeting its burden of proof in this case on either count."

The fight goes on. Citizens are not sitting down or letting up. To learn more, go to:

www.stophetowers.org

Rimrock Trilogy Continued

(Continued from page 1)
could easily tell out-of-town friends how to find it and meet me there. I was part of a close-knit circle of early-twenties hippies who either graduated or dropped out of academia (sometimes with a little push) as the great counter-cultural wave of the Sixties lost its momentum and receded. We were all struggling in various ways to reconcile the wildness of heart we cherished in ourselves and each other with the often heartless demands of making a living. I was the one who, after our brief run of liberation, excess, joyous confusion, and college, returned to the boondocks to serve as a weekend host and guide, offering a floor to crash on, the ability to build a campfire, and a lonely, constant willingness to hike and wander in the company of kindred spirits.

Rimrock became our gathering place. At times we were crazily reckless. We free-climbed the cliffs tripping so heavily the rocks respired like breathless animals and the trees writhed like the legendary masses of rattlesnakes from barroom tales. It was in social situations outside the tribal camaraderie of our freakdom that we felt endangered. We mostly had Rimrock to ourselves, especially in winter when the access road was closed. We felt safer there than most other places. Falling seemed among the smaller risks we courted, even when disaster was avoided by a frantic, bloody-handed scramble. We believed the confluent wildness of the land and our hearts somehow protected us, which was hugely naïve, but not entirely untrue. The constraints of reverence often parallel those of caution.

The intimacy of our relationship with the place synchronized our awareness of our physical abilities with the risks and demands of the rocks. Though we were functionally more cautious than any factual description of our behavior can sound, I can't deny that we were also just plain, dumb-ass lucky. I can't responsibly recommend our attitudes or actions to anyone, but I do believe that everyone must, and probably does, engage in some equivalent dance of risk and joy as they find their way to feeling at home in their own heart, body and place.

We frolicked, climbed and laughed. We cooked brown rice on small fires of gathered twigs. We made love and had great gasping floods of insight. We were transformed by processes we barely understood into the new people we had to become as the great wave of exuberant dissidence we had ridden with youthful abandon dissipated and left us aground in a strange America knee-deep in simulacra and greed.

Our often foolish, risky, and/or naïve behavior had been an essential component of our generation's point of departure, the vessel on which we sailed forth in search of a new world as well as the essence of whatever new and unique we could give to humanity. For a small circle of us, Rimrock was our Ellis Island, our point of re-entry into the "real" world beyond the wildness of tripping through a sea of wonder and risk. Outside the ceaseless, virtually tribal social life of hippie college years we began to see ourselves from a broader perspective — much like emerging from the detailed multi-sensory opulence of Allegheny Forest onto the sandstone cliffs of Rimrock and seeing the overall shapes of the land spread out before us. What I saw in the confluence of those two broad perspectives, the shapes of land and land, was home.

In the years that followed, Rimrock became more known and popular while I grew more adept and comfortable in wandering to other less easily accessible forest places. My growing sense of nativeness to the land of my birth and youth drew me toward more private territories I could discover or rediscover on my own. I came to disdain places of easy access, but the wonders I sought, found and loved in my miles of off-trail wandering all bore the indelible imprint of Rimrock's powerful contrasts: hard sandstone weathered into soft organic forms, a simultaneously harsh and gentle blend of intimacy and grandeur, the sunny openness of valley spaces and the cool darkness of caves, shelter and danger, rattle-

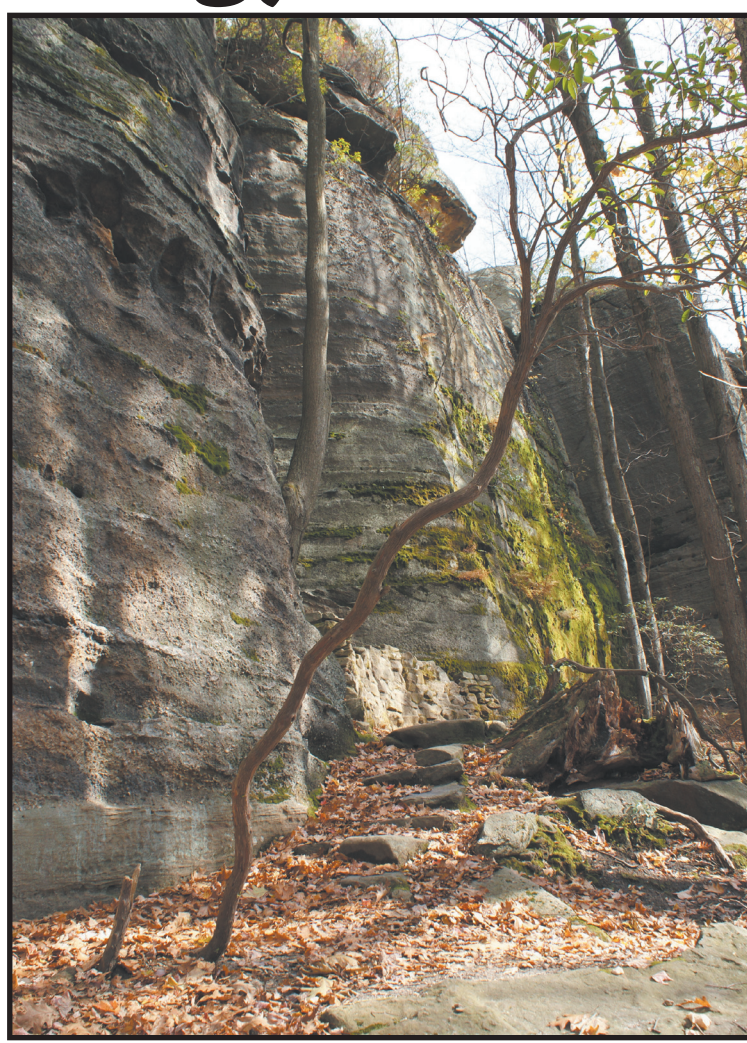
snakes and song birds.

A decade and a half after those early years of homecoming, I returned to Rimrock with my young son to show him wonders otherwise inaccessible to his short legs or unacceptable to my fatherly overprotectiveness. Though I was dismayed to see it looking worn and threadbare around its trails and edges, we picnicked there several times each summer for a few years. I believe Rimrock gave to Oren something parallel to what it had given to me long before — something made possible by the very accessibility that had widened its paths and deposited beer cans in its caves.

A hopeless forest romantic, I fall in love with wild places; I fall deep and hard. For a while that was safe and hence joyous. In the late Sixties and early Seventies, other aspects of our personal wildness were safe too; the largest dangers in our sometimes exuberant, sometimes desperate promiscuity were the emotional hazards of falling too quickly into loves whose intensity exceeded their depth. Those of us who kept our alterations of brain/blood chemistry in the realm of perceptual enhancement mostly emerged unscathed, if also unmaturing, when the revelations eventually grew repetitious and simplistic.

But when the places I dearly loved began to fall one after another to the chainsaw, bulldozer and drilling rig, my heart took a more savage beating than any it had received from the capricious young women of my overlong adolescence. To love a particular territory came to seem at least as risky as the drugs and free climbing of younger days.

When my favorite hunting territory of twenty years was chewed so ragged I could no longer bear to witness its wounds, I embraced the nomadic urges already rising in my heart as an opportunity to share with my (by then) adolescent son the joys and skills of



Rimrock, the amazing area of rock formations Friends of Rimrock is working so hard to protect. Photo by Terry Darling

owned. The public consensus reflected by local politicians and the local newspaper seems to be one of helpless surrender to some combination of the sanctity of ownership and the unquestioned imperative of petroleum. There's a lot to be said about those two topics, but frankly I have neither the aptitude nor education for the intricacies of legality interwoven with political history — I'm neither a scholar nor a journalist. I'll try to keep my focus on my forte, which is my own life, here in the northern Alleghenies.

I live in Warren, on the edge of town. Like the deer whose flesh has fueled my life, I'm fond of

paranoia and carelessness, my generation's gift dissipated in the apathy, voyeurism and money that defined post-Vietnam American culture. In dark moments I still feel the palpable absence of our lost promise.

But revisiting Rimrock to refresh my memories for this writing, I still felt its electric buzz in the subtext of nostalgia. Surprisingly, the threadbare quality that had dismayed me nearly two decades before had gotten no worse. Rimrock seems to have achieved some sort of ecological balance with its human traffic. I could still walk through the cool, green, fertile lushness of forest and feel my sudden emergence into the vast space of the shape of the land that shaped me as a wonderfully repeatable epiphany. That experience is not some rare or rarified act of connoisseurship or a labor of pilgrimage — it's there for all of us. Our culture is dying and our young becoming lost for lack of such epiphany. When its possibility is taken from us the loss will be as democratic as its current accessibility: our lives will be equally diminished.

Sitting on a cliff-top rock to write the scribbled notes that became this essay and waiting for friends to arrive, my pondering was interrupted by the arrival of several young men on a nearby rock. I overheard them talking about camping at Fool's Creek. I asked if they knew Oren Darling. Yes, they'd just come from camping there with him. Back home that evening I received an e-mail from Oren telling me that the trees in his favorite area of Fool's Creek had been marked for cutting.

When they log Fool's Creek, they will surely wound my son. They will use chainsaws to amputate part of the meaning of home in his world. He is a grown man now and probably more resilient than I am, but I still bleed when he is wounded.

A gridwork of oil well sites and access roads has been marked in orange tape and paint along the road to Rimrock and all over the surrounding forest.

Nowadays, we hear a lot of talk about patriotism. It's a notion with a long history, but we seem to have lost touch with the core of its meaning. Patriotism is more than an irrational loyalty to a flag. It is more than a fanatically held opinion that some particular form of government is superior to all others. Patriotism mutually defines, and is defined by, the confluence of the shapes of life and land that is the foundation of what it means to call a place home. Patriotism is a faith that can only live in the context of being native to a particular place; it cannot exist without a deeply felt loyalty to, and reverence for, the land itself.

If true patriotism existed in northwestern Pennsylvania, the survey markers at Rimrock would be widely regarded as an act of war. I don't know what "war" would mean. I'm not a wise man. I don't believe in armies and I don't want to encourage anyone to risk their freedom with venge-

ful felonies, but my forest, my great-grandfather's forest, my son's forest is bleeding deep and hard.

What is the half-life of passive acquiescence — how long does it take for apathy and defeatism to decay into active complicity?

The very soul of our land, the wildness of our forests, and of our spirits, is being plundered and pissed on for the short-term profits of petroleum greedheads. We must not go quietly into that dark night.

II. Greed Written in Oil

Though the land of the Allegheny National Forest is owned by the federal government, which, in theory, means "we the people," more than 90 percent of the subsurface mineral rights are privately owned, which, in fact, means corporately owned.

The very idea of having separate ownership for the land's surface and subsurface seems like such a self-evidently dysfunctional notion that it's difficult not to rage against a perversion so vastly more twisted than anything practiced by gay folks, whose imagined bedroom behavior keeps the shorts of conservative politicians in a perpetual twist. But that irrational separation is neither luridly imagined nor theoretical; it's done a deal and not likely to be undone anytime soon. We have to accept the now well-established legal right of our lusty corporations to sodomize the land the ancestors of those same conservative politicians allowed them to marry.

Regardless of whether subsurface rights should have been separately sold, they were, in fact, purchased and it behooves us to respect those purchases as we would respect other forms of ownership, lest we step onto a slippery slope, at the bottom of which everything and everybody is fair game. That if you own subsurface mineral rights and the use of the surface owner effectively destroys that resource by rendering it inaccessible, you should be fairly compensated for your loss is rooted in an age-old principle so ingrained in our culture as to be essentially beyond dispute. Though there are issues that could complicate or even attenuate that principle, for purposes of this discussion let's accept it as fundamental and avoid the tempting distractions of philosophy.

The most basic, primal core of human morality is rooted in reciprocity. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you — the old, almost trite. "Golden Rule." That's why we should all agree that subsurface-rights owners should be compensated if they're denied access to their property.

Now, consider that in the Allegheny National Forest such access to their rightful ownership will deny and/or destroy the clearly entitled use of the surface rights, which we the people own. Should we not also be fairly compensated for our loss? If not, why not? Someone needs to explain without diversion or obfuscation why this one human relationship among all others is not bound to the principle of reciprocity.

What is the moral/ethical difference between "You can't drill here" and "You can't hike, hunt, fish, camp, or experience the epiphany of creation here?"

The only difference is dollars and when it comes to the love of the land you own (and we all own the Allegheny National Forest) and live within, dollars are not necessarily the bottom line. Still, I realize that dollars often represent the only common ground we have in achieving equity between conflicting values. So the real problem is a matter of establishing the appropriate compensation for the short-term gains of the subsurface rights owner versus the long-term losses of the surface rights owner (i.e. we the people). Regardless of the subtlety and complexity of that issue, compensation must be made for the very simple reason that a one-sided relationship is an oxymoron. Reciprocity lies at the core of all human morality.

I can't begin to say how one can put a dollar value on the loss of Rimrock or Fool's Creek or the Arnot or Kinzua Heights or Salmon Creek. But I'm keenly aware of the desperate, greedhead sound

Continued on next page



Reg Darling standing by a sign in Allegheny National Forest dedicated to Edward Abby, born in PA near the village of Home. He was a "famous author and defender of wilderness" well-known for *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Photo by Terry Darling

wandering and the newfound love of discovered places.

One of the several wondrous places we discovered was Fool's Creek, a little valley with rock formations that mirrored Rimrock in similarity and uniqueness. Our shared explorations of Fool's Creek's wonders became one of the threads that stitched our father-son friendship together through the hormonal and emotional tumult of Oren's teenage years. He fell in love with Fool's Creek; he fell deep and hard. It became a refuge and a friend. He frequently escaped to the wildness of Fool's Creek and its wildness is part of what kept despair at bay while he struggled through the lost loves and disillusionment that are twenty-first century America's sad version of a vision quest for our young. It remains a place he shares with friends who cross a threshold of intimacy only he can define. I have thought of Fool's Creek as perhaps the truest gift I have given my son — not a parental duty, but truly a gift.

In the spring of 2008 it was announced that Rimrock was to become an oil field. As with most of the Allegheny National Forest, the subsurface mineral rights are privately (i.e. corporately)

edges. I have neighbors. I own my little piece of creekside land (subsurface mineral rights and all) free and clear — no debt, no mortgage. If I decided to raise hogs in my yard, I would not be allowed to do so. Although I have more than twenty-five years of my life invested in my unencumbered ownership of this piece of land, I agree that I should not be allowed to raise hogs there for the very simple reason that my ownership does not confer upon me the right to degrade the day-to-day quality of life for my neighbors. Such restraint and consideration are a fundamental aspect of civilized behavior, not merely here in the United States, but around the globe. It's not just a matter of money, of the decreased property values that might result from a small, in-town hog farm; it's a quality of life issue — a matter of the smell of pig shit, the appearance of a churned mix of mud and manure versus the present mix of trees, flowers and grasses. It's a matter of ambience that takes precedence over economics, even if I gave a small boost to local economy by hiring local people to shovel shit and slop hogs.

Weakened by a mixture of

Rimrock Trilogy

(Continued from page 14) of a con man's bullshit and right now it's spewing like a gusher.

We live here. Our grandparents lived here. Our great-grandparents lived here. Our children live here. Our grandchildren live here. Why? What is so special about this place that we have become native to it? Whatever that is, we must take it into our hearts with all the righteous ferocity of mated goshawks defending their nest. Those who would take our land from us must be made to pay for our loss.

A precise one-to-one match of monetary value for losses that are only partially monetary and whose monetary aspect is far less easily quantifiable than units of oil or natural gas is not a simple matter. But the subtleties and complexities of defining just compensation are certainly no more daunting than other such issues routinely addressed by our court system in damage claims for the loss of a spouse or child, for pain and suffering, for emo-

group (which included me) calling themselves Friends of Rimrock labored in uncertainty to summon public attention and political support in hope of sparing Rimrock from brutal transformation into an industrial site, another weird, ugly drama unfolded a few ridges away up the Kinzua valley.

Vandals, allegedly a pair of disgruntled former employees, took a wild, vicious shot at haphazard revenge against the oil developer they had once worked for. Not content with merely smashing some equipment, they opened the valves on oil tanks — twenty of them. The Forest Service initially announced a spill of around 1,000 gallons of oil in the Chappel Fork (a branch of the now-submerged portion of the Kinzua Creek) watershed, an ugly wound indeed on a small, woodland trout stream. But within a week the estimated spill had grown to 45,000 gallons — not merely a wound, a catastrophe. The alleged culprits were apprehended

wielding of brute force and the dismissal of care, finesse and caution as effeminate and weak.

They beat the crap out of their tools and equipment with little regard for the consequences in terms of wear or malfunction. There is a peculiar disconnect between their actions and consequences — beyond "git'er done," nothing else matters.

So it's no surprise that, when a couple of their own got pissed, they dumped 45,000 gallons of oil without even considering damage that might be done beyond the cost and inconvenience to the object of their anger.

Their actions were a classic example of oil industry culture. That's exactly why such operations are desperately in need of both public and governmental scrutiny and oversight. The utter failure of their internal culture to foster an ethic that connects them to the larger world of watersheds, stewardship and fundamental human values of compassion and beauty renders them incapable of



A voice kept asking what I was Inside

Well, I was like the snow

Shaped in each flake

Circlings

Framed by a window

Sandy Chilcote, Newfoundland, Canada

CLASSIFIEDS

CALL FOR PRIMARY SOURCES

Research Project: I am starting an independent research project which involves keeping track of the **projected powerline, gas line and highway projects which are proposed to cross the Appalachian Trail and the Allegheny Mountains** in the Central Appalachian Region. If you know of any local projects in the mountain regions of West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, please let me know. I am especially looking for timelines and examples of scenario planning. **Contact:** Matthew Lindberg-Work 650-465-1724 or 240-258-2806 sierraclubmatthew.arcticberg@choicemail1.com www.solomonsgap.com/power-tothepeople/rightsofway

MEETING NOTICE

SUSTAINABILITY GATHERING: Frederick County, Maryland — coming soon — January 17th., 2009. Event will be during the day and in Urbana, Maryland. Open to public and sponsored by "Our CommonWEalth". To learn more, please call 301-371-9852.

REPORTS

Target Atmospheric CO₂: Where Should Humanity Aim? Dr. James Hansen's recent 18-page report shedding light on new, extremely low goals for carbon dioxide reduction. Very technical. Color charts. \$18 payable to The Order of the Earth, HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap PA 17255.

In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development. Released last year by Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. Just one copy, very slightly marked. \$10 payable to The Order of the Earth, HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap PA 17255.

The Stolen Forests: A ten-page exposé of horrendous illegal logging practices and a sleuth who risks his life to uncover the truth about valuable, vanishing trees worldwide. Reprint from *The New Yorker* article reads like fiction. \$10 payable to The Order of the Earth, HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap PA 17255.

FOR SALE

The Great Silent Grandmother Gathering book by Sharon Mehdi. Like new. Value \$10.95. Now \$8 includes shipping. Nice holiday present. Send check to: The Order of the Earth, HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap, PA 17255.

Leather-bound, gold-edged, beautiful copy of Thomas Paine's Common Sense and Rights of Man. \$20 includes shipping. Nice holiday present. Send check to: The Order of the Earth, HCR 83 Box 881, Shade Gap, PA 17255.

HP Laserjet Color Printer: Lightly used, Model 3500, \$100 or best offer. Pick up in Shade Gap, PA. Call 814-259-3680 for directions.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

The Order of the Earth News needs help. We are growing and the costs are rising. There are many things people can do to shore up the creation of this newspaper.

Markets: We are trying to find places to sell our paper which are sympathetic and won't take a huge cut from our new \$1 price. Please get contact person's name and phone number so we can call them, then call Iona at 814-259-3680.

Permissions-Getter: Just a few minutes of your time is required to help us get permission to reprint articles and keep us out of trouble.

HELP THE PARK

Show your support for the "Friends of Cunningham Falls State Park and Gambrill State Park" — Annual Fundraising Drive happening now.

The "Friends" are a volunteer group based in Central Maryland. We support the recreation and conservation programs at Cunningham Falls State Park and Gambrill State Park (in the Catoctin Mountains of Maryland).

Please consider helping out with a contribution this December.

The Cunningham Falls State Park and Gambrill State Park is Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) agency # 93407. (The CFC is a workplace giving program for Federal employees — The "Friends" are registered with the Combined Federal Campaign for the National Capital Area).

You could also send your donation directly to us. Our address is:

**14309 Catoctin Hollow Road
Thurmont, MD 21788
Attn: Friends Treasurer**

The Friends of Cunningham Falls State Park and Gambrill State Park is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit agency. Your donation is tax-deductible.

The Friends of Cunningham Falls State Park and Gambrill State Park was revived in 2004 in order to continue supporting these two Maryland State Parks. In the time since 2004, the "Friends" have contributed the equivalent of more than fifty-thousand dollars to the parks. The Friends have purchased two 4WD vehicles, a skid-loader, two defibrillators, a chainsaw and the Manor Area tool cache. We help with the Cunningham Falls' Maple Syrup Festival each March, and the Spirits of the Furnace event each October.

The Parks include roughly 17 miles of trails and most of these trails are kept clear by volunteers. The two State Parks and the surrounding area include more than 6,000 acres of publicly-owned forestland.

PLACE AN AD \$25 PER WORD



And Where Will the Wild Ones Live?

Coyote paw prints, two sets, two animals, taken in the stone pit where oil-drilling equipment is kept, ruining the natural terrain and habitat for all forms of wildlife. Photo by Iona

tional distress, etcetera.

The trade-off could be something as simple as acre for acre, with some small adjustments for special place-specific values on both sides of the equation. The net result of such an approach would be the protection of fifty percent of our remaining forest. Could the oil and gas industry be content with the reduction of a mere fifty percent of the surface owned by we the people to a ravaged, grid work, industrial site?

I'm tempted to say it's absurd to think they'd be willing to settle for only half of our land. Maybe that's unfair of me — it is, after all, only a gut feeling based on an accumulation of impressions with little that's analytical or objective to support it. But if it's true, what does it say about the level of sheer, ravenous, amoral greed we're dealing with? Why are we not furiously outraged?

If a foreign enemy attempted to do this to us and refused to settle for even half of our land, would we consider any other reaction than to lock and load? Are we so demoralized, so desperate and defeated that we're ready to surrender the beautiful, living heart of our land in exchange for a few hard-labor jobs?

If so, how have we become so gutless and pathetic? Why are we not shamed by our cowardice?

I've never been inclined to be swept up in the testosterone-added patriotism so dear to the hearts of rednecks and the mouths of politicians, but I have always believed that Americans in general, and rural Americans in particular, were especially blessed with resourcefulness, fierce independence and love of their land. But let speculators drive the price of gasoline up by a buck and we're ready to surrender. What happened to us? How did we get so weak?

At what magnitude does the single-mindedness of greed accumulate into criminality deeper than what can be defined by law?

That's a large and ancient philosophical question requiring wisdom beyond both my eloquence and the scope of this essay. But I believe that we can all access such wisdom in our hearts even when we can't cultivate it into eloquence with our intellects, if only we can step outside the shrill cacophony of politics and gossip. That belief remains one of the cornerstones of my battered, but still living, capacity for hope.

III. Grief Written in Mud

While a loosely-formed

quickly. According to newspaper accounts, they claimed to have had no intention of harming the environment, but were merely lashing out at the former employer whom they felt had treated them unfairly. It's easy to react to their claim of quasi-innocence with sarcasm and contempt: What did you think would happen when you dumped that oil? Duh! But hold on, these guys were oil field workers. Their foresight may have been crippled as much by culture as by ignorance, and perhaps alcohol.

I went out to Chappel Fork with a couple of fellow Friends of Rimrock to witness the damage first-hand and confirm the credibility of Forest Service and newspaper reports. We took a walk through some of the drilling-in-progress, not far from the site of the spill. I didn't see much that I hadn't seen before. The oil spill itself was terrible. To witness hungry trout taking insects from the surface of an oil-slicked stream, thus poisoning themselves, is darker than poignancy.

But the simple unspoken truth is that the watershed was already doomed before it was poisoned by angry fools. It is being reshaped and ravaged by bright yellow machines of destruction so fierce and powerful that their aftermath can only be described using the language of warfare.

All discussions of the economics of oil, energy and need aside, I don't believe we can treat the land and its creatures with such heedless, callous brutality without paying a huge price in degraded humanity. The thinly veiled cost of all brutality is its damage to the soul of the perpetrator. Aboriginal people know this; any hunter, fisher, or farmer ought to.

There's no pretty way to drill oil wells in a forest, but the visible brutality currently inflicted on the land goes pervasively beyond that self-evident limitation. When you walk in an area being drilled you observe an obvious thoughtlessness, a careless disregard we can only assume comes from a rote refusal to consider any value beyond the completion of the task at hand, a refusal which seems to be deeply ingrained in the culture of the industry.

A friend who does technical work on equipment for oil and gas developers tells me that the workers are extraordinarily rough on their tools and equipment, not out of necessity or even expediency, but with a twisted, collective, macho pride in the casual

recognizing their own brutality and hence, incredibly dangerous.

Chappel Fork is not a place where I've spent a lot of time, but in its unravaged state it was typical of my homeland creeks in both its commonality and its uniqueness. It was typical too in its demise, which largely took place before a couple of vicious thugs spilled their ignorant savagery from its already gaping wounds. I've seen it before; the long list of beloved places — small valleys, each as distinctive and alike as a human being — slaughtered for oil and veneer is heartbreaking.

This is not a call to end all harvest and extraction. I don't deny the ways my life is deeply and often happily embedded in a society that pervasively fails to imagine sustenance without destruction. I'm aware that the damage that sustains my thoughtless habits and casual pleasures, as well as my survival, will sometimes alight on places tender to my heart.

I once knew a whitetail buck who I intended to kill and eat, despite knowing him so well — it was and remains impossible to speak or write of him using the grammatically correct "it."

I loosed a poorly-aimed arrow and caused him to die in terrible suffering without gaining even the meager redemption of my sustenance. I am not innocent. This isn't abstract theorizing or tree-hugging naïveté. I mourned that buck as I now also mourn Chappel Fork. I mourn its beavers and its trout. I mourn its beauty, which I cannot live to see return. Everyone I know who truly loves these gentle Alleghenies and their myriad beauties feels the same way.

What is the critical mass of grief? To what depth must it accumulate before its heat and pressure result in a chain reaction of outrage and resistance? To allow brutality to force a marriage of hope to anger is a hidden surrender that merely perpetuates the evil it seeks to resist.

But how can we take our land back?

I mourn the absence of an answer.

Reg Darling is a retired bureaucrat living in Warren, Pennsylvania with his wife, Terry, and two Siamese cats. He is the author of Coyote Soul, Raven Heart: Meditations of a Hunter-Wanderer. His new book, Hartwell Road, will be available this winter.



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