

Highways Incorporated

Private roads latest threat to environment?

by Anne Lindsey

Where there's a way there's a road. At least that's if two corporations get the go ahead to build their own roads in Manitoba.

One is a home grown corporation, the Pine Falls Paper Company (PFPC), which is proposing a road that will breach the largely inaccessible region east of Lake Winnipeg. The other is a more far fetched plan to build a trucks-only route from Minnesota into Manitoba in order to divert the grain trade to the Lake Superior port of Duluth.

Access to timber limits

The East Side Road proposal, as it has been called, has already been

submitted for an environmental licence. At least a partial licence.

It may be that the proposal to build the road north to the Bloodvein River has been submitted in stages in order to avoid environmental review. PFPC is proposing the private construction of an all weather forest access road into the company's timber concessions on Crown Land allotted to the company in its Integrated Wood Supply area. The road would run as far as the Bloodvein First Nation and cross the Bloodvein River. But subsequent stages may extend the road all the way to Berens River.

The proposal is controversial for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that the East side of the lake is virtually without roads at present. The incursion of a road and the access this will provide to all forms of vehicles will undoubtedly have significant impacts on the semi-wilderness nature of the area, including on wildlife populations.

PFPC's license application does make mention of the likelihood that the road will eventually be extended as far as Berens River.

According to University of Manitoba zoologist, Bill Pruitt, such

an extension would cross the path of the Sasaginnigak herd of woodland caribou, which migrates from Loon Straits on Lake Winnipeg to Sasaginnigak Lake.

PFPC has been clever in its formation of the license application. It is a two phase proposal: the first phase takes the road to within 1 km. of the banks of the Bloodvein, the second phase is the river crossing itself, and the continuation of the road into the reserve. This permits the company to avoid the law list trigger under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which would mean a federal as well as the less rigorous provincial environmental review, at least until such time as they are ready to construct the river crossing.

Once Phase 1 of the road has been built however, it will create a significant momentum to license the second phase. Phased licensing was used by Louisiana Pacific when it artificially separated its factory at Swan River from an examination of the source of its wood supply.

This practice has been encouraged by the provincial government, (in fact, the proposed Manitoba Sustainable Development Act seems poised to entrench such a process), even though the federal government has done away with the practice under the recently adopted Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Peter Miller, of TREE, has noted that PFPC's forest management plan for the area into which the road will be built has not been subject



See STAGED LICENSING page 3

COMPLIMENTARY
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Chain reaction guts CCME budget

by Toby Maloney

Spending cuts in Ontario have caused a chain reaction that will strip a third of the funding from the Winnipeg-based Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME).

Ontario's contribution to the federal-provincial secretariat was \$500,000 in 1995, but that is being slashed by almost half to \$267,000 in 1996.

After Ontario's announcement Quebec followed suit with its own cut from \$342,000 down to \$183,000. The only surprise there was that Quebec decided to continue contributing at all given the separatist orientation of its new government.

But, as if that wasn't enough the federal Department of the Environment, in perhaps the last major decision by the Minister Sheila Copps who has now moved to the Heritage portfolio, cut its contribution from \$676,000 to \$361,000.

By the time the dust settled the CCME had lost 46 per cent of its former budget from a fairly flush \$2 million and 14 employees down to \$1.4 million. That still sounds like a lot to environmental groups which receive next to no government funding, but it will curtail the work of the organization seriously according to its Director of Administration and Finance. Charlotte Hilton says the other ten jurisdictions have reconfirmed their contribution for 1996, however, unless someone picks up the slack there are going to be staff cuts. That could be as little as two or three positions and no major deviation from the work of the secretariat or it could

mean as many as eight positions lost and a major departure from the current programs.

Hilton says that the CCME's major work is to provide research and coordination for the 12 member Environment Ministers across Canada.

One of the major initiatives of the secretariat has been to study the harmonization of environmental assessment and protection legislation across Canada. That has generally been opposed by environmentalists who see harmonization as an attempt by the federal government to abdicate its environmental protection responsibilities.

Manitoba has agreed to continue to pay its share of \$54,500. As the host province Manitoba also picks up the secretariat's rent of \$90,000 per year.

IN BRIEF

Update on BFI

The Clean Environment Commission has recommended the approval of BFI's proposal to build a giant dump just north of the city of Winnipeg.

The CEC acknowledged the process concerns raised by opponents -- that the government is proceeding without due regard for its own Capital Region Waste Management Study, that opponents didn't have time to respond to documents released by BFI only days before the hearing, that no intervenor funding was available, again, and that documents were withheld as proprietary information even though BFI partially based its justification of the project on those studies.

Those deficiencies in the process were not seen as cause to delay or recommend rejection of the licensing, however.

1995 Eco-Network Steering Committee

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Staged licensing avoids federal assessment

Continued from page 1

to environmental assessment, and that by all rights it should be. He also points to the fact that the proposed East Side transmission line corridor from Conawapa was to have been the subject of extensive public consultations and assessment, primarily because of the road that was to accompany it. (That proposal collapsed along with plans to build a generating station on the Nelson River when Ontario withdrew from an agreement to buy power from Manitoba Hydro.)

PFPC is justifying this version of the road by pointing to the considerable level of support for the road expressed by the aboriginal communities on the east side of the Lake. Without a doubt, the road will provide improved access for these communities, thereby lowering significantly the cost of bringing in supplies, especially in the winter months. There is, however, a considerable amount of traditional land use (trapping, hunting, gathering) by people in these communities, upon which the road would surely impact.

It is critical that a full and complete consultation process be carried out so that all potential benefits and "costs" may be considered. TREE and others are calling for a full environmental assessment of the road proposal, including public hearings and intervenor funding.

Sci-Fi Highway

A second highway proposal sounds a little more like science fiction. A developer based outside of Washington, DC is touting a trucks-only toll highway from Duluth, Minnesota into Manitoba.

The purpose of the road would be to divert grain transportation from the port of Thunder Bay to the port of Duluth, thus contributing to economic development in that city. The rationale is that the demise of the Crow Rate grain transportation subsidy will make farmers look more favourably upon sending grain east rather than west.

(The Crow Rate, which equalized grain transportation costs for farmers and subsidized the cost of shipping grain by rail for more than half a century, particularly to the west coast, was revoked by the federal government in its 1994-95 budget.

The road would be reserved for rubber tired trains — four trailer trucks — which would compete directly with the railroads and the port of Thunder Bay for Canadian grain transportation business.

Manitoba environmentalists first learned about the proposal from the Fossil Fuels Policy Action Institute, a citizens group based in Arcata, California which calls the project an "environmental, health and safety nightmare".

The route for the road has it travelling an East/West direction across Minnesota (in order to avoid a National Park, but notably not avoiding several Native American reservations), and turning north towards Richer, where it would intersect with the Trans-Canada. This would mean the road would have to cross wetlands and agricultural lands, which in itself makes the project environmentally questionable.

Added to this is the fact that there is already an existing rail link, and that grain transportation is carried out far more efficiently by rail than by truck, and the whole project becomes totally ludicrous.

Though the proposal sounds incredible, Jeff Lowe, a Winnipeg transportation analyst, believes that it could well be slated to become part of the so-called "NAFTA Superhighway", from Canada to Mexico.

First the project will have to be approved by the Department of Highways in Minnesota, (which has called for private road proposals and apparently intends to make State loans available) and then approval will be sought from the communities along the proposed route, all of which have a veto against the project.

Currently, Manitoba does not have legislation permitting the construction of private roads. Four-trailer trucks are currently not permitted on highways in either Canada or the US. A call to the

Manitoba Department of Highways confirmed, however, that it has received an initial letter on the proposal, and that the provincial government will be requesting information on the "economic justification" for the project.

For more information on this project, contact Russell Ghent, Fossil Fuels Policy Action Institute, P.O. Box 4347, Arcata, CA 95521, USA, and see the article by Wanda Chow in The Winnipeg Free Press, Mon. Jan. 22. Some information is available in the Eco-Network Resource Centre.

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February 2: The Prairie Chapter of the Sierra Club of Canada invites you to an afternoon of conversation and visiting with Elizabeth May, Executive Director of the Sierra Club of Canada. Bring a friend, or bring an activist to 6th Floor-63 Albert St. in Winnipeg from 2 to 5 p.m. Call Jean Louis Hebert 444-2750 (fax 444-3763 or email hebertjl@xpressnet.com) for information.

February 10: Community Animation Project workshop on Healthy Housing issues at Brandon's Central Community Centre. Call Dave or Meaghan in Brandon at 725-3308 for information.

February 16: Hemp Symposium 8:30 am to 10 pm. Holiday Inn Crown Plaza sponsored by Winnipeg Hemp Exchange. \$100 registration fee includes catered lunch and hemp foods. Local and international speakers (Ukrainian and Polish growers) films, panel discussions, lectures. For information call 947-2315, fax to 956-5984 or email to hempor@mbnet.mb.ca.

February 27: Legislating Sustainable Development, What are the challenges? Manitoba Eco-Network Eco-Information evening. 2nd Floor Auditorium, Winnipeg Centennial Library, 7pm. Speakers include Muriel Smith from the United Nations in Canada, Dr. Robert Fenton from the University of Winnipeg Department of Economics and Robert Sopuck, Director of the Manitoba government's Sustainable Development Unit. Call 772-7542 for info.

March 11-15: Phase 1 Public Hearings, Concept on the Disposal of Canada's Nuclear Fuel Waste. Toronto, March 11-15. Call Concerned Citizens of Manitoba (452-2352 or 775-4409 for details).

March 23: Community Animation Project hosts a day-long workshop on Aquifers and Groundwater Quality at Brandon's Agricultural Extension Centre. Call Dave or Meaghan in Brandon at 725-3308 for information.

March 23: Organic Producers Association of Manitoba, Annual General Meeting and Seminar. All day, in Portage la Prairie. Call Yvonne at the OPAM office for details (204) 748-1315.

April 25 to 27: Waste Reduction 1996 hosted by Recycling Council of Manitoba and Manitoba Association of Recyclers. Westward Village Inn, Portage la Prairie. Workshop topics include Pollution Prevention, Maximizing Diversion, Financing Waste Management, Product Stewardship, Organics: the Next Challenge, and more. Call the Recycling Council 925-3777 to register.

April 27: Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization fund raising dinner. Hotel Fort Garry. Live and Silent Auctions. Speaker to be announced \$45 per person. For tickets call 883-2122

July 13-20: Harmony Foundation's Institute for Environmental Values Education 1996 Summer Program Pearson College of the Pacific, near Victoria, BC. Join progressive educators and community leaders from across Canada and around the world in an interactive program that examines the relationship among values, issues, and actions and combines environmental knowledge with group process skills, innovative teaching methodologies, and dynamic leadership training. For registration information contact: 604-380-3001, fax to 604-380-0887 or (email) to harmony@islandnet.com.

Legislating Sustainable Development

Is this possible or even desirable? What are the challenges?

The Manitoba government will soon be bringing forward its Sustainable Development Act in the legislature. Hear a variety of views on this timely topic at the Manitoba Eco-Network's Eco-Information evening:

Robert Sopuck,

Director of the government's Sustainable Development Coordination Unit;

Muriel Smith

United Nations Assoc. in Canada;

Dr. Robert Fenton

U of W Economics Department.

**7 pm Tuesday February 27
Centennial Library Auditorium
Admission \$1 or by donation**

Volunteer program matches people with projects

by Jan Westlund

The second year of the Volunteer Effectiveness Program is well underway with many satisfying matches to report.

Three Miles MacDonnell students in their guided work experience program, Challenge For Tomorrow, have responded to the needs of our member groups by volunteering an afternoon a week for the entire school year!

Neil Carlson is now exploring his affinity for animals while offering handyman skills to the Manitoba Wildlife Rehabilitation Organization. Juan Perez is learning about organic food production, distribution and sales by volunteering to do a little bit of everything at Harvest Collective. Ryan Pownall donates his computer skills and outdoor awareness to a project developing a catalogue of trips for the Naturalists Society. Clearly, all parties are equally pleased with these attempts to introduce students to the environmental community in an organized way.

More experienced workers are applying their skills to the needs of Eco-Network member groups as well: For example, Janice Pennington is volunteering her bookkeeping knowledge to aid the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. Carys Guy has taken a wealth of event and conference planning experience to help the Recycling Council of Manitoba pull together its Waste Reduction Conference for the end of April in Portage la Prairie.

The International Coalition for Land and Water Stewardship in the Red River Basin has put Lisa Schaldemose to work on a weekly basis as information officer. It's a title that doesn't begin to describe the talent and high energy for organization and detail she applies to the job.

Closer to home ...

Lisa also spends a morning a week in the Eco-Network office indexing our collection of periodicals. Many others have found ways to help the Network with its role as a clearinghouse for Manitoba environment issues and groups.

On Wednesday mornings, Tricia Olson, working through a mountain of bits of paper and return phone calls, is updating an ever-changing list of community groups - information which is vital to our diverse networking activities.

Gavin Hay, Ivan Grey and Simon Hughes are lending their graphic skills and computer expertise to the Eco-Network staff (with our sincere gratitude!).

Albert Calman, Adam Dalman, Jennifer Foote, Ric Jensen, Donna Davenport and Jacquie Woychuk have made contact with various groups to find their niches in the environmental community.

Thanks to these volunteers who helped out with our Annual Appeal in November: Elizabeth Carlyle, Christine Common Singh, Jane Carruthers, Hendrik Herfst, Morgan Jahnke, Michelle Klimczak, Anna Matas, Harry Mesman, Karen Pachet, Rick Penner, Jen Peters, Lydia Stepanovic and Dave Taylor.

We're very appreciative of the EcoNetwork Telephone Tree participants for sharing news of upcoming environmental events: Maxine Cox, Sandra Chikowski, Jaque Dhalilwal, Karen Emberley, Geoff Enns, Stephanie Harvey, Donna Johnson, Joey Olafsson, Jennifer Polle, Bernice Rusak, Jennifer Schaldemose, Deborah Shelton, Margaret Scott, Manon Soleil, Evelyn Teichman, and Louise Wilmot.

Annual Appeal 1995 exceeds previous year

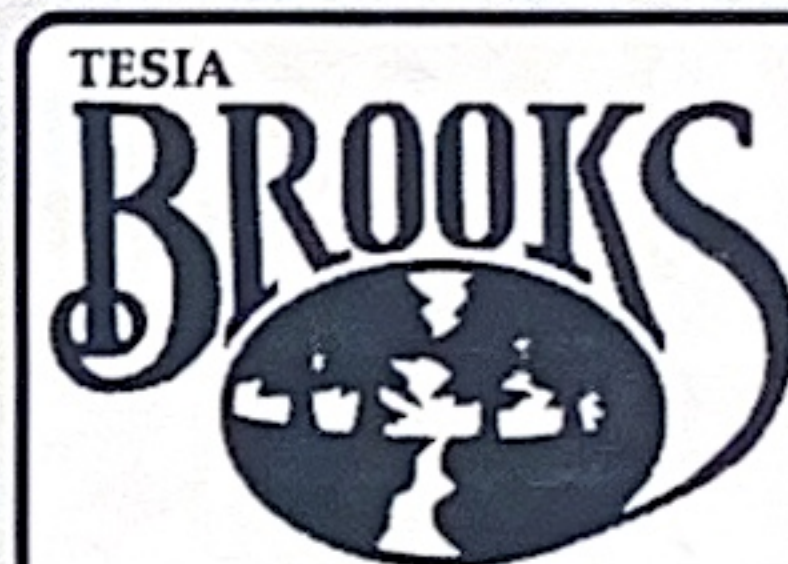
A huge thank you is due to all who responded so generously to our Annual Appeal Campaign. We actually raised about \$600 more than last year! - A total of \$4,600.

A large proportion of the work on the appeal is carried out by volunteers (See adjoining article).

The importance of these donations cannot be overestimated. The funds go directly to Network programs and operating expenses like rent, telephone, and printing which are essential to the ongoing functioning of the Network, yet almost impossible to obtain from other sources.

We're particularly impressed by the response in this year of tight economies, cutbacks and high unemployment.

In spite of what the pundits say, the environment is still important!



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Pinawa: what next?

In the economy, as in an ecosystem, diversity is the key to sustainability. Single industry towns, dependent as they are upon a sole source of revenue, seldom thrive once that revenue source is removed. Will Pinawa

by Lorna Kopelow and Anne Lindsey
Concerned Citizens of Manitoba

eventually suffer the same fate as Lynn Lake, or Wadhope? The nuclear industry will not be spared in the current round of across-the-board federal cost-cutting - and this nuclear research community in Eastern Manitoba has had a very close encounter with the federal chopping block.

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited operates two major research facilities - one at Chalk River, near Ottawa, and the other at Pinawa. The corporation's recent bid to site a low-level nuclear waste dump at Deep River, Ontario, included promises to maintain jobs at Chalk River for the next 10 years (most Deep River residents work at Chalk River). The fact that AECL's new budgetary realities will barely stretch to two research labs could leave Pinawa out in the cold. Furthermore, the overall unprofitability of the nuclear industry means it has no cushion to temper

the cuts from the federal coffers.

Therecent scare is not the first time that Pinawa has been faced with imminent demise. 1948 saw

the closure of the Pinawa Dam, then the primary employer for area

residents. AECL established its facility in Pinawa in 1962, and has been the town's predominant source of support ever since.

The wholesale withdrawal of the \$80 million or so that the federal taxpayers pump into Pinawa every year would have had a catastrophic effect on the economy of the entire South Eastern Manitoba region. This scenario, not surprisingly had many people, including politicians of every stripe, alarmed.

And while the nuclear industry has too long been at the public trough, the federal government should assume the responsibility of helping to implement a transition, rather than simply putting hundreds of people out of work and threatening a regional economy.

As the Pinawa nuclear operation gradually crumbles, decades of enormous federal investment will have left a legacy of little more than lost jobs and environmental contamination. (The Atomic Energy Control Board acknowledges that it is not known whether the steel barrels and other containers of nuclear waste buried in unlined earth trenches at Pinawa are leaking at this point.)

Experience has shown that panicky politicians and a desperate unemployed workforce may grasp at straws for any kind of economic activity. For example, the closure of the Fox mine at Lynn Lake prompted the mayor of that community to call for hosting a toxic waste dump. An obvious but rather chilling analogy in this case would be for an anxious Pinawa to offer itself as the site for a high-level radioactive waste repository.

After all, AECL's major research on nuclear waste burial is at Lac du Bonnet, just a few short kilometres away, and its scientists have been studying the geology of the area for years.

While AECL has dangled the carrot of jobs and money for any community willing to host a high-level waste repository, the Atomic Energy Control Board has severely criticized its work, saying that

Continued on following page

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Continued from previous page

AECL has failed to demonstrate the safety of deep geological disposal. Moreover, it's unlikely that the unsavoury exchange of cash for risk would meet with the approval of most Manitobans.

It appears that high-level political lobbying has won at least a temporary reprieve for Pinawa, and that instead it will undergo

a kind of indecisive drift towards gradual atrophy. While such a scenario might appear to be positive in the short term, it

will only postpone the inevitable: The reality is that a gradual down-sizing will do nothing to change the area's essential dilemma - its dependence on a single, unsustainable industry.

Eastern Manitoba, and the people of the Pinawa area deserve better treatment. Some creative thinking about the future of the region is called for. Any taxpayers' money that continues to flow into Pinawa should be earmarked first for decommissioning the site and then for meaningful economic development - that which has a future.

Pinawa, with its existing buildings, road access and infrastructure, would be an ideal site for the development of a variety of environmentally-sound energy technologies, including solar and photovoltaic cells, as well as those related to the more efficient use of the energy we already have. This field is wide open for development, but in Canada has suffered from an abysmal lack of government support. The nuclear industry, however, has swallowed up more federal money than all other energy technologies combined.

Instead of being dependent on the continued influx of tax dollars, solar and related energy technologies would make money. And because of lower overall capital costs, overseas sales would not need to rely on massive government loans as is the case with CANDU reactor sales.

Federal dollars should move away from the nuclear industry, and into investment in alternative energy sources. Provincial start-up support could be provided by the Sustainable Develop-

ment Innovations Fund. Pinawa could become a centre of excellence and innovation for appropriate energy development.

While the most highly specialized nuclear scientists would not find work in a Pinawa transformed to an Appropriate Energy Centre, many of the workers currently employed there would likely find their skills to be transferable.

In addition, research undertaken for the Carpenters' Union of

Manitoba indicates that the energy conservation field creates many jobs and has the potential to greatly stimulate economic activity which would benefit the entire region. Furthermore,

an Appropriate Energy Centre would enhance the tourism appeal of this beautiful semi-wilderness area of Manitoba.

There is every reason to believe that a healthy and diversified economy could flourish in the wake of the nuclear experiment. The world desperately needs clean energy sources, and without a doubt it is possible to attain this goal.

What's needed is the popular will and the political courage to turn back from a dead-end road, and to set out on a new path. Pinawa's current dilemma, if it is met with decisiveness, intelligence, and vision, could in fact be an important opportunity.

To contact Concerned Citizens of Manitoba or to get involved in nuclear energy issues call 452-2352 or 775-4409.

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Fax 204-942-3202

United Nations Assoc'n in Canada
Winnipeg Branch
2-340 Cockburn St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3M 2P5
204-475-0513

UWSAFE
515 Portage Ave.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 2E9
204-786-9778
Fax 204-738-7080

Western Canada Wilder-
ness Committee
Manitoba Chapter
4-910 Dorchester Ave.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3M 0R8
204-475-9608

The Wildlife Society,
Manitoba Chapter
c/o 33 Byron Bay
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3K 0R6
204-888-8288

Winnipeg Vegetarian Association
Box 2721 Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 4B3
204-888-6336 (fax) 204-789-3725

Winnipeg Water Protection Group
14 Mount Royal Crescent
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3J 2M9
204-889-8241

Wolseley Elm Guard
68 Sherburn St.
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3G 2K2
204-772-9694

YM-YWCA Intl. Development Branch
400-428 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0E2
204-989-4160

If you have difficulty contacting any group on this list or are looking for group that is not listed please call the Manitoba Eco-Network Environmental Resource Centre at 867 Westminster in Winnipeg. 772-7542. Email men@web.apc.org.

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Contact Lorna or Joe at 853-7389.

Reach for unbleached — if you can find it

by Anne Lindsey

Several people have remarked lately that it's no longer possible to purchase unbleached toilet paper or other paper products at stores in Winnipeg's two largest grocery chains.

A call to Canada Safeway revealed that the store no longer carries unbleached toilet paper because its supplier, Scott Paper, is no longer producing it. Safeway directs callers to the Product Line at Scott Paper, where consumers can leave a message about products they wish to see available. The number is 1-800-667-0775.

The Eco-Network wanted to find out why Scott has ceased production of its unbleached toilet paper. According to Bruce Rothwell, Marketing Manager at Scott Paper, the reason is that demand has dropped off in the last two years, after a period of growth following the introduction of the product in 1990. Scott's head office is "looking at it, and will be issuing a statement soon", Rothwell said.

Interestingly, Rothwell also noted the unbleached tissue on the market in Winnipeg Safeway stores emanates from Scott's British Columbia mill, which doesn't have a recycling plant. So this paper was being made from 100% virgin fibre.

Their mill in Eastern Canada has a recycling plant, but does use a chlorine containing agent for bleaching. On this issue, Scott believes that using alternative whiteners (such as hydrogen peroxide)

creates an inferior product, which may detract from its sales.

Product information is a little harder to obtain from Superstore. A person actually has to go to the store to talk to someone, there is no listed phone number.

Superstore used to carry a line of toilet paper made from 100% post consumer recycled paper with no chlorine added during the manufacturing process, under its President's Choice label.

The store's own brand still carries the cute little planet logo on the outside packaging, but its contents appear to be neither recycled nor unbleached.

An Eco-Network staff member went to the store to ask some questions, but the upshot was that no one at the store, nor apparently anyone in all of Winnipeg, knows who the supplier of "President's Choice" products are. (A distributor, Sunfresh, is listed, but not the producer).

She was told that the recycled product is no longer available from the supplier, but that "it sold very well" and that they'll be seeking a new source.

Preserving resources

Just in case you need a reminder, it's important to seek out and buy recycled products wherever possible. Consumer demand will increase the markets for the paper everyone puts in their blue box, thus helping to divert materials from landfill,

utilizing less of our precious forest resources, and requiring less energy for production.

Nothing is as straightforward as it may first appear, however. As Rothwell pointed out, mills making paper from recycled fibre have their own problems with landfill in the form of sludge residues.

The moral of the story, of course, is to reduce consumption in the first place. And it's essential that we reduce our dependence on bleached products. The bleaching agent, chlorine, reacts with other substances in the environment to form highly toxic compounds which endanger and kill wildlife, and which cause cancer in humans.

Governments are moving, albeit slowly, on regulations for minimum recycled content on some products, and on regulating the effluent from pulp and paper mills.

They need encouragement to work faster and more effectively (pulp and paper companies are strong hold-outs against clean up operations, because they cost money).

At the same time, we as consumers need to vote with our dollars. Call that toll-free line to Scott Paper right now! Tell them you want paper products made from post-consumer recycled fibre, and that you object to the use of chlorine in the manufacturing process, even when the finished product is a little less white than we may be accustomed to.

You should know that Green Earth, on Westminster or Corydon in Winnipeg, carries 100% post-consumer recycled toilet paper, whitened with hydrogen peroxide.

At \$10.95 for a 24 roll pack, it's probably more expensive than you're used to, but one which you might want to consider if using virgin forests and poison for toilet paper, is anathema to you.

"REACH FOR UNBLEACHED" is the name of a campaign for public awareness and pressure on chlorine issues, and community monitoring of bleached pulp mills, being undertaken by the Georgia Strait Alliance in B.C. The organization can be reached at: Box 39, Whaletown, BC. V0P 1Z0. Phone/fax: (604)935-6992.

A thank you to our business supporters

Production of this issue of **Eco-Journal** was greatly assisted by the contributions of progressive business owners in Winnipeg. Among them were Green Earth (with stores on Corydon and Westminster) which generously donated paper; Home of Instant Printing (at Princess and McDermot) our printer since 1990, which offered printing at a generous discount for both this issue and the last; Gavin Hay, Indigo Communication, who offered additional typesetting; and The Hemp Exchange, which unfortunately was unable to provide hemp paper for the centre spread this issue, but which is valiantly attempting to do so for subsequent issues.

Thank you from Eco-Journal and the Manitoba Eco-Network to:

- HOME OF INSTANT PRINTING
- THE HEMP EXCHANGE
- GREEN EARTH
- GAVIN HAY, INDIGO COMMUNICATION

ECJ

The birds are back at Whitewater

Project opens access to major staging area

by Toby Maloney

Seven years ago Whitewater Lake in southwestern Manitoba dried right up. Despite being a fairly large lake, the 1980's drought depleted groundwater in adjacent hay lands and what melt water came from the Turtle Mountains quickly dissipated in the summer heat.

Now it's back as a staging area and wetlands complex that rivals Oak Hammock marsh for diversity and productivity.

Last fall several hundred thousand geese staged at the lake, although there are fewer Canada and more snow and white fronted geese than at the more famous marsh north of Winnipeg.

The Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited and the Turtle Mountain Conservation District are planning to improve road access to the lake, build a viewing mound, and construct dykes for an additional wetlands cell, in an effort to introduce the bird paradise to more human visitors.

Natural Resources Western Region Natural Lands Manager Tom Moran sees the proposed development as having minimal impact, as sensitive to the natural features of the area, but important as an educational tool.

"It's close enough to the schools -- Deloraine, Boissevain and Killarney -- to take a day trip," he said.

The area is already used occasionally by birders who tour Whitewater Lake in busloads.

The plan, which is in the process of receiving environmental approvals, is dependent on the provincial government contributing its share from the upcoming 1996-97 budget.

Shared cost project

The Department's share will cover the day use area at the entrance and interpretive signs, Ducks Unlimited will pay for the cell construction and dykes and the Conservation District will pay for the road improvements. The land being used is crown land. Ducks Unlimited will lease the portion for the new wetlands cell. The total cost will be well into six figures.

The project will add an additional two

miles of dyking bringing the total for the two cells at the southeast end of the lake to about 8 miles. Visitors will be encouraged to hike or bike on top of the dykes or to canoe in the lake.

Part of the plan will produce a backflood area where run-off will accumulate in spring, and then, in agreement with adjacent farmers be drained into the cells in time to produce a summer hay crop.

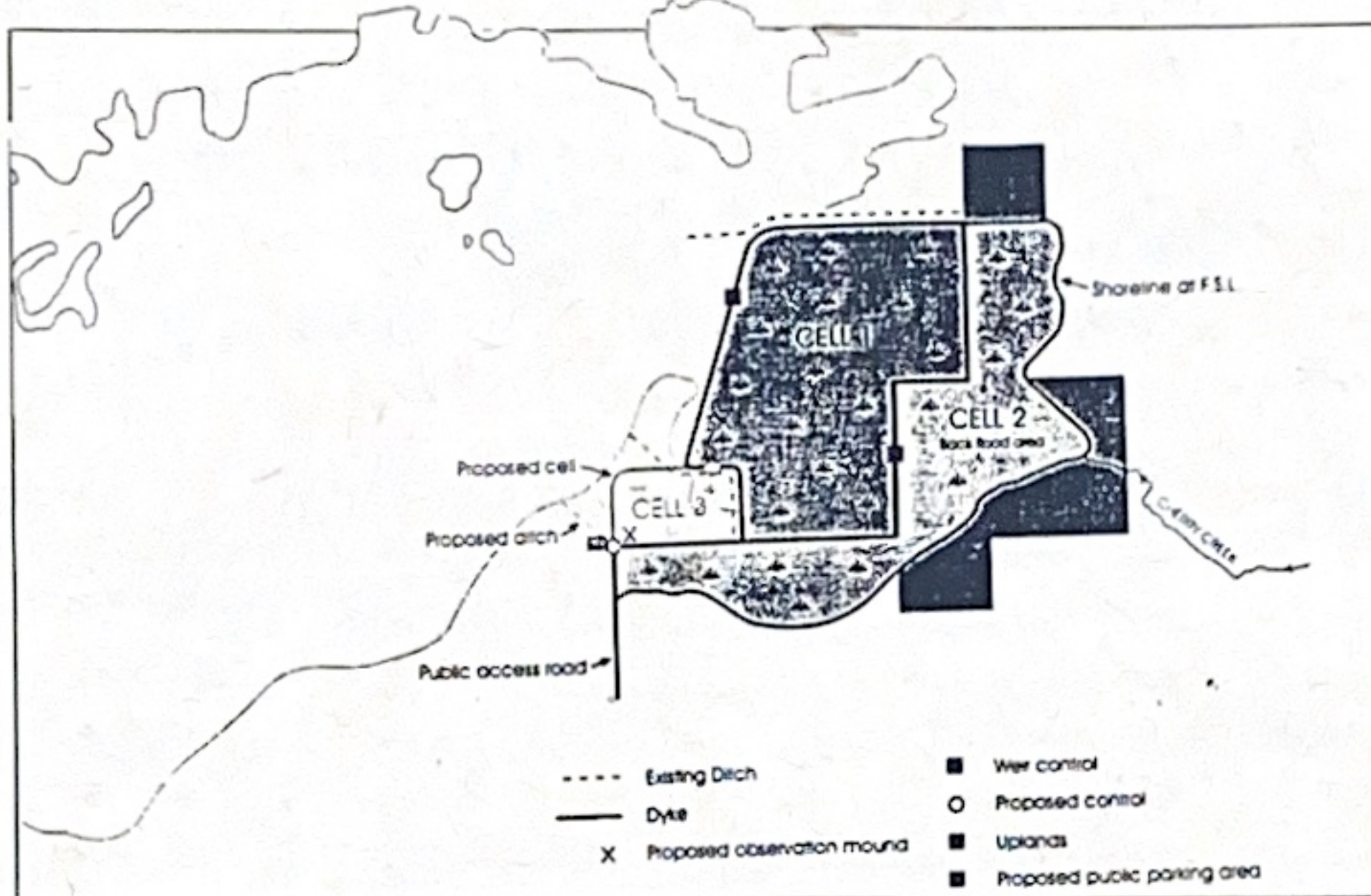
The project, which has received a lot of attention in the local area, has been in the planning stages for a couple of years.

While the lake was dry birds had to look elsewhere for their rest stop. The previous wetlands cell, built in the 80's, helped draw migratory birds back while the lake levels were replenished.

In the last two years the lake has re-established itself as a major staging

area -- a rest stop -- for the birds.

According to Moran, the intent of the project is not so much tourism, although he sees it as another asset along with the Peace Gardens, the Turtle Mountains and efforts in the communities. He says the intention is more to provide and control access that would otherwise be difficult.



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Organic gardeners coop established Quick freeze plant could extend the season

by Toby Maloney

Market gardener Marcus Summersfield is looking for a way to extend the fruit and vegetable season, and he wants to take a couple of hundred organic growers with him.

After three seasons back from the UK, and having re-learned some of what he needs to know to deal with our more extreme climate, Summersfield has plans to build a quick freeze plant that would specialize in organic fruits and vegetables.

He's thinking big, at least for organic produce, and has priced the proposed plant to be built near his farm in Stuartburn southeast of Winnipeg based on about 10,000 square feet. The plant would cost from a million to one and a quarter million

dollars and would turn out 500,000 packages of vegetables the first year or the produce from 100 acres. At full tilt the plant would require produce from 1250

Marcus Summersfield wants to provide and alternative to the supermarket fare of "colourless dots which were once peas"

acres and produce \$6 million revenue just from vegetables.

Conventional vegetable growers tend to produce several hundred acres of one or two crops, but Summersfield says that isn't feasible for more labour intensive organic production. So that's why he wants

to involve more than a hundred smaller growers. That would diversify the risk, although it might be more difficult to guarantee consistency.

The first hitch is that there aren't hundreds of certified organic growers. So the first step by Summersfield and his wife Dawne, who is an organic inspector, is to organize an organic grower's co-operative, help the gardeners to certify, and boost summer production of organics

for the local market as well.

Certification could be a relatively easy step for gardeners who have never used chemicals -- the three year period becomes one if they can assure the certifying body they have never used chemicals. And Summersfield says that most of the rest of the 160 gardeners who came out to an initial meeting in Vita last month have only ever dusted for potato beetles.

He says he's had a lot of interest and calls from all over. Some people have driven from as far as 220 kilometres away, and several Winnipeg residents have talked to him about moving out of the city and growing organically. Summersfield says the marketing coop would be autonomous from and make its own pricing deals with the freezer plant which would be a private effort.

The produce would be individually quick frozen, as opposed to being frozen in a lump. The method retains more of the nutritional value and quality of the fruits and vegetables.

The intent would be to package in clear containers so consumers can see they are getting a quality product, as opposed to what he calls the "colourless dots which were once peas."

The initial market would be

Continued on following page

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Primary market would be health food stores

Continued from previous page

health food stores where consumers "are accustomed to an organic lifestyle," but often resort to more expensive import organics in the winter after eating Manitoba produce all summer. U.S. and other provincial health food stores would be the secondary market and finally local supermarkets where he expects to be able to compete on price as well as quality.

The Summersfields expect the plant could return a profit in the several weeks that it would be quick freezing foods, but in order to keep the plant running through the winter he wants to go after other processing markets. He's investigating vegetable and fruit juices, sauces and salsa, maybe even baby foods, as a way of keeping the plant going through the long winter.

He has been helped in his research by the National Agri-Food Research Centre at Portage La Prairie which suggested appropriate technology and pointed him towards manufacturers. He's also getting support, moral so far, from his local MLA Jack Penner (P.C. Emerson) who thinks the proposal could qualify for a community Grow Bonds project.

For now it's up to the growers to establish their cooperative and show that the supply, as well as the market, is available.



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For further information, please contact the Recycling Council of Manitoba, Inc., at #925-3777 or fax #942-4207

Community Animation Project looks at ground water/healthy housing issues

by Dave Kattenburg

The federal government shrinks from involving itself in the environmental affairs of the provinces, which often refuse to enforce their own guidelines and regulations.

Likewise, in the area of health, the feds pass the dwindling buck to provincial authorities less and less able to deliver health services.

Fortunately, the feds haven't completely abdicated their responsibility. Both Environment and Health Canada are providing moral and financial support to healthy community and environmental action groups who are trying to accomplish something at the grass roots level.

The Community Animation Project (CAP) is one federally sponsored avenue of support for Canadians seeking to create a healthy environment for themselves. It is financed by Health Canada and Environment Canada, and is being implemented by regional steering committees across the country. Individual CAP animators have been hired to promote and facilitate the activities of such groups.

Dave Kattenburg and Meghan Moon are the CAP animators for southern Manitoba. For the past three months they have been consulting with groups and individuals, learning about issues of concern, helping to put people in contact with each other and dig-

ging up technical information from a variety of sources.

The results of their work come as no surprise: the quality of surface and underground water systems is an issue of concern for everyone. Clear-cut forestry in the western

pressed by grassroots activists is for more comprehensive and credible information about ground water quality. Communities opposed to large-scale hog farming in the Interlake region, for example, want to know the extent of contamination by ammonia and other chemical agents, and by microorganisms as a result of sewage lagoon leaks.

In the town of Springfield, east of Winnipeg, citizens are concerned about the impact of an expanded landfill operation on the Moosenose aquifer.

And in the regions surrounding Carberry and Oak Lake, the prospect of increased potato farming and irrigation raises new fears about depletion and chemical contamination of the Assiniboine and Plum Lakes aquifers.

To animate action around these issues, a day-long CAP workshop on southern Manitoba's aquifer systems will be held at Brandon's Agricultural Extension Centre on Saturday, March 23. Participants will hear about and discuss the behaviour of aquifers, how aquifers are affected by irrigation and municipal water use, and the impact of ground water contamination



Environment and Health

Parklands, the profligate use of farm chemicals in the southeast, the expansion of potato irrigation in the southwest and mega-hog operations in the Interlake all threaten sources of underground water upon which the health of Manitobans depends.

One of the most common desires ex-

on human health.

The most recent information about chemical contamination of prairie aquifers will be presented. Ideas about a possible Manitoba-wide, community-driven water testing project will be shared.

Continued on following page

Information and strategies will be shared in workshops

continued from previous page

Southern Manitoba's CAP animators are also working to promote a healthy municipal environment. The most immediate environment for town and city dwellers are the houses and neighbourhoods they live in.

What chemicals are breathed in from the walls and building materials around us? How do indoor lighting and electrical systems affect our health? How safe are the streets that criss-cross our neighbourhoods? How might neighbours work together to promote a healthier housing and municipal environment?

These and other questions will be tackled at a February 10 CAP workshop on healthy housing, at Brandon's Central Community Centre.

Helping to animate activities emerging from these two workshops, and from the previous five months of work, will top the agenda for CAP next spring and summer. Information gathered from grassroots, academic and government sources will be incorporated into a health and environment site on the World Wide Web of the Internet.

The site will contain links to further sources of information on health and environment issues relevant to Manitobans. Arrangements for establishing this Web site on Manitoba's Blue Sky Community Network are now being made.

When the weather starts warming up, CAP is also planning to promote a province-wide discussion about how environmental policies and regulations are drafted, administered and enforced.

For further information about CAP, or about the aquifer and healthy housing workshops mentioned above, please contact Dave or Meaghan at 725-3308 or by E-mail: kattenburgd@docker.com

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New Resources at the Manitoba Eco-Network Environmental Resource Centre

• *Endangered Spaces Progress Report 94-95* from the World Wildlife Fund's Endangered Spaces Campaign contains the latest report card on each of the provinces.

Manitoba got a C- despite its attempt at appeasing parks advocates by establishing four new parks in the far north of Manitoba. This put the province near the head of the class, however. In other words at the mid-point of the campaign's goal, Canada is not doing too well.

According to WWF Canada president Monte Hummel "so far 5% of our natural regions are judged to be represented, 40 % are moderately or partially represented, and 55% have little or no representation."

If you would like a better idea of how WWF goes about determining what should be protected and how, check out *A Protected Areas GAP Analysis Methodology: Planning for the Conservation of Biodiversity* which includes, among other things, a paper by Stan Rowe. The report makes a case for and describes how comprehensive, site-specific land use planning can protect ecologically critical habitat. Diagrams, charts and photographs illuminate the text with examples.

Check out the Manitoba Eco-Network Environmental Resource Centre at 867 Westminister Ave. in Winnipeg. Call 772-7542.

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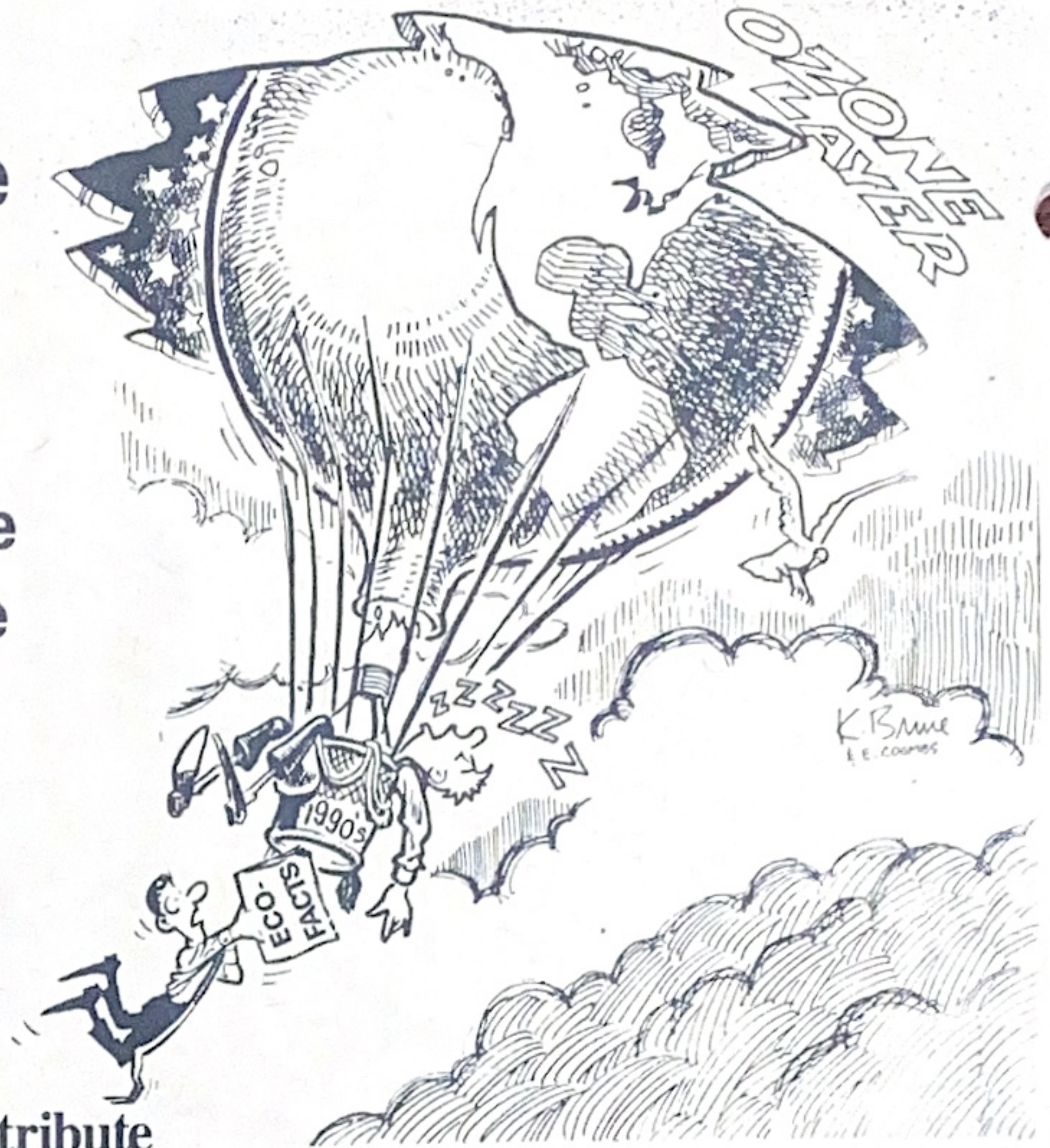
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If you or your group would like to contribute
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Group members are entitled to nominate representatives for a position on the Eco-Network Steering Committee. Group membership is open to any non-governmental, non-profit group which has as one of its objectives the enhancing or furthering of environmental quality, protecting the environment or environmental education.