Covering Extreme Disasters
Reporters Brace for Danger in Breaking Weather News
Page 4

The Climate in the Capital
How Changing Policy Impacts Coverage
Page 8

New Exec Director on SEJ’s Future
Meaghan Parker Talks About Opportunities
Page 18

A Deeper View for Journalists
VR, AR Add Dimension to Climate Reporting
Page 27

Standing Firm in Troubled Times
Why We Need In-depth News Now
Page 34
courage
change
impact

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The News Environment

In this time of “fake” news and public derision of the press for doing their job, environmental journalists come under a lot of attacks from the highest levels of government. This occurs as they cover federal officials working to roll back changes made under previous administrations that protect the environment or ridiculing the idea of human-caused climate change. Yet, as we see in this issue of Crain’s NewsPro, environmental journalists continue to push ahead, providing what is among the most important work in a democratic society: They report on policies, regulations and issues that threaten the quality of our air, our water, the food we eat — and the planet we live on.

Just the number of areas covered by the environmental beat is daunting. They range from national politics, as evidenced by the recent coverage that led to the resignation of Scott Pruitt, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, to local, such as the Flint water crisis, which will be explored during the Society of Environmental Journalists’ conference. Environmental journalists are exploring the use of harmful chemicals in water and agriculture, toxic sites created by the U.S. military across the country and the catastrophic effects of climate change on coastal regions. And those are just a few of the many important subjects covered by this beat.

Focusing on environmental journalism, this issue looks at a range of topics, from weather disaster coverage to new technology, offering advice, tips and resources for environmental and science journalists and writers, including ways to capture an audience that may be pressed for time or committed to a political point of view in an area that shouldn’t be political, but rather a matter of science and fact.

At a time when the press is under attack, it’s critical that the media — and citizens — understand just how important a responsible and trustworthy press is as a watchdog when it comes to our most basic and essential needs. The work that environmental journalists do every day underscores the importance of the Fourth Estate in educating our citizens as well as maintaining and improving the quality of life — for us and future generations.

— Karen Egolf, Editor
COVER STORY

REPORTING IN THE VORTEX OF A STORM

As Extreme Weather Events Worsen, Journalists Remain Aware of the Dangers — and Take Steps to Stay Safe

By Michele Cohen Marill

As the eye wall of Hurricane Irma approached Naples, Florida, NBC News correspondent Kerry Sanders stood in the worsening storm for a live shot. Behind him, palm fronds flapped furiously against a gun-metal gray sky. Sanders shouted over the crackle of rain and drum beat of the wind.

Sanders wrapped an arm around a railing to steady himself against strong gusts. After covering more than 60 hurricanes, he is as accustomed as anyone can be to the throes of extreme weather.

But then Sanders gave viewers a rare, behind-the-scenes glimpse of how he stays safe. He was standing on the fourth floor of a parking
A large SUV parked further inside the deck provided cover for Sanders and his crew.

"Honestly, there's a danger in everything that happens [in a storm]," he told viewers. "We're just trying to use the proper caution in everything we're doing here."

After Hurricane Irma in 2017, critics questioned the rationale for storm-tossed live shots, with headlines such as "TV reporters face danger they tell others to avoid." But journalists who cover extreme weather are fully aware of the hazards — and they do what they can to reduce their risk as these events grow in number and scope.

Human-caused climate change is leading to heavier rain, more frequent heat waves and large forest fires, and other extreme weather events, according to the Climate Science Special Report issued by 13 federal agencies in 2017 as part of the Fourth National Climate Assessment. That is an important backdrop to the reporting by environmental and weather journalists.

Like the reporting itself, staying safe requires attention to detail. Prepared journalists bring along proper gear and clothes, healthy snacks and drinking water, weighted ropes and rugged footwear.

"This isn't about thrill-seeking," Sanders said. "People want to know what is going on outside their boarded-up windows. They are sheltered inside, and we are the window to what's going on."

A sobering reminder of the deadly potential came in May 2018, when two broadcast journalists were killed by a tree that fell on their SUV while they were covering the effects of Subtropical Storm Alberto in North Carolina.

This kind of reporting is not new. Dan Rather aired the first live hurricane coverage in 1961, when he was a young news director at a local station in Houston. Broadcasting from a U.S. Weather Bureau (now the National Weather Service) office on Galveston Island, he superimposed a radar image onto a map, showing the massive size of Hurricane Carla — and spurring evacuation of the Texas coast as cameramen captured images of the rising wind and waves. Rather, who retired as anchor of the "CBS Evening News" in 2004, acquired the nickname "Hurricane Dan."

Today, the 24-hour news cycle drives storm coverage, while climate change ramps up the severity of extreme weather events.

A broad view of hazards remained top of mind for Lise Olsen, senior investigative reporter at the Houston Chronicle, as she waded through water and helped her neighbors in the wake of severe flooding after Hurricane Harvey in 2017. She visited a shelter, witnessed rescues and collected vignettes for daily news stories — and she began calling sources to ask about one of Houston's most dangerous Superfund sites. She eventually teamed up with Associated Press reporters for stories on toxic spills after Harvey.

"You can get caught up in the coverage of the minute-by-minute, but you have to think about the bigger picture," Olsen said.

At the same time, she managed logistical challenges. When she was eventually able to leave her neighborhood, the cellphone app Waze helped her avoid flooded roads and hazards — and she kept her cellphone in a Ziploc bag in case it fell in the mud. She used it to record interviews rather than trying to write on a pad. After spending time in flooded homes — which reeked of mold, mildew and rot — she came home and left her boots on the doorstep and immediately showered.

As meteorologists track weather events, journalists have time to prepare for their on-scene reports. Mike Bettes, a Weather Channel meteorologist known for his dramatic live coverage, moves to the location of an approaching storm as early as possible. As soon as he arrives, he contacts the local emergency manager, police chief or fire chief and seeks a safe shelter.

For live shots, he makes sure he won't be standing near trees that could uproot or fling coconuts like missiles in the gusts. He tries to stay a safe distance from tornadoes, and if he finds himself in a lightning storm, he and his crew take cover in their vehicles.

Ample food and extra clothes are essential in ongoing storm coverage. "You have to be self-sufficient, potentially for days on end," Bettes said.

continued on page 6
When he covers a winter storm, Bettes brings extra apparel: two hats, two pairs of gloves, two pairs of boots, two parkas, and four or five pairs of socks. “Sometimes you’re in a really wet snowstorm and you get soaked. The last thing you want to be in a snowstorm is wet,” he said.

In his years covering hurricanes, Sanders has developed some do’s and don’ts. Instead of sugary snacks, he brings fruit, peanut butter and bread. He carries two cellphones — with different carriers. He dresses to stay cool and knows he won’t stay dry.

“I’m shocked at the number of people who are dispatched from other parts of the country to cover a hurricane who are wearing jeans,” he said. “The rain on jeans becomes the most miserable experience ever.”

Underneath his rain pants and jacket, Sanders wears a cotton T-shirt and shorts or a swimsuit. (He has one or two extra rain jackets.) He doesn’t bother with socks; his feet will be wet inside his boots. And he wears goggles to protect his eyes, as the wind often carries sand and debris.

Wildfires pose their own threats. Al Henkel, NBC News senior coordinating producer for newsgathering, quickly realized that he needed to understand fire behavior if he wanted to stay safe. He enrolled in a fire academy for basic training and volunteered to help with controlled burns in the Texas grasslands.

Fires can change direction suddenly, so Henkel is always aware of
safety zones and escape routes. “You have to think like a firefighter rather than a reporter,” he said.

He dresses like a firefighter, too. His pants and shirt are made of Nomex fabric, which is fire-resistant. He wears gloves and a hard hat, and his leather boots are eight inches high with Vibram soles, which have strong traction.

During one wildfire, he recalls standing next to another reporter who was wearing a T-shirt and shorts — and getting burned by flying embers.

As he treks toward the fire, he carries a pack that contains a fire shelter — a protective pop-up tent for a worst-case scenario in which the crew becomes trapped by flames. He also has extra water, food, toilet paper, batteries, gloves and shoelaces. “You’ve got to be prepared to be on your own and provide for yourself as long as you’re out with the crews,” Henkel said.

In his reporting, Henkel remains respectful of the work of the firefighters and sensitive to the residents in the local community who have lost their homes. Ultimately, his coverage shows a vivid reality that a view from afar could not.

“I love covering wildfires because they are the full view of the fury of Mother Nature,” he said. “You don’t really realize how hot it is and how fast they move and how dangerous they can be until you’re right up next to them.”

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**Drones Capture a View of the Aftermath**

*By Michele Cohen Marill*

One iconic photograph tells the story of Hurricane Maria’s devastation of Puerto Rico: A lone bicyclist in a blue jacket makes his way down the ruins of a highway. Huge chunks of the road are missing, eaten away by a raging river that has now receded into a placid stream of mud. Uprooted trees and sheared-off branches lie scattered in heaps.

The photo was taken from above — by a drone. It was the only way to get the panoramic image.

Drone use in journalism is evolving rapidly, especially as a method for conveying the aftermath of extreme weather events. For example, the USA Today Network has about 60 drone pilots in more than 20 of its 109 print and digital newsrooms around the country and continues to train more in conjunction with other news organizations and Virginia Tech Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership in Blacksburg, Virginia.

“People want to see the effects of a natural disaster,” said Andrew Scott, director of photo and video news gathering and director of operations for unmanned aerial systems at the USA Today Network. “[Drones have] really elevated the visual storytelling skill set and made our pieces much more cinematic.”

Before he could deploy the first drones, Scott needed to consider issues of liability, ethics, privacy, insurance, training — and Federal Aviation Administration regulations. The FAA began certifying drone pilots in August 2016. Under FAA rules, drone pilots first take a written knowledge test. Drones must stay in the operator’s line of sight and cannot be flown at night. A waiver is required to fly a drone over people or in controlled air space. Drones cannot be flown over a wildfire because they may interfere with aerial firefighting efforts.

Still, drone journalism has made great progress since the day in 2011 when Matt Waite first saw “flying robots” at a digital mapping conference. They were expensive and couldn’t be used legally in the United States.

Undeterred, Waite, a journalism professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, created a Drone Journalism Lab and used grant money to test the capabilities of drone photography. He filmed a severe drought in Nebraska.

“We thought this would be a perfect demonstration story because we could do it in extremely rural places, at no risk to anyone in the air or on the ground, and it was extremely visual. It would open people’s eyes to the extent of the drought,” he said.

He posted images and video on the lab’s website and YouTube — and received a “cease and desist” order from the FAA.

Today, working under the new FAA rules, journalists use drones to reveal the impact of extreme weather events. Waite and his students continue to explore drones’ journalistic capabilities — from creating a “virtual reality” experience using multiple images of storm damage to mapping the loss of wetlands.

“A single photograph can change the way people think about a storm or an event,” Waite said.
Tracking Changing Regulatory Conditions

New EPA Policies Spur Greater Role for Environmental Journalists

By Dinah Eng

Covering the Trump administration’s deregulatory efforts at the Environmental Protection Agency has been a challenge, even for experienced journalists, with government officials prone to attacking members of the press when stories are not to the agency’s liking.

Hostility toward the mainstream press was a hallmark of former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, whose 16-month tenure was filled with financial indiscretions and ethical scandals. Media relations have thawed slightly under EPA Deputy Administrator Andrew Wheeler, previously a coal lobbyist, who took the reins as acting administrator when Pruitt resigned in July.

But the direction of EPA decisions, rolling back policies that aimed to curb climate change and limit environmental pollution, such as the Clean Power Plan, which would impose restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, has not changed.

The role of environmental journalists has grown ever more critical as most actions are far from final, with many state governments and environmental and public health groups filing lawsuits against EPA decisions.

“Whatever you think of President Trump’s deregulatory agenda and attitudes toward the press, it has ushered in a new golden era in journalism,” said Bobby Magill, president of the Society of Environmental Journalists and a reporter for Bloomberg Environment.

“The Trump administration is doing all it can to discredit and demean journalists just for doing their jobs. Despite the threats and abuse toward the press, incisive reporting has made a real impact. The challenge now is that we have to work even harder to keep up with the pace of news.”

Magill said that during Pruitt’s tenure, every major news outlet began covering the story of the administrator’s actions at the agency.

Eric Lipton, an investigative reporter at The New York Times, has written numerous articles about conflict of interest involving government officials and policy decisions at the EPA.

“It’s been very intense and interesting to deconstruct how former industry lawyers and lobbyists have gone into the Trump administration and just taken up the same agendas they had previously been paid to deliver on — changes in federal policy that have a real impact on the environment and public health,” Lipton said.

Lipton was one of the reporters targeted by the agency’s press office for ridicule during the Pruitt era as EPA officials attempted to counteract stories they did not like.

“I’ve been working in D.C. 14 years for The New York Times, through Republican and Democratic administrations, and the unprofessionalism of those in the Trump administration has been shocking to me,” he said.

“EPA staff would not allow background briefings to explain their reasoning behind policy changes. Their press shop mocked me, but it’s not personal. Public policy needs to be explained. It’s the back story that’s the most interesting part of it.”

Lipton has written about changes in the EPA’s enforcement policy, reporting on a drop in activity against polluters, as well as pieces on how various industries have influenced changes in the way their products are evaluated. He and his colleagues also traveled around the country to see how EPA-related changes are impacting people’s lives, often in areas that voted for President Trump.

Whether media transparency will change or not under Wheeler is still an open question, but all signs point to a continuation of the same policies, said Brady Dennis, national environmental reporter for the Washington Post.

“There has been a change in tone,” Dennis said. “Wheeler held an open press event the first day he was there. He’s posted his calendar meetings on a daily basis, which Pruitt never did, and has done some interviews. But he’s also clear in saying that he’s there to carry out President Trump’s policies.”

EPA officials did not respond to requests for comment.

With so many changes in play, reporters must navigate policies and their impact while keeping readers interested in issues that are unfolding over a long period of time, said Rebecca Leber, environmental reporter for Mother Jones. Getting information out of EPA officials isn’t easy, so journalists need to explore other avenues, she said.

Freedom of Information requests, for example, are a routine staple, and information can often be gleaned from the Federal Register, a U.S. government publication that covers proposals and final administrative regulations of federal agencies.
“You can read the Federal Register for the fine print on regulations and USA.gov for the contracts that EPA hands out,” Leber said. “You hear claims and talking points from the EPA about what they’re going to do, but the rules don’t always reflect what they claim.

“Covering the environment is also not just about regulatory policy. Stories about the impact of policy can be written by interviewing people in state and local agencies, and people living in a polluted area or hurricane response area. There’s on-the-ground reporting to be done outside of D.C.”

Ron Fonger, a reporter for MLive Media Group and the Flint Journal, became one of the leading voices covering the Flint water crisis from its inception in 2014, when residents began complaining about what they could see, smell and taste in the city’s water.

“It’s been a story that’s intensely local and state,” Fonger said. “The response from city and state officials, especially at the beginning, was that nothing was going on and people should not be concerned. It was all about denial and withholding of information.”

But when tests done by the EPA and Virginia Tech in 2015 showed dangerously high levels of lead in the water supplied to residents’ homes, media transparency began, he said.

“There’s a lot of different arms and legs to this story,” Fonger said. “The criminal cases are pending against current or former city and state employees, even though charges were issued more than a year ago. There are civil cases pending too. I suspect this will go on for several years.”

Similarly, rollbacks to EPA policies are likely to generate stories that will become increasingly complicated over time due to legal challenges.

Marianne Lavelle, a political reporter and writer for InsideClimate News, said the activity and sheer number of areas environmental reporters have to keep track of can be daunting.

“We expected the Trump administration to roll back the Clean Power Plan, but they’ve taken on a whole range of ideological battles we didn’t expect,” Lavelle said. “The move to limit the use of science that shows things are dangerous to human beings, the efforts to reduce the EPA’s budget, changing vehicle emission standards — it’s hard to decide what to write about.

“The press is playing a really important role in covering this administration. They’ve begun all these efforts, but nothing has been completed. Every move is in process or has been beaten back.”

For example, a federal appeals court in August ordered the EPA to revoke its approval for chlorpyrifos, a pesticide that studies show can harm the brains of children. The decision, which stemmed from a petition by two environmental groups to prevent the chemical

continued on page 32
EPA Under Fire: What It Means for Journalists

By Dinah Eng

Regulatory rollbacks proposed by the Trump administration seem to come out almost daily, posing challenges for environmental journalists who must analyze and interpret rule changes that are being fought at every turn.

According to Harvard University’s Environmental Law Program, which tracks environmental regulatory rollbacks announced by the Trump administration, 46 such decisions had been initiated by the end of August by various agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of Energy.

The EPA itself has always been affected by political winds, said Brady Dennis, national environmental reporter for the Washington Post. Under the Obama administration, for example, the agency took aggressive and controversial actions, especially regarding climate change, power plants and car emissions, that were fought by regulated industries that didn’t want to pay the price required to follow the rules, he said.

“The EPA has always been a lightning rod,” Dennis said. “It’s sort of a bouncing ball back and forth. Every administration knows it’s on the clock, whether they’re putting regulations in place or rolling things back.”

Dennis said there are things an administration can put into place without the legal system getting involved, such as changing the criteria for people who are chosen to advise the EPA. These actions, over time, can also change the direction of policy.

Jay Austin, senior attorney with the Environmental Law Institute, a nonpartisan research and education center that analyzes environmental law and its impact on societies worldwide, said the first moves made by the EPA under Trump were procedural actions designed to delay Obama-era policy.

“That led to the first wave of court challenges, and rulings have come back saying no, you have to put those rules into effect,” Austin said. “Going forward, the agency will get more deliberate in proposing new standards and regulations, and trench warfare will begin. The battle royale to come will determine the real scope of the rollbacks.”

For example, rolling back the Clean Power Plan, vehicle emission standards or renewable energy rules could go to the U.S. Supreme Court, a process that could take years.

Austin added that in addition to the EPA rollbacks, efforts are underway at the Department of the Interior to open up formerly protected public land in the West to mining and fracking, and offshore areas nationwide to exploration and drilling for oil.

He said that in the wake of the Trump administration pulling out of the Paris Agreement on climate change, states, local municipalities and corporations have continued the fight to cut greenhouse gas emissions to curb global warming.

At the same time, there are positive stories and trends for environmental journalists to cover. Michael P. Vandenbergh, director of the Climate Change Research Network and the David Daniels Allen Distinguished Chair of Law at Vanderbilt University, said government is not the only actor in fighting climate change.

Firms ranging from The Carlyle Group to retailers such as Walmart have developed sustainability programs to offset companywide carbon emissions, just as individuals have taken steps to reduce household carbon footprints, he said.

“Microsoft, Facebook and Google are demanding renewable power when they open new data centers,” said Vandenbergh, whose book “Beyond Politics: The Private Governance Response to Climate Change,” with co-author Jonathan M. Gilligan, traces the resistance to fighting climate change to concern about the role of government.

“Many of the most important environmental problems will not be solved by the political system because politics is so polarized now.”

Even when government policy steps back from reducing carbon emissions, Vandenbergh said, efforts at fighting climate change will not be stopped. For example, the Trump administration can create incentives for utilities to burn coal, but it can’t require the marketplace to demand electricity from coal-fired plants.

“Corporations, households, investors, civic and cultural organizations are all facing pressure from various sources for reducing their carbon footprint, even absent government pressure,” Vandenbergh said.

“Companies want to be seen as caring about the environment. For the first time since the second World War, U.S. household per capita energy use has declined due to more efficient appliances and LED lights. The marketplace is shifting dramatically.”

Michael P. VANDENBERGH
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SEJ 2018: Focus on Flint

Environmental Journalists Explore a Crisis in Real Time

By Karen Egolf

When it comes to studying the impact of journalism on an environmental disaster, Flint, Michigan, offers a prime example. That’s why the Society of Environmental Journalists chose the city as the site for its 28th annual national conference, running Oct. 3 to 7 at the Riverfront Conference Center in downtown Flint.

Between 500 and 800 participants are expected to attend the conference, themed “Fresh Water, Fresh Ideas,” for workshops, sessions, plenaries and tours on topics ranging from Flint’s water disaster to broader issues such as environmental justice, race and news coverage, and deregulation as well as sessions teaching new skills for journalists.

“We don’t go to typical conference cities because we go to places where there’s environmental data and [a] university that will host us,” said conference co-Chair Emilia Askari, a lecturer on environmental and public health journalism at the University of Michigan. She credits University of Michigan-Flint Chancellor Susan Borrego “for recognizing this as a great opportunity for her university and her city and the people … to continue to tell their story and to show the world the progress made and the work that still needs to be done to make sure people remember what happened in Flint and try to draw lessons from it so that we don’t repeat the same mistakes.”

The Flint water crisis started in 2014 when the city switched its water source to the Flint River. Improperly treated water caused lead from aging pipes to leach into the water supply, contaminating the water and exposing more than 100,000 residents to serious health problems. A federal state of emergency wasn’t declared until 2016, when residents were told to use only boiled or filtered water. While water quality was deemed to be at acceptable levels by early 2017, residents must continue to use bottled or filtered water until all lead pipes have been replaced, which is expected to be in 2020 at the earliest.

As a result, part of SEJ’s focus will be on the crisis and surrounding issues. “We have sessions on environmental justice where [local] voices are prominent,” Askari said. “We’re having a session looking at water as a human right and how that is playing out not only in Flint, but around the world. And we have a ‘Welcome to Flint’ opening session where we have a variety of people from Flint.”
An independent journalism workshop session on the opening day of the conference is focused on “Heart-to-Heart With Flint: Racism, Stereotypes and New Narratives.” Run by VISIONS, Inc., a top consulting firm specializing in race-related conversations, the workshop will bring together journalists and Flint community members “to explore mainstream media’s coverage of disenfranchised communities with people who weathered the national spotlight. This is a factor in news coverage. So that’s a first step in what SEJ hopes will be an ongoing conversation about race in [environmental] coverage,” Askari said.

“A very common and, I’m sure, justified criticism of journalists is that we often show up for a disaster and cover that thoroughly, and then we disappear,” she added. “We don’t spend enough time and resources covering the hard work that follows. It was a great stroke of good fortune that we were able to bring the SEJ conference to Flint just a few years after Flint has been international news.”

But the conference will offer many more sessions and opportunities to learn about other environmental and journalistic topics beyond Flint and its water crisis, with SEJ members proposing the panel topics and tours. “We’re talking about air and water and food and these very basic human needs and how they get to us in perhaps a way that’s contaminated or polluted,” said conference co-Chair Brian Bienkowski, editor of Environmental Health News and the Daily Climate. “You have people covering everything from biodiversity, things like endangered species, to people covering climate change, people who specifically cover water or air pollution or energy, energy extraction and energy production. It’s really a broad field, and I think our conference reflects that.”

For example, Oct. 4 will be devoted to nine tours on various environmental topics led by journalists and guest speakers. These include “The Last Good Country: Lush Forests and ‘Holy Waters,’” a look at the Pigeon River State Forest and Au Sable River and the efforts to renew these areas; “Canada’s Chemical Valley: From Toxic to Green,” a look at the effect of petrochemicals and refining in Ontario, including their impact on the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, and an emerging green chemical industry in the

continued on page 28
When the Society of Environmental Journalists honors top journalists with its 2018 Awards for Reporting on the Environment, it will also be introducing the Nina Mason Pulliam Award for Outstanding Environmental Reporting. This “best-of-the-best” award will honor one first-place winner from the 2018 categories with a $10,000 cash prize as well as up to $2,500 to cover SEJ conference registration, travel and hotel expenses for the winner or representatives of the winning team.

The Pulliam award, to be given at the awards luncheon on Oct. 6, is being given by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust in association with the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Society of Professional Journalists.

The Pulliam award, like SEJ’s awards program in general, focuses on the best of environmental journalism to encourage efforts in this area. “The program is designed to encourage and highlight the best in environmental journalism,” said Awards Committee co-Chair James Bruggers, news reporter for InsideClimate News.

The annual awards recognize the best journalism efforts in seven categories. To be considered, the work needed to run from March 1, 2017, through Feb. 28, 2018, with books on environmental topics being published in 2017.

SEJ received more than 400 entries for the awards, which were judged by panels of working journalists.

“The competition is really stiff,” Bruggers said. “It’s really encouraging seeing so much journalism being done on the environment when people need to be paying attention to these issues.”

First-place winners of this year’s Awards for Reporting on the Environment are:

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KEVIN CARMODY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING, LARGE MARKET

The first place award in this category went to the ProPublica series “Bombs in Our Backyard” by Abrahm Lustgarten, Lena Groeger, Ryann Grochowski Jones, Sisi Wei, Ashley Gilbertson, Ranjani Chakraborty and Lucas Waldron. In this series, journalists found 40,000 toxic sites in the U.S. that were created by the U.S. military. In addition to a series of stories, the team created an app that people can use to see if there are bombs in their own areas.

In awarding first place to the series, the judges said, “In a sweeping series, journalist Abrahm Lustgarten revealed the military as the biggest polluter not only in the United States, but surely on the planet. What made Lustgarten’s series so shocking was the fact that their actions were not entirely covered up — it just took the kind of diligence and shoe-leather reporting of a committed journalist to pull together the disparate pieces of a story scattered across the country.

This series — which revealed 40,000 toxic sites across the U.S., open burning of old munitions and explosives going off in rural communities — should change the shameful practice of a federal government allowing the military to harm the very citizens it is supposed to protect.”

KEVIN CARMODY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING, SMALL MARKET

The Record, Bergen County, New Jersey, and NorthJersey.com took first place in this category for its four-part multimedia series “Toxic Secrets: Pollution, Evasion and Fear in North Jersey” by James M. O’Neill, Scott Fallon, Chris Pedota, Daniel Sforza, Michael Pettigano and Susan Lupow. In a lengthy investigation, the journalists found that chemical company DuPont knew that cancer-causing solvents from as far back as World War II could vaporize into the homes of a New Jersey community. While the solvents were discovered 30 years ago, they continued to be a hazard despite public awareness over the last three decades.

The package drew immediate attention from Gov. Phil Murphy, who ordered an investigation into whether adequate cleanup steps had been taken. The site is now being considered as a federal Superfund site, and spurred awareness at the national level.

Said the judges: “The six-month reporting effort by the Record’s environmental team of James M. O’Neill and Scott Fallon along with photojournalist Chris Pedota was launched last year to get at a central question: How could a site of this magnitude across 140 acres remain hazardous 30 years after DuPont agreed to clean it up? It took until 2018 to get action on the DuPont site because DuPont feared that an aggressive cleanup would aid litigants in a lawsuit brought by 500 residents of the town of Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. Congratulations to the team and their organization for demonstrating patience and commitment to getting to the DuPont story.”

OUTSTANDING BEAT REPORTING, LARGE MARKET


In awarding Nuwer first prize, the judges said, “It’s not just that freelancer Rachel Nuwer gets her work published in iconic publications such as The New York Times and National Geographic; it’s that her balance between fearless reporting and graceful writing leaves a lasting impression. Judges agreed the prose, organization and overall presentation of her stories has an extra something that makes them highly readable, engaging and even a little mesmerizing. … The bar was set high by this year’s group of solid entries — and Nuwer blew right past it.”

OUTSTANDING BEAT REPORTING, SMALL MARKET

First place for Outstanding Beat Reporting in a small market went to Tony Bartelme of the Post and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, for his “Environmental Reporting in South Carolina’s Lowcountry.” His scope of environmental coverage is broad: Among the stories he’s written are “Running amuck: Harmful algae blooms fouling waters across the nation,” “Here’s your future: A tropical storm surge sends Charleston an urgent message” and “Power Failure: How utilities across the U.S. changed the rules to make big bets with your money.”

Said the judges: Tony Bartelme’s mastery of his environmental beat is evident, whether he’s writing about algae blooms, flooding continued on page 17
SEJ AWARDS FOR REPORTING ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Winners: SEJ 17th Annual Awards for Reporting on the Environment

KEVIN CARMODY AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING, LARGE MARKET
FIRST PLACE
“Bombs in Our Backyard” by Abrahm Lustgarten, Lena Groeger, Ryan Grochowski Jones, Sisi Wei, Ashley Gilbertson, Ranjani Chakraborty and Lucas Waldron for ProPublica

SECOND PLACE
“Cheating the Atmosphere” by Matt McGrath and Fiona Hill for BBC World Service Radio

THIRD PLACE
“Burned Investigation” by Raquel Rutledge, Rick Barrett and John Diedrich for Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

KEVIN CARMODY AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING, SMALL MARKET
FIRST PLACE
“Toxic Secrets: Pollution, Evasion and Fear in North Jersey” by James M. O’Neill, Scott Fallon, Chris Pedota, Daniel Sforza, Michael Pettigano and Susan Lupow for the Record (Bergen County, New Jersey) and NorthJersey.com

SECOND PLACE
“Power Struggle” by Brett Chase and Madison Hopkins for Better Government Association (www.bettergov.org), republished by several Illinois newspapers; condensed versions ran nationwide on AP wire

THIRD PLACE
“Oroville Dam Aftermath” by Ryan Sabalow and Dale Kasler for the Sacramento Bee

OUTSTANDING BEAT REPORTING, LARGE MARKET
FIRST PLACE
“Complexities of the Wildlife Trade” by Rachel Nuwer for The New York Times, National Geographic, BBC Future

SECOND PLACE
“Coverage of the U.S. EPA” by Sharon Lerner for The Intercept in partnership with The Investigative Fund

THIRD PLACE
“Scott Pruitt’s EPA” by Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis for the Washington Post

OUTSTANDING BEAT REPORTING, SMALL MARKET
FIRST PLACE
“Environmental Reporting in South Carolina’s Lowcountry” by Tony Bartelme for the Post and Courier

SECOND PLACE
“Environmental Issues in Rural Texas” by Christopher Collins for the Texas Observer

THIRD PLACE
“Environmental Stories in Rhode Island” by Alex Kuffner for the Providence Journal

OUTSTANDING EXPLANATORY REPORTING
FIRST PLACE
“Marshall Islands Project” by Kim Wall, Coleen Jose, Jan Hendrik Hinzel, Brittany Levine, Andrew Freedman and Alex Hazlett for Mashable

SECOND PLACE
“Power Struggle” by Scott Dance for the Baltimore Sun

THIRD PLACE
“Revolt: Climate and Energy Revolution in the Heartland” by Zach Toombs, Kate Grumke, Kevin Clancy and Andrew Lawler for Newsy

OUTSTANDING FEATURE STORY
FIRST PLACE
“The Lobster Prince” by Matt Hongoltz-Hetling, Michael G. Seamans, Patty Cox and Kevin Hayes for weather.com | The Weather Channel Digital

SECOND PLACE
“The Watson Files: A Climate for Conflict” by Laura Heaton for Foreign Policy

THIRD PLACE
“The Valve Turners” by Michelle Nijhuis for The New York Times Magazine

RACHEL CARSON ENVIRONMENT BOOK AWARD
FIRST PLACE
“White Wash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer and the Corruption of Science” by Carey Gillam; published by Island Press

SECOND PLACE
“The Death and Life of the Great Lakes” by Dan Egan; published by W. W. Norton & Co.

THIRD PLACE
or questionable power projects. A blockbuster piece on the aforementioned algae blooms engages the reader from start to finish as it explains the growing, toxic menace that is scum. He is also adept at bringing national scope to local issues. … Tony's skill is evident as he dives deep time and again in order to deliver deftly crafted, enterprising features on serious topics.”

OUTSTANDING EXPLANATORY REPORTING

“Marshall Islands Project,” a multimedia project looking at the legacy of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands amid the advancement of climate change, took first place for Outstanding Explanatory Reporting. The entry was reported and produced by Kim Wall, Coleen Jose, Jan Hendrik Hinzel, Brittany Levine, Andrew Freedman and Alex Hazlett for Mashable.

In honoring the piece, the judges said, “Of all the strong entries in the Explanatory category this year … this multimedia project was emotionally provoking. It stood out for its gripping narrative and its effective interweaving of the largely forgotten legacy of nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands with the advancing threat of climate change to the same remote region. The complicated issues of nuclear contamination, islander displacement and economic disruption are not easy to forget.”

OUTSTANDING FEATURE STORY

The 2018 Outstanding Feature Story was “The Lobster Prince” by Matt Hongoltz-Hetling, Michael G. Seamans, Patty Cox and Kevin Hayes for weather.com and The Weather Channel Digital. The piece looks at the effects of climate change through the eyes of a child who wants to follow in his father’s footsteps to become a lobster fisherman.

Said the judges: “Adults talk about how climate change will affect the next generation. This story talks to that generation: Myron Wotton, who is 11 and wants to be a lobster fisherman like his father. In a time when children are not often interviewed, this piece puts a well-defined human face on the overarching issue that will shape the planet for decades. As we learn about Myron’s life and hopes, we also learn how the ocean temperature changes creating windfall catches for his father now also put Myron’s desired future in doubt. Days after reading it, this is a story that stays with you.”

RACHEL CARSON ENVIRONMENT BOOK AWARD


continued on page 30
Q&A: Meaghan Parker

SEJ’s New Executive Director Discusses the Future and the Power of Environmental Journalism

Vowing to continue SEJ’s mission to support its members while educating the public about environmental issues, Meaghan Parker became the new executive director of the Society of Environmental Journalists last month, filling a role that has been vacant since 2017.

Parker most recently was partnerships director and senior writer/editor for the Environmental Change and Security Program and the Global Sustainability and Resilience Program at the Woodrow Center, a nonpartisan policy forum in Washington, D.C., where she worked since 2003. She joined SEJ in 2005 and was elected to the Board of Directors to represent associate members in 2012.

“Parker stood out among the candidates because of her longtime experience with SEJ, bold vision for the organization, steadfast commitment to environmental journalism and sense of mission to broaden SEJ’s reach and pool of funders,” SEJ President Bobby Magill said in announcing Parker’s appointment. “There was a sense among the board that Parker’s enthusiasm for SEJ’s mission and understanding of the needs of environmental journalism and the funding landscape for nonprofit organizations made her just the person SEJ needs to lead us into the next decade.”

She takes over the role handled during the search by interim co-Executive Directors Beth Parke, a charter member of SEJ who was executive director from 1992 through 2016, when she assumed the duties of founding director in fiduciary and development areas, and Chris Bruggers, who resumes her position as SEJ associate director and director of awards.

On the eve of the Society of Environmental Journalists’ 28th annual conference, Parker talked to Karen Egolf of Crain’s NewsPro about her new role at SEJ and what she sees for the organization’s future. An edited version of that interview follows.

NewsPro: Why did you decide you wanted to become executive director of the organization? What are your plans as you get started?

Parker: I had been deeply engaged with SEJ for six years as a board member and I’ve been a member for 13 years, and it’s been a huge part of my life for that entire time. I hope to combine my experience in fundraising, my passion for the organization and my desire to drive us into the next 25 years of SEJ’s existence — its second quarter-century — given all of the many, many, many changes that have been occurring in the media landscape but also in nonprofits and, of course, in the discourse in this country.

In addition, a lot of students don’t always get to hear about us or get the opportunity to apply before their student term is up. One area we’ve identified on the board as something we want to prioritize is recruiting students, not only as members, but also as part of an investment in the future of the field. I’m finding ways to support students so that they know that they have the tools and the resources to make this a viable career.

NewsPro: You have been involved in environmental journalism and issues for quite a while. What changes have you seen in the coverage of the environment and within environmental journalism?

Parker: There’s a real glass-half-full way to approach this question, which is certainly seen in the overall changes that happened when the legacy media model became challenging to support. You saw the environment [coverage] get cut as newspapers tried to adjust and thin out their staff and cut costs.

That overall trend is still in place. But more recently, since the
last election, you've seen a number of these papers beef up their teams on environmental issues because they have become more of a part of the national discussion about the political situation. There's two sides to that — why is this only important when it's a political battle, and the environmental issues that affect all of us every day.

The most fundamental parts of our lives are about water, food, energy, land. These are things that are integral to every person's everyday existence. My personal feeling is that it should be a story no matter what's going on. But in reality, of course, what happens is when it becomes a political issue, you see a spike in coverage.

**NewsPro:** We're certainly seeing that at the national level.

**Parker:** But one of the trends ... is at local-level coverage where these things are very critical to people. People want to know what's going on with their water, where their energy is going to come from, what the air quality is — that's where some of the local papers that had a budget squeeze cut some of those positions. It makes it harder for citizens to get that really local information that they need about their environment.

So I'm hoping that starts to turn around. I think it's early stages yet, but I've seen some of the impacts of that. Flint, for example, is an incredible location for our conference. We're incredibly excited about going there, and one of the trends that I think that it exemplifies is ... the way that environmental stories can be overlooked initially or downplayed because they're not seen as important as some other leading news story but turn out to be incredibly important, especially for the people in that community.

**NewsPro:** Tell me more about Flint and how your conference will be focusing on that community.

**Parker:** We're going to have a session on the first day of the conference that's going to look at news coverage and racism and the intersection between that through a conversation with Flint activists and residents to attempt to learn from the people involved, their perspectives on the role of the news media and what kinds of issues and concerns that reporters need to consider when they're writing about similar situations to Flint, when they're writing about race and the environment.

Continuing to use the Flint example, you continued on page 32

**POWERING THE SUSTAINABLE ENERGY REVOLUTION IN RURAL AMERICA**

Driven by a focus on local communities, electric cooperatives are making sustainable energy possibilities a reality in rural America.

That’s why co-ops from Alaska to North Carolina established the first rural microgrids, why co-ops in Minnesota pioneered the first electric school bus program, and why co-ops in 42 states have accelerated community solar energy development faster than any other segment of the electric sector.
A Golden Era for Environmental Journalism

From Global Crises to Government Malfeasance: Reporters Delve Deeper to Make an Impact

By Bobby Magill

Journalists today find themselves at a strange, dizzying juncture in U.S. history: The press are subject to repeated attacks from the president of the United States and ongoing abuses by government officials who physically remove reporters from public events and declare that truth isn’t really “truth,” facts are fake and those engaged in environmental issues are “terrorists.”

Public trust in the press seems to be eroding as anti-press rhetoric escalates.

And yet, this is a golden era of environmental journalism as the work of the Society of Environmental Journalists members and other reporters is having an outsized impact on public understanding of the environmental challenges we face.

Local journalists and those at national news outlets such as The New York Times, CNN, MSNBC and NPR are vigilantly shining light on government malfeasance, corruption, inaction, negligence and mendacity while also informing the public about threats to their health, safety and livelihoods. They are holding the powerful accountable and are empowering the people to improve their lives to help find solutions to global crises such as climate change.

Maybe one of the most notable examples of journalism’s impact in this strange era is Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt’s resignation, the result, in part, of reporters relentlessly digging deep to expose levels of corruption never before seen at the EPA.

Perhaps the depth of the environmental journalism’s impact and the quality of the reporting being done in the Trump era is best illustrated by this year’s SEJ Awards winners.

I grew up in Charleston, S.C., so the reporting that hits home for me the most is the superb work of Charleston Post and Courier environment reporter Tony Bartelme, who won this year’s first-place SEJ award for outstanding beat reporting in a small market.

Charleston is a city that has long seen its fringes flood during the year’s highest tides...
and has endured the ravages of hurricanes, rising seas and saltwater inundation. It’s a city that until recently was barely able to utter the words “climate change” in connection to its ever-intensifying battle with the rising Atlantic Ocean. The tides have always risen, so it was easy to explain the floods away as something as normal and enduring as the summer cicadas buzzing in the Spanish moss-draped trees over patio barbecues serving Carolina sweet iced tea and mustard-based barbecue sauce.

Bartelme’s reporting showed that half of South Carolina’s 8,763-mile shoreline is quickly eroding as the Atlantic’s swelling accelerates. More than 1,400 structures are threatened.

His reporting told wary Charlestonians that Hurricane Rita, which sent four feet of sea water surging over the Charleston Battery walls, “was yet another wake-up call: Rising seas and other effects of a rapidly warming planet will force us to make hard and expensive decisions sooner than later.”

Other SEJ awards winners this year showed the value and impact of environmental reporting too.

The team at ProPublica that won SEJ’s Kevin Carmody Award for outstanding in-depth reporting in the large market category exposed the U.S. military as the biggest polluters in the United States.

The team at the Bergen Record that won the same award for the small-market category exposed DuPont’s knowledge that its cancer-causing solvents could poison New Jersey residents, prompting immediate action from state Gov. Phil Murphy.

Ryan Sabalow and Dale Kasler at the Sacramento Bee won an award for covering the Oroville Dam’s fractured spillway crisis, which forced the evacuation of 200,000 residents. They revealed that 93 dams across California were vulnerable.

Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis at the Washington Post won an award for their coverage of the EPA under the Trump administration, exposing the agency’s corruption under Pruitt. Their reporting showed that Pruitt ignored EPA scientists and pulled its agents off the pursuit of environmental crimes.

As climate change quickly shows itself to have the potential to become an existential threat to billions of people worldwide, and as local and national governments respond both with more ambitious emissions cuts and also regulatory rollbacks, the need for environmental journalism has never been more urgent than it is today.

SEJ members’ hard work and superb reporting show what incredible journalism is being done today and its broad impacts.

This amazing reporting goes far to inform the public of the environmental challenges they face, and its insights and impact serve as an antidote to the president’s accusations of “fake” news.

Let’s celebrate that.

Bobby Magill is president of the Society of Environmental Journalists and a reporter covering renewable energy and climate change for Bloomberg Environment in Washington, D.C. Previously, he covered climate and energy for Climate Central in New York and worked as an environment reporter for newspapers in Colorado and New Mexico. Bobby lives in Alexandria, Virginia, and can be found online at bobbymagill.com.
Beyond the ‘Granola Beat’

Environmental Journalists Face New Challenges as Coverage Broadens

By Mike Cavender

Whether it’s discovering lead-tainted drinking water that threatens thousands of residents or demanding answers from officials about polluted air, today’s environmental reporters have become an invaluable part of the journalistic landscape.

They’ve come a long way from being relegated to what some in the business used to call the “granola beat.”

But these days, it’s a beat that comes with an increasing set of challenges, according to Beth Parke, the founding executive director of the Society of Environmental Journalists, the 1,400-member Washington, D.C.-based professional association that represents environmental reporters, editors and broadcasters. (www.sej.org)

One of the biggest challenges is competition for the audience’s attention. With so many platforms and so much content available everywhere, Parke said, “their bandwidth is limited and their attention is often distracted.”

It’s a very broad beat — oftentimes creating a “firehose” syndrome for reporters who need to discern not only what’s important, but also how to best tell those stories to cut through the news clutter. But Parke is gratified that the “seriousness” of the beat has grown along with the science literacy of both environmental reporters and their audience.

Another challenge comes from Washington and the Trump administration. Former EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt’s ethical lapses received a lot of news coverage before he finally called it quits (likely with some help from the White House). But the national reporting of Pruitt’s problems too often masked his unrelenting efforts to remake the country’s environmental agenda into one that is far less regulatory and eliminates a lot of consumer protections.

However, environmentalists are warning that his successor, Acting Director Andrew Wheeler, is likely to carry on those efforts with equal vigor, but will be able to do it without the distractions of the Pruitt baggage.

Another problem facing reporters is difficulty in getting access. “There are still more troubling levels of government intervention,” according to Parke. She said it’s more difficult now to get government scientists to comment on and react to issues, due to restrictions placed on them by their agencies. “It’s the ‘gag order’ syndrome, and it’s not getting any better,” she lamented.

One of the significant growth areas in environmental reporting is climate science. Dr. Edward Maibach leads the project, Climate Matters in the Newsroom. The program provides research and resources to reporters about climate issues. (Disclosure: RTDNA is a media partner with Climate Matters.) The National Science Foundation-funded program is free and can be accessed at mediabrary.climatecentral.org/about-us.

“We’re seeing a huge increase in climate reporting by TV weathercasters … [it’s] increased by about 1,600 percent over the past five years,” Maibach said. But he said outside of the weather segment, news coverage rates remain low and are often focused on the politics of climate change. The recently launched Newsroom component is designed to help boost climate reporting among non-meteorologists.

“A growing majority of Americans understand that human-caused climate change is real,” Maibach said. “But most Americans see it as a distant threat — in space (not here), time (not yet) and species (not us). Research shows that people who understand that climate change is happening here (in their community) are much more likely to take actions that will help solve the problem.”

SEJ’s Parke said one of the keys to effective environmental reporting mirrors that of any other kind of journalism — the human element. “Getting people to want environmental news is an art,” she explained, “and good storytelling skills are so important to that.”

Diversity issues are also becoming more important. Reporters and editors need to ensure their stories reflect the community being served. Remember, too, that interest levels are, at least in part, geographic in nature. “Farming and agricultural concerns are big in the Midwest, while climate and weather impacts are important especially on the coasts,” Parke said.

When I asked her what advice she has for young reporters considering environmental reporting, Parke offered this: “Hone your basic journalism skills, of course, and get some extra training in science. But be passionate about the subject — be it energy, climate or anything else.”

One thing Parke is passionate about is the future of journalism reporting on the world around us. “The level of work I see from a lot of folks doing environmental reporting is tremendous, and so is their dedication,” she said. “Life-changing things can happen from working this beat so long as you have the motivation.”

It’s a beat that really can make a difference.

Mike Cavender is executive director emeritus of the Radio Television Digital News Association and a 40-year veteran of broadcast news management. He can be reached at mikec@rtdna.org
Best Practices

Academics Offer Advice to Add Impact to Climate Change Reporting

By Jill Goldsmith

Climate change is a tough beat, and it’s not getting easier. There’s the perpetual challenge of explaining to stressed and busy people why it matters. Plus, there’s a twist: a rancorous and growing cultural divide where global warming is more about politics than science.

That’s despite the four consecutive hottest years on record through 2017 and recent months dominated by hurricanes and tornadoes, floods, wildfires, drought and dramatic headlines. “In the line of fire: Losing the war against climate change” warned a cover story in The Economist. The New York Times called 2018 “The Year Global Warming Made Its Menace a Reality.”

To many, it seems counterintuitive that the United States, one of the world’s biggest polluters, is backing policies that will pollute more, not less, with support from many Republicans. With the politicization of climate change, the need for fair, factual and even in-depth environmental journalism is more important than ever. For journalists in this area, professors from around the country offer their suggestions on best practices for covering this increasingly critical and controversial area.

To start, one expert in science communications says environmental journalism should focus on how and why climate change has become a conservative calling card.

Scientists have been declaring climate change the issue of the moment since James Hansen testified before Congress in 1988, said Bruce Lewenstein, professor of science communication at Cornell University. He was referring to the director of NASA’s Institute for Space Studies who first told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee 30 years ago that the warming of the earth’s atmosphere was caused by carbon dioxide.

But “just providing information is rarely going to solve a problem” since “the issues for people on any side of the climate change discussion are linked to their social values,” Lewenstein said, adding that journalists are not covering “the emotional side [of climate change], the values side of it. Why it is that people find other issues more salient? Or why do they choose political positions that … work against their own long-term interests?”

“I don’t think we have gotten a lot of good reporting about why people’s politics and their science … are linked."

“There’s a lot that remains a big challenge,” said Maxwell Boycoff, director of the Center for Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Still, as in any other area of journalism, basic tenets apply, he said, such as “being very careful about your sources, having them be reliable, legitimate and relevant experts. Accurate and responsible reporting has never been more important.”

Reporting on Trump

CU Boulder’s International Collective on Environment, Culture and Politics (ICE CaPS), which monitors global reporting on

continued on page 30
ScienceWriters 2018 Tackles Washington

More than 800 to Gather for Professional Development, Networking Opportunities

By Karen Egolf

Billed as a meeting for science writers by science writers, the ScienceWriters 2018 conference will run Oct. 12 to 16 at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. More than 800 participants are expected to attend the conference, a joint effort by the National Association of Science Writers, the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing and George Washington University and its hosting partners.

ScienceWriters 2018 will offer a wide range of panels, lectures, tours, workshops and other events to help science writers expand their knowledge and skills as well as network with others in their field.

“People these days are wearing multiple hats, they’re changing hats a lot, so we want to make sure that we offer something that will appeal to people who are at different points in their career — early, mid, late — and who are doing different things, whether they’re writing for institutions or they’re out doing editing or freelancing,” said NASW Executive Director and meeting organizer Tinsley Davis, pointing to the event’s four main elements: professional development, scientific briefings, lab tours and field trips.

“Then throughout it all, the most important thing that people consistently say they want are networking opportunities, because they really come to see each other in person and meet new people,” Davis added.

NASW is responsible for the professional development workshops and the annual awards event. The content for the workshops is proposed by the group’s members, who volunteer to organize the sessions. The content is selected by an all-volunteer program committee to ensure a wide range of diverse topics.

For the conference as a whole, sessions include everything from practical skills such as “Getting Real: Science Writing in AR and VR,” “Coping Strategies for the Stressed-Out Science Writer” and “Apocalypse How? The Challenge of Writing Freshly About Huge Intractable Problems” to scientific topics, including “Science + Science Writing: The Wild West of Stem Cell Therapy” and “Wounds, Plants and Poisons: Zooming in on Cellular Processes to Solve Problems on the Farm and Battlefield.” Political and social issues are also on the agenda, with looks at “In the Trump Era, Whose Job Is It to Build Public Trust in Science?” and “Troubled Intersections: Police Violence, Gentrification and HIV/AIDS Prevention.”

Tours and workshops will take advantage of George Washington University’s facilities, including looks at the Wilbur V. Harlan Greenhouse and the GW Nanofabrication and Imaging Center, with workshops on the Butterfly CRISPR technique. Field trips will be offered on the final day of the event, with topics ranging from “Beyond Biotech” and “Quantum Computing” to “Just Because We Can, Should We?” and “Virtual and Augmented Reality.”

The goal, said Davis, is to give attendees a little bit of everything while keeping in mind that science reporting is always critical. “Science writing is important right now for the same reasons that it’s always been important,” she said. “No matter how politics change, no matter how society changes, science is fundamental, and writing about it will continue to be important.

“We have people who come to the field from journalism and they just think science is pretty cool,” Davis said. “Another portion of our members come to it because they’re scientists and they’ve decided that writing about science speaks to them more than actually doing the science.”

At the end of the day, Davis said, the aim is to give science writers a place to learn, network and actually talk about their passions.

“Our goals for the conference are to make sure that people start conversations and continue conversations because there are so few opportunities these days, especially if you’re freelancing or you’re in a field like science writing … if you are fortunate enough to be at an institution or at a publication, you might be the only person covering science,” she said. “So you come and find your tribe and continue the conversation that you had last year or start a lot of new conversations so that when you go home and you’re behind your screen again … you have that touchstone.”
Scientific Explorations

Networks Offer Viewers an In-depth Look at the Natural World

By Marc Berman

With immediate weather and climate stories dominating the news, deeper explorations of science can often get lost in TV coverage. But sometimes natural events bring the environment and science into sharp focus in a positive way and spur people to want to learn more. Take the 2017 Great American Eclipse, for example.

“This was a moment when basically the whole country could experience science together,” said Marc Etkind, general manager of the Science Channel. “You could go outside, you could see it, you could feel it, and I do think it brought the country together and united everyone in a positive science moment.”

“When you think of all the people that watched it at some point, it was more people than who saw the Super Bowl,” he added.

According to Nielsen, an estimated 215 million U.S. adults — 88 percent of the adult population — watched the Aug. 21, 2017, total solar eclipse in some fashion. That compares to the record 114.4 million viewers who tuned in for the most-watched Super Bowl in 2015.

The eclipse, and the coverage that accompanied it, can inspire people to look for deeper stories to find out more about the planet and space, the environment and scientific discoveries. “For a long time people talked about the future, but it was always about 20 years away,” Etkind said. “Now it feels like the future is here. People are experiencing it, they want to know more about it, and they want to live it.”

Longer-form content is critical for this kind of information. “If we do our job right we are creating bold new ways for the viewers to see the world and our place in it,” said Geoff Daniels, executive vice president and general manager, Nat Geo WILD & Kids. “When we do a show at National Geographic, it’s about inspiring, and it’s about enlightening and entertaining. But it is also about a way to give people a better sense of their place in the world.

“Our programming, and this category, is about giving hope and creating a sense of community around that,” he added. “And I think that’s intrinsically what these audiences take away.”

Empowering the Viewer

Unlike much news coverage, documentaries and series can have an inspirational effect on viewers, TV executives say, encouraging them to learn more and connect with others.

“There are just so many more discoveries that are being made now, and because of some of the technological and scientific advancements, the world is increasingly impacted as a result,” said Bill Gardner, vice president of programming & development at PBS. “Whether it is the latest genetic research or the new space race or archeological discoveries, there is a more direct impact these days.”

Gardner pointed to environmental- and natural history-themed content as engaging in something that is truly positive and gives people a connection with each other.

“The technology of the filmmaking … allows for some really compelling and beautiful stories and immersive experiences in these spaces,” he said. “The ability to really get into these things is something we see in these genres.”

Upcoming in the Category

Citing three consecutive years of ratings’ growth at Science Channel, Etkind is particularly excited about the upcoming “MythBusters Jr.” The 10-episode series, hosted and executive produced by Adam Savage, will give six of the nation’s most talented kids a chance to tackle myths similar to those seen in “MythBusters,” with topics such as driving, explosions, chemistry, physics and popular culture. It debuts this month.

*MYTHBUSTERS JR.* PHOTO: SCIENCE CHANNEL

continued on page 26
Also debuting on Science Channel in October is “Above and Beyond: NASA’s Journey to Tomorrow,” a celebration of the 60th anniversary of NASA from documentary producer Rory Kennedy.

“Science is mind-blowing, and we are glad we can share these moments with our viewers,” Etkind said.

Debuting on PBS this fall on “Nature” is a three-part miniseries called “Supercats,” narrated by Oscar winner F. Murray Abraham. The program uncovers the secret lives of big cats and introduces behaviors captured on film for the first time.

Also coming up on PBS is “The Amazing Human Body,” which explains how the human body works via new scientific discoveries.

And in December, “NOVA” will feature the story of Apollo 8, with a focus on the moon landing and Apollo missions over the next year.

“Within our natural history and science spaces, we have a whole lineup of programs,” Gardner said. “We really want to have more of an identity within our content and within understanding of the role that humans play in the world around us through positive stories that illustrate that.”

Daniels is particularly excited about Nat Geo’s upcoming six-hour limited series “Hostile Planet,” which he describes as “the triumph of life in the most extreme environments on earth.”

“Everyone is seeing how quickly the planet is changing right now, which makes this story a celebration of how life can evolve and adapt and ultimately overcome,” he said.

“Hostile Planet” debuts in spring 2019.

Also of note at Nat Geo are the second seasons of “One Strange Rock,” which explores the fragility and wonder of planet Earth, and “Mars,” a look at the red planet from producers Ron Howard and Brian Grazer, which begins Nov. 12.

Ultimately these shows have one common denominator — inspiring a global community to see not just how miraculous, fragile and interconnected life on earth is, but how important protecting and promoting its diversity is to the health of the planet and our future,” Daniels said. “We are excited about what lies ahead.”
A New View of Journalism
VR and AR Add a Deeper Dimension to Environmental Storytelling

By Debra Kaufman

Imagine diving under the Antarctic sea ice to follow seals, explore ice caves and observe the sea life. The New York Times’ Sunday subscribers could do just that, with a series of four virtual reality films that added an immersive dimension to an in-depth report on the continent’s melting ice.

Graham Roberts, co-director of NYTVR, the newspaper’s immersive platforms storytelling, said that such VR experiences create a powerful experience of “presence.” For that reason, VR — and its cousin AR, or augmented reality — are promising new tools for telling environmental stories, and early practitioners have done just that with VR experiences that take viewers from the Amazon rainforest to the California wildfires.

“These technologies are especially adept at giving a sense and understanding of place,” said Roberts, who directed the Antarctic project. “This can immerse the user in an environment story and perhaps give a stronger connection to that environment than other media types.”

To experience virtual reality, the user dons a headset or goggles and is completely immersed in another world; with AR, with a headset or smartphone, the user sees computer-generated images overlaid on the real world.


“We were able to bring this new medium to the masses and introduce our audiences to it,” said Marcella Hopkins, the Times deputy video editor and co-director of virtual reality who headed up the Daily 360, publishing a 360-degree video every day for 14 months.

“We learned that stories where the place is almost a character are really great to do in VR/360 because we can bring the audience to that place. These stories are really good for access to places, people or events that aren’t very accessible to the public, such as the Antarctica series.

“We also learned that immersive media provide a sense of intimacy and almost a visceral experience for the audience,” she added. “The audience often comes away with feelings or understandings that are difficult to convey in words and images alone.”

Among its immersive videos, Daily 360 touched on many stories with environmental elements, including “Dark Island: Rebuilding Puerto Rico’s Grid,” “Uncertain Future for West’s Wild Horses” and “Basking in Butterflies.”

Hopkins and Roberts also learned the hurdles in producing VR/360 video content. For the Antarctica VR pieces, Roberts said, the cold, remote location was inhospitable, often crashing cameras, and VR’s rich media quickly filled up 16 terabytes of storage.

Plus, Hopkins said, the medium itself presents a learning curve, since VR/360 lets the viewer look anywhere, at any time. “The hardest part is learning the storytelling part of it,” she said. “But if you already have the storytelling skills, learning this technology and experimenting with new ways to tell stories is totally accessible.”

In 2015 and 2016, Hopkins created and presented a VR 101 curriculum to teach the basics of immersive storytelling and technology at places such as National Public Radio and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. But she believes journalists, even independents and those from smaller media outlets, can do it on their own. “The tech part isn’t as hard of it seems,” she said. “And the barrier to entry is pretty low. For a few hundred dollars, someone interested can buy a camera and editing software and start experimenting with 360 video.”

In 2017, the Times introduced augmented reality continued on page 28
tool. “That’s a shift in production tools,” said Roberts, who noted that Apple’s debut of ARKit for AR creation was a breakthrough moment. “Now we’re talking about real-time graphics and game engines and a new set of skills.”

The Times’ first AR feature was for the Winter Olympics in Sochi. More recently, the team produced eight pieces about the devastating wildfires in Redding, California. “We sent a reporter and a photographer who took hundreds of photos that could be reconstructed into a 360 representation,” Roberts said. “The user can investigate in real time the true scale of the destruction and see the extent of the damage.”

Despite the Times’ commitment to VR/AR, not many other media outlets have followed its lead. Stanford University Communications Professor Jeremy Bailenson, who is also founding director of the Virtual Human Interaction Lab, thinks he knows why. “The news industry had early excitement, but has paused on this idea of VR news directly to the consumer,” he said. “The Google Cardboard idea was genius, but it didn’t stick.”

He encourages news outlets to partner with museums or other groups to create a location-based experience, such as Stanford’s VR project on ocean acidification, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and drew a line of attendees to experience it. “Journalists need to get creative as to where you’ll reach consumers,” he said.

Hopkins and Roberts, however, say the Times’ work in immersive media has just begun. “At The New York Times, which is 165 years old, we take the long view on journalism,” Hopkins said. “We believe that immersive platforms are going to be a part of how we convey information in the future, and these early iterations of immersive technologies are part of a journey and an evolution.”

SEJ Overview

area; and “Sail the Saginaw River and Saginaw Bay,” studying the toxic legacy of Michigan’s 100-year manufacturing history and how it still affects one of the largest freshwater wetlands systems in the world.

“The tours are] a chance for journalists to spend a day out of the office in the field with sources being put in front of you all day,” Bienkowski said.

The rest of the conference will be largely devoted to sessions covering various environmental-related issues and how-to learning opportunities for journalists in addition to an awards luncheon honoring the winners of the 2018 Annual Awards for Reporting on the Environment, including the announcement of the first winner of the Nina Mason Pulliam Award of $10,000, and an opportunity to pitch book editors on reporters’ ideas for longer-form topics.

Still, Flint and the lessons it offers will be a focal point for teaching journalists more about broader environmental issues as well as how to better cover a crisis and the people it affects in the long term.

“We’ve really made an effort to incorporate the Flint community, more so than at any other conference,” Bienkowski said. “We’re opening up to the Flint community because there was so much outrage … over how some of the water crisis was portrayed in the media and maybe it wasn’t done in a way that they felt was right and timely. [It’s important to] have this be a model for SEJ moving forward, to integrate the community into the conference.

“Flint really put environmental justice back on the map and was the monster story last year,” he added. “I also think it’s a real good opportunity for community journalism, engagement journalism — it’s not this one-way conversation where journalists are writing stories and throwing them into a newspaper, but rather trying to incorporate real people, real stories and create more of a dialog in the news, and this is a good place to showcase that.”

Askari agreed: “There are many cities around the country and around the world that have lead pipes, that have lead contamination issues. So it’s applicable around the country and around the world. There’s some interesting work being done there with future approaches to infrastructure that we should take a close look at. … They’re the unheard voices, the people speaking who did not get enough coverage and enough attention.”

They both emphasize that the purpose of the SEJ conference is to educate journalists and enhance their skills to help them as they navigate environmental coverage. “Our No. 1 goal is to have journalists walk away from the conference feeling like they’ve learned something and that it was a worthwhile trip and will help them do their job right, right away when they get home — whether that’s going home with more sources, with more information,” Bienkowski said. “The No. 1 goal is to make sure reporters go home with tools to do their jobs better.”
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that information and do something about it,” he said. “So what should people do? Buy a Prius? Turn their air conditioner down?”

“I talk about climate change but I don’t lead with it,” he said.  Handling storm water or preparing for an increase in precipitation funded human health studies in safety and health regulation and administration moving to curb Environmental Protection Agency-Danny Hakim and Eric Lipton’s New York Times piece about the E&E News’ Adam Aton on Trump using tweets to politicize natural disasters.

“Visually portraying climate change, sparking a debate in the journalism community on when and how to make that connection.

Boycoff said a hurricane he experienced in the late 1990s shook him to the core. “Heat waves, droughts and wildfires can raise attention in a way that scientific reports and political activities definitely won’t,” he said. “Every publication has to make the decision on where they fall and how they want to address this.”

Recent environmental stories he liked were unusual takes: Danny Hakim and Eric Lipton’s New York Times piece about the administration moving to curb Environmental Protection Agency-funded human health studies in safety and health regulation and E&E News’ Adam Aton on Trump using tweets to politicize natural disasters.

Bret Shaw, associate professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said video coverage is particularly effective. “Visually portraying climate change — floods, fire, anywhere you can see the impact of change without a lot of nuance.”

But he also warned against scaring the audience. Shaw’s specialty is strategic communications, not journalism, and in his work he said fear needs to come with an “efficacy response” or a chance to act: “When you raise fear, [someone] can tune it out, or actively integrate that information and do something about it,” he said. “So what should people do? Buy a Prius? Turn their air conditioner down?”

Shaw focuses on changing behavior around specific issues such as handling storm water or preparing for an increase in precipitation events. “I talk about climate change but I don’t lead with it,” he said.

“We know that facts are not the determining factor. Your cultural identification is. You believe your family more than your local newspaper, and your local newspaper more than the national media.” And you tend to stick with your party.

According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, 88 percent of liberal Democrats are concerned about global warming versus only 30 percent of conservative Republicans. That narrowed to 76 percent to 58 percent when comparing moderate-to-conservative Democrats and liberal-to-moderate Republicans.

A study by Yale Law School Professor Dan Kahan found that to a surprising degree, people assessed new information, including data on climate change, based less on reason than on “the impact that crediting the new information would have on [their] standing within a group whose members share identity-defining political commitments.”

On a national policy level, that commitment is clear. President Trump has shut down Obama’s Clean Power Plan and reversed a ban on new federal coal leases. He’s expedited pipeline construction and moved to increase drilling — including reversing the ban on offshore oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. His administration is rewriting fuel efficiency standards for new vehicles.

Lewenstein said it’s easy to dismiss the current administration for acting in ways that many believe irresponsible. “But we as a society have accepted [it as] the legitimate administration of the country.” The goal is “to understand how [people] chose what evidence to believe and not to believe.”

SEJ Awards continued from page 17

Gilliam writes about the herbicide’s main ingredient glyphosate, what some considered to be the mishandling of the potential carcinogen, and the behind-the-scenes politics, using the Freedom of Information Act to dig deeper into the science and the issues raised by this controversial chemical.

In awarding Gillam first place, the judges said, “This timely and well-organized examination of one of the world’s most compelling controversies over science and agriculture is well-researched and beautifully written and is accessible to readers who don’t have extensive science backgrounds. In an era of continuing evidence of censored science, she examines jiggered studies, industry pressure on sympathetic government regulators and the international fallout of action and inaction involving one of the most widely used chemicals in modern agriculture.”

Best Practices continued from page 23

climate change, cited an outside report that a “disproportionate” amount of U.S. climate journalism in 2017 was focused on the Trump administration, meaning that other climate stories got less coverage than they warranted.

“There are two ways to look at it,” Boycoff said. “That he [Trump] has been taking up the news hole and blotting out stories that could have been covered. [Or] he actually amplified climate awareness though his actions.”

Another report cited by ICE CaPS said the media last year consistently failed to explain how extreme weather events were linked to climate change, sparking a debate in the journalism community on when and how to make that connection.

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Shaw focuses on changing behavior around specific issues such as handling storm water or preparing for an increase in precipitation events. “I talk about climate change but I don’t lead with it,” he said.

“I’ll say, ‘You want to keep your lake pristine?’

“Being aware of human psychology is very important because so many science communicators think that the more information is out there, the more awareness people will have. But the more people hear about climate change, the more likely they are to think it’s exaggerated.”

Lewenstein urged journalists to consider “how people who are not news junkies consume information.”

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Meaghan Parker continued from page 19

can see that breaking the story is what forced, eventually, the actions to protect the water and to alleviate the harm that it was doing. There are really clear examples throughout the years of stories that have exposed contamination, exposed corruption, that make a very fundamental difference to people's lives. Being able to [do this kind of reporting] is a particular skill, and it's one that I learned a lot about from SEJ members. What was really important in my career was being able to boil down very complex issues and complex interactions between scientific processes and explain that to somebody who probably hasn't studied science since they got out of high school. That is critical to our public understanding of the challenges we face and the decisions that you have to make. So even the stories that don't have that big reveal like Flint, even the day-to-day stories that simply help people understand their world better, do have an impact. It just doesn't make the biggest splash in the headlines.

NewsPro: A lot of weather stories today talk about climate science. But there's a segment of the population that still denies climate change. It must be frustrating that science isn't necessarily the be-all and end-all for a lot of people.

Parker: Science, like a lot of things, is a process, and scientists know this very well. One study doesn't necessarily prove everything. It starts with the accumulation of results and the reiteration of them and the replication of them and the refuting of them as all part of that process. But that is harder to convey in the very short formats and time frames that people have to understand things. When you see advice or scientific results that seem to change 180 degrees from one to the other, that can contribute to undermining people's confidence.

At some point, we have a collective responsibility as a country just to think about … improving people's understanding of these issues. It's not just one sector's responsibility because this just wouldn't solve the whole problem. The media has a really, really critical role to play. Certainly SEJ itself has a mission to improve journalism in these areas in order to improve the public understanding. So that's definitely where we see a great need that we can fulfill.

NewsPro: How do you work with media to increase and improve public understanding at a time of journalistic cutbacks?

Parker: SEJ grants and funds for environmental journalism take many different specific forms. One of the projects that has been very successful recently has been helping to support beat reporting at key news outlets. For example, with support from SEJ, there are reporters at the New Orleans Times-Picayune who are covering climate change there.

Through SEJ we can directly affect the amount and scope of coverage, but indirectly provide support for our members. We're helping them connect with others who can mentor them through our mentor program or to be mentors, connecting with others who have sources or suggestions or advice for anything.

I think one of the most important reasons why I have been a part of SEJ for so long, and I know that I'm not alone in this, is the community. It's a community that's very supportive, very dedicated to the craft and to helping other members learn from each other.

NewsPro: So, going forward, what are your priorities for SEJ?

Parker: One of the major concerns for SEJ, like it is for all nonprofits, is the sustainability of funding. In the same way that media companies have had challenges with their models, so have media nonprofits. The recent discourse about the role of media in this country has highlighted the need to protect and support the role of the media. So I am sure we will see greater investments by funders who are concerned about free expression, freedom of information, the fundamental role of media in a functioning democracy.

What I want to make sure [of] is that the environmental journalists and environmental media aren’t left out of this focus because we may not always see the environment as a critical part of our democracy.

But we’re talking about the most fundamental needs of the people to have clean air, clean water, safe and nutritious food, energy and light. That’s critical to any functioning society. So one of my priorities will be to continue to secure the funding that supports SEJ and its members, but with a special focus on reaching out to funders and others who are concerned about the role of the media to remind them how important all the beats are, including environment and energy.

Regulatory Coverage continued from page 9

from being used on food, chastised the EPA for dragging its feet in banning the pesticide.

At the same time, Lavelle said, the importance of climate change can be seen across the country now in changing weather conditions. Drought in the West has fueled wildfires in California. Heavy, extended rains during Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Maria caused disasters in Texas and Puerto Rico. People are now dealing with tick infestations that cause Lyme disease in areas that were once free of those insects.

At the same time, Congress, currently controlled by the GOP, doesn’t accept human-driven climate change, she added.

“The mid-term elections will have a big impact on climate change from the state and local level to the federal level,” Lavelle said. “What we’ve been trying to do is bring these climate change stories home to people more so they can see that this impacts their lives. It’s an issue that deserves to be a priority in public policy, just like health care is.”
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Troubled Times

Why We Need to Support In-depth Journalism

By Tom Hundley

The good news is that Donald Trump has not been able to persuade anyone beyond his devoted base that the press is “the enemy of the people.” According to a Poynter poll published in August, a healthy 76 percent of Americans say they trust their local television news and 73 percent say the same about their local newspapers — a significant uptick since Poynter’s last survey in November 2017.

But the reality TV presidency has accelerated a disheartening trend across the American media landscape in which “the news” is increasingly becoming a form of entertainment or spectacle rather than a source of trusted information that connects citizens to the society in which we live.

This past summer provided ample opportunity to sample both the highs and the lows of American journalism. The hyperventilation over “Omarosa” is a prime example of the worst tendency, a cheesy book promotion gussied up as news story. From the taped snippets of her conversations with Trump and his chief of staff, John Kelly, we learned what exactly?

At the other end of the quality spectrum is the Aug. 5 issue of The New York Times Magazine, which was devoted to a single 30,000-word story by Nathaniel Rich that investigated the critical period in the 1980s when it might have been possible to halt the progress of climate change. It is a deeply disturbing story. It is also a fact-based, relentlessly researched and skillfully presented piece of journalism that has drawn wide comment, both pro and con.

The writer and critic Naomi Klein strongly disagrees with Rich’s conclusions as to who is to blame for the looming climate disaster, but she fully understands where Rich and the Times are coming from: “The novella-length piece represents the kind of media commitment that the climate crisis has long deserved but almost never received. We have all heard the various excuses for why the small matter of despoiling our only home just doesn’t cut it as an urgent news story,” Klein wrote in The Intercept.

“None of the excuses can mask the dereliction of duty. It has always been possible for major media outlets to decide, all on their own, that planetary destabilization is a huge news story, very likely the most consequential of our time. … which is why it was so exciting to see the Times throw the full force of its editorial machine behind Rich’s opus — teasing it with a promotional video, kicking it off with a live event at the Times Center, and accompanying educational materials.”

At the Pulitzer Center, we, too, were excited to see the Times throw the full force of its editorial machine into this project — and not just because we supported the project with a major grant. We also welcomed Klein’s disagreement with some of the story’s main arguments. It’s important to have that debate.

As a nonprofit journalism organization, our mission — in the words of Joseph Pulitzer III — is to “illuminate dark places and, with a deep sense of responsibility, interpret these troubled times.” For us, the dark places are the many unreported or under-reported stories around the globe. These include stories about the environment and dozens of other topics ranging from land rights in the developing world to nuclear security issues. We “illuminate” them by providing grants — more than 120 so far this year — to journalists and news outlets that take a serious interest in these topics but lack the funds to cover them properly.

Our only quibble with Klein’s otherwise thoughtful argument is her suggestion that news organizations have “always had the capacity to harness the skills of their reporters and photographers” to the climate story. In fact, news organizations, large and small, have not had this capacity for some time.

Reporting on climate tends to be time-consuming and expensive. Rich spent 18 months reporting his story, interviewing more than 100 people. Photographer George Steinmetz spent 84 days traveling to eight countries and Antarctica for the images that accompanied the story. Even for a news organization as large and well-staffed as the Times, that’s a heavy lift. For almost everyone else, it’s a financial impossibility.

That’s why for the last decade the Pulitzer Center has been raising funds (hard work) and giving grants to dozens of news organizations and individual journalists to cover issues related to climate. These range from an award-winning series on ocean acidification in the Seattle Times to climate journalist Dan Grossman’s growing roster of innovative projects on global warming for The New Yorker, Science magazine and other outlets.

In recent weeks the Pulitzer Center has helped important climate change stories reach not only The New York Times and its global audience, but also publications such as Vox, Undark and PRI’s The World. Several more projects are currently in the works.

These stories will not be as entertaining as the Omarosa soap opera, and they cost a lot more to produce. But the true difference is these stories actually matter.

Tom Hundley is a senior editor at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Before joining the Pulitzer Center, he was a newspaper journalist for 36 years, including nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent for the Chicago Tribune. During that time, he served as the paper’s bureau chief in Jerusalem, Warsaw, Rome and London.
Colorado simultaneously boasts and suffers from a population explosion in Denver and other cities. This purple state is fertile ground for both clashes and collaborations among parties vying for rights to land, water and air, whether to preserve it for wildlife and human recreation or to exploit it for energy extraction. And it is fertile ground for stories!

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*Conference Chair: Susan Moran*
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