

Columbia Foundation
Articles and Reports
September 2009

Arts and Culture

ASIAN ART MUSEUM

\$1,058,000 awarded since 1971, including a three-year \$150,000 grant in 2007 for *The Dragon's Gift: An Exhibition from Bhutan*

1. [The Wall Street Journal, April 16, 2009](#)

Fierce Imagery, Serene Tone

Review of *The Dragon's Gift*; the writer says, "Despite the fierceness of much of the imagery, the overriding tone that emerges is one of serenity."

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

\$200,000 awarded since 2004 for the *Living New Deal Project*

2. [SPARK \(KQED\) and The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, May 13, 2009](#)

Another New Deal May Offer Arts a Needed Boost

Explores the impact of the economic recession on artists and the possibility of New Deal-style support for them [links to video; features Gray Brechin, director of the *Living New Deal Project*]

COUNTERPULSE

\$50,000 awarded in 2008 for *Performing Diaspora*

3. [FOXNews.com, July 30, 2009](#)

Stimulus Bill Funds Go to Art Houses Showing 'Pervert' Revues, Underground Pornography

\$80 million in economic-stimulus funds were given to the NEA to support artists in difficult times.

CounterPULSE and Frameline received National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant awards.

Conservatives are not happy about this, citing performances involving nudity.

KRONOS QUARTET

\$50,000 awarded in 2008 for *Music Without Borders*

4. [The Guardian \(London\), May 22, 2009](#)

Kronos Quartet: Floodplain

Four-star review of the CD *Floodplain* [part of the *Music Without Borders* series, featuring music from Azerbaijan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, India, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Serbia, and Turkey;] the writer says "Kronos's selection of music from these regions is engaging, challenging, complex and rewarding."

5. [The Times \(London\), May 24, 2009](#)

Kronos Quartet: Floodplain

Four-star review of *Floodplain*; the writer says "In short, this is one of the albums of the year."

6. [musicOMH, June 2009](#)

Interview: Kronos Quartet

The Kronos Quartet pushes “the boundaries of a long-established instrumental medium” [interviews Kronos Quartet violinist David Harrington.]

7. [San Francisco Classical Voice, June 23, 2009](#)

Venturing Onto Kronos' Floodplain

Review of Floodplain [audio/video embedded in attachment;] the writer says, “This is music both timely and timeless, conceived and executed beautifully.”

ODC THEATER

\$275,000 awarded since 1979, including a two-year \$200,000 grant in FY 2009 for the renovation of the theater

8. [San Francisco Business Times, May 9, 2009](#)

ODC expanding Mission District theater

The renovation of ODC Theater will make the 36,000 square-foot campus the largest, state-of-the-art dance center in the region.

ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY (RSC)

A two-year \$100,000 grant awarded in 2007 from the Columbia Foundation Fund of the Capital Community Foundation for *The Grain Store*

9. [Financial Times \(London\), August 15, 2009](#)

A Ukrainian play in Stratford

The Grain Store will receive its world premiere in Stratford-upon-Avon, U.K. [interviews the playwright Natal'ia Vorozhbit.]

YOUNG VIC

\$50,000 awarded in 2008 from the Columbia Foundation Fund of the Capital Community Foundation for *Amazonia*

10. [The Telegraph \(London\), December 5, 2008](#)

Amazonia at the Young Vic - review

Two-star review of Amazonia; the writer says “Frankly, *Amazonia* is an often incomprehensible mess, with a disjointed and confusing story-line based on unfamiliar myths, characters you don't learn enough about to care for, and an acting style that seems based on the erroneous belief that if you shout loudly enough and rush dementedly around the stage then you are bound to be entertaining.”

11. [The Guardian \(London\), December 6, 2008](#)

Amazonia

One-star review of Amazonia; the writer says that it is “a production that will surely go down in the annals of theatrical history as one of the most misguided Christmas shows ever.”

Human Rights

MISSION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (MEDA)

\$100,000 awarded in 2009 for a capital campaign to purchase and renovate a property, to be called Plaza Adelante, at 2301 Mission Street in San Francisco. Plaza Adelante will be a tenant-owned community facility for MEDA and up to seven local organizations that provide essential services to immigrant communities and support for the development of financial independence of low-and moderate-income families in the Mission District.

12. [Mission Local, August 2, 2009](#)

Likable Landlords in the Mission?

Some landlords in the Mission District of San Francisco have not evicted their tenants for getting behind in rent payments, believing instead in a sense of community in difficult economic times [quotes Dairo Romero, a community organizer for MEDA.]

Electoral reform

CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL STUDIES (CGS)

\$50,000 awarded in 2005 to promote reform of state and local campaign finance laws to achieve public finance of political campaigns and to assist civic and governmental organizations in determining the best strategies for achieving public finance of campaigns with an emphasis on the clean election approach

13. [Los Angeles Times, April 20, 2009](#)

Derailing California's money train – Campaign contribution laws in California are far too lax.

California's campaign contribution laws are badly in need of reform, as \$225 million over the past eight years has been raised outside of the law's contribution limits [co-authored by Robert Stern, president of CGS and Molly Milligan, a CGS senior fellow.]

CHANGE CONGRESS

\$50,000 awarded in 2009 to end pay-to-play politics and corruption in the U.S. government by creating a grassroots online citizen movement to hold Congressional leaders accountable, and to promote public finance of Congressional campaigns

14. [The New York Times, April 28, 2009](#)

Activists Urge Top Democratic Groups to Ban Lobby, PAC Donations

A group of organizations led by Change Congress has set up a new website called Stop Fake Reform, urging Democrats to ban contributions from political action committees (PACs) and lobbyists.

15. [The Washington Post, April 28, 2009](#)

To Lure Obama, Fundraisers Briefly Ban Contributions

For just one day, Democratic fundraisers banned contributions from PACs and lobbyists. Change Congress released a letter signed by over 50 activists stating, "This isn't just hypocritical – it defies common sense that you'd think the public would believe this was a principled stand against special-interest influence. For 364 days a year, your rules would allow members of Congress to leave a hearing about regulating Wall Street and then walk straight to the DSCC [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee] and DCCC [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee] offices to 'dial for dollars' from Wall Street lobbyists who want more bailout money and less accountability to taxpayers."

16. [The Huffington Post, April 28, 2009](#)

Progressives Call Out Dems' "Hypocritical" Fundraising

The letter to Democratic fundraisers is signed by, among others Lawrence Lessig, co-founder of Change Congress and Nick Nyhart, president of Public Campaign.

17. [Politico, April 28, 2009](#)

Activists, bloggers rip DCCC, DSCC

Change Congress advocates public financing of congressional campaigns, but it cast a wider net with its letter to Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. Their letter, which also asks the congressional campaign committees to reject contributions from executives of bailed out companies and to support public financing of congressional elections, asserts that the committees' "'one day of reform' is absurd on its face and, if left standing, an embarrassment to your organizations."

18. [Blip.tv, August 15, 2009](#)

Lawrence Lessig

Presentations by Lawrence Lessig [co-founder of Change Congress] on a range of subjects, including culture, copyright, and money and politics [video link]

PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

\$400,000 awarded since 2002, including \$100,000 in 2009 to continue to provide national leadership to advance understanding and support for public finance of political campaigns through Public Campaign and the Fair Elections Coalition

19. [Reuters, May 14, 2009](#)

GOP Senators Leave Interior Post Empty But Fill Campaign Coffers With Big Oil Money

Republican senators, who have taken large campaign contributions from big oil, vote against cloture for the nomination of David Hayes for Deputy Interior Secretary [quotes David Donnelly, national campaigns director of Public Campaign; lists Senators votes and campaign contributions from big oil; Hayes was confirmed for the post the following week when the matter was brought before the Senate.]

20. [Roll Call, July 22, 2009](#)

It's Time to Implement 'Fair Elections'

Calls for Fair Elections campaign-finance reform [Op-ed supporting publicly financed elections by Arnold Hiatt and Alan Patricof, politically active business-community leaders]

Elimination of prejudice and discrimination based on sexual and gender diversity

CIVIL MARRIAGE COLLABORATIVE

\$800,000 awarded since 2004, including \$300,000 in 2008

21. [The New York Times, April 29, 2009](#)

New Hampshire Senate Passes Gay Marriage Bill

The New Hampshire Senate narrowly passes a bill 13-11, which would make the state the fifth in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage. Because the bill was amended before the vote, it moves back to the House (for what is largely seen as a procedural vote) before going to the desk of Governor Lynch [quotes Mo Baxley, executive director of New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition, a Civil Marriage Collaborative grantee.]

22. [Burlington Free Press, August 30, 2009](#)

Gay marriage pioneers look back

In Vermont in 1997, three same-sex couples tried unsuccessfully to get marriage licenses. The attempt set in motion a successful court case and then legislative efforts that have resulted in the legalization of same-sex marriage twelve years later in Vermont, and a realization of their efforts [features Vermont Freedom to Marry, a Civil Marriage Collaborative grantee.]

23. [The Boston Globe, June 4, 2009](#)

New Hampshire ties gay-marriage knot – Revised bill assures religious protections

On June 3, 2009, New Hampshire officially became the fifth state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage after the bill was signed into law by Gov. John Lynch. He said, “Today we’re standing up for the liberties of same-sex couples by making clear that they will receive the same rights, responsibilities, and respect under New Hampshire law [quotes Mo Baxley, executive director of New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition.]

24. [Associated Press, September 2, 2009](#)

In Vermont, same-sex couples rush to wed

On September 1, 2009, the same-sex marriage law went into effect in Vermont and same-sex couples began to marry. Beth Robinson, a founder of Vermont Freedom to Marry, married one of the couples. Vermont joined Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Iowa as the only states that currently allow same-sex marriage. New Hampshire’s law goes into effect on January 1, 2010.

EQUALITY CALIFORNIA

\$100,000 awarded in 2006 for the *California Equality Project*

25. [The Sacramento Bee, April 21, 2009](#)

California's gay marriage trailblazers look east for signs of progress

Same-sex marriage supporters are motivated by victories in New Hampshire, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Vermont [quotes Marc Solomon, marriage director for Equality California.]

26. [San Francisco Chronicle, May 27, 2009](#)

Prop. 8 stands; more ballot battles ahead

The California Supreme Court upholds Prop. 8 banning same-sex marriage in the state, judging that it is the right of the people to amend the Constitution through the voter-approved proposition. However, 18,000 same-sex couples married before November 4, 2008, remain legally wed. Prop. 8 will be challenged in federal court, even though established gay-rights groups are concerned that raising an issue that could bring the marriage dispute before the conservative-led U.S. Supreme Court is a bad idea. Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California, believes the challenge should be back at the ballot box.

27. [San Francisco Chronicle, May 27, 2009](#)

Next same-sex battle will begin in Fresno

The battle over same-sex marriage in California will be fought at the ballot box in November 2010. Same-sex marriage supporters will focus on conservative areas such as Fresno. A pro-same-sex-marriage march has been planned to start in Selma, Fresno County. Equality California has released TV ads featuring same-sex couples in an effort to educate California voters.

28. [San Francisco Chronicle, June 18, 2009](#)

Gay activists not impressed with Obama's move

Obama signed a memorandum granting just a smattering of benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees, at variance with his campaign promise to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act, which denies federal benefits to same-sex partners [quotes Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California.]

29. [Los Angeles Times, August 13, 2009](#)

Group that spearheaded effort against Prop. 8 postpones push for amendment until 2012

Equality California revises its stance, believing that postponing a challenge to Prop. 8 until the presidential election year in 2012 (rather than in November 2010) will aid fundraising efforts [quotes Marc Solomon, marriage director for Equality California.]

FREEDOM TO MARRY

\$575,000 awarded since 2002, including \$75,000 in 2009

30. [New York Daily News, April 21, 2009](#)

Marriage is more perfect union: In gay marriage debate, separate but equal won't cut it

Argues that civil unions are not a legitimate substitute for same-sex marriage [Op-ed quotes Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry]

31. [Forbes, April 29, 2009](#)

Marriage Equality is Inevitable

Marriage equality will happen in the U.S. It is only a matter of time. Those that oppose it will be on the wrong side of history [Op-ed features Evan Wolfson.]

32. [Outcome, May 6, 2009](#)

Same-Sex Marriage The Law in Maine; Governor Signs Bill

John Baldacci signs a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in the state, making it the fifth state [temporarily] to do so [quotes Evan Wolfson; the law was due to take effect in September 2009, but has been put on hold until a November 3, 2009, ballot measure when voters will consider whether to repeal the law.]

GROUNDSPARK (formerly WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL MEDIA)

\$423,000 awarded since 1992 for the *Respect for All Series*, including \$100,000 in 2008 for *Straightlaced*

33. [San Francisco Chronicle, April 20, 2009](#)

Chasnoff's latest documentary takes on gender

The aim of *Straightlaced* is to increase awareness of gay bullying in schools and to fight homophobia [quotes filmmaker Debra Chasnoff, the executive director of Groundspark.]

NATIONAL CENTER FOR LESBIAN RIGHTS (NCLR)

\$210,000 awarded since 2002, including \$150,000 in 2009

34. [San Francisco Chronicle, May 23, 2009](#)

State Supreme Court to rule Tuesday on Prop. 8

In the run-up to the California Supreme Court ruling on Prop. 8 in May 2009, Kate Kendall, executive director of NCLR says, "If we must reverse Prop. 8 at the ballot, we will do so. We will win – if not on Tuesday, then one day soon."

35. [San Francisco Chronicle, June 20, 2009](#)

San Francisco asks federal judge to toss Prop. 8

The City of San Francisco asks a federal judge to overturn California's ban on same-sex marriage. Shannon Minter, legal director of NCLR, says that the federal suit is "going forward, and we certainly want it to succeed" [NCLR was one of the established gay-rights groups originally concerned about bringing a federal suit too soon.]

36. [Los Angeles Times, August 9, 2009](#)

Prop. 8 foes clash over federal suit

The federal lawsuit challenging Prop. 8 was launched by Los Angeles consultant Chad Griffin, despite the concern of many same-sex marriage advocates. Now that the suit is going forward, the NCLR, the ACLU, and Lambda Legal all want to fully join the suit. However, Griffin has vowed to "vigorously oppose" their intervention. Kate Kendell says about the opposition to the groups' intervention, "Given the enormity of what is at stake, it is perplexing. This case is about our community and not any transient misunderstanding or disagreement among the lawyers. The stakes of this case for the entire community are legendary, and this is an all-hands-on-the-deck moment."

37. [Silicon Valley Mercury News, August 16, 2009](#)

Gay marriage supporters tangle over legal strategy

Griffin's team formally asks the presiding federal judge to block the NCLR, ACLU, and Lambda Legal from joining the case to overturn Prop. 8 in California [quotes Shannon Minter.]

38. [Silicon Valley Mercury News, August 19, 2009](#)

January trial set for U.S. court challenge to California's gay-marriage ban

Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker sets a January 11, 2010, trial date and blocks the NCLR, the ACLU, and Lambda Legal from joining the opponents of Prop. 8 in the suit.

Food and Farming

BRENTWOOD AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST (BALT)

\$135,000 awarded since 2005, including \$50,000 in 2008 to protect and expand the farming community in highly threatened and already urbanized areas of eastern Contra Costa County.

39. [West County Times, May 28, 2009](#)

Produce pipeline running from farms to inner city

In a new initiative, fruit and vegetables from Brentwood are sent to the urban center of Richmond to make it easier for poor people to get fresh produce [features Kathryn Lyddan, executive director of BALT.]

40. [Contra Costa Times, August 7, 2009](#)

Farm Report: Keeping our farmland for farming

Brentwood has long been a farming community. The population of Brentwood has swelled over the past 20 years, as the same qualities that have made the environment good for farming have also made it attractive to suburban developers. BALT purchases conservation easements from farmers in order to protect farmland from development and to compensate farmers [co-authored by Kathryn Lyddan and Tom Powers, chairman of the board of BALT.]

41. [Civil Eats, August 10, 2009](#)

Farmland Conservation: The Important Lesson of Brentwood, California

According to BALT, which preserves productive agricultural land through farmland conservation and promotes local farming through the Community Alliance with Family Farmers' *Buy Fresh Buy Local* regional marketing campaign, East Country Costa includes more than 12,000 acres of contiguous, prime, irrigated farmland. The California Department of Conservation has ranked the soils as having the highest quality in the state. Despite this, land is being developed at an alarming rate. It would be beneficial to the farm community for there to be a source-identified distribution system to connect the Bay Area to the local food. BALT is working to create these connections, while continuing efforts to preserve family farms and fertile soils.

BUSINESS ALLIANCE FOR LOCAL LIVING ECONOMIES (BALLE)

\$175,000 awarded since 2006, including a two-year grant of \$125,000 in 2007 to develop and connect membership networks in California to support the development and success of locally owned, sustainable businesses

42. [The Bellingham Herald, August 28, 2009](#)

National sustainable economy organization to move headquarters to Bellingham

BALLE hires a new executive director, Michelle Long, who is moving the headquarters from San Francisco to Bellingham, Washington, though BALLE will maintain a regional office in San Francisco.

CALIFORNIA RURAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

\$50,000 awarded in 2008 for the *Sustainable Communities Project*

43. [Sacramento News and Review, August 27, 2009](#)

Chemical consent

Inexplicably, California is considering replacing methyl bromide with methyl iodide for use as a primary fumigant pesticide for specialty crops. In an international agreement, methyl bromide was to be phased out by developing nations by 2005. The U.S. received an exemption until the EPA under the Bush Administration found a "safe" replacement in the equally toxic methyl iodide. Methyl iodide is so toxic that it is even used to induce cancer in lab animals. The health effects on humans are staggering and as Martha Guzman Aceves of California Rural Legal Assistance says farmworkers and their children are at the greatest risk [also features ROC Stewardship Council member Jim Cochran.]

CENTER FOR FOOD SAFETY (CFS)

\$340,000 since 2003 for the *California Food and Agriculture Initiative*

44. [Reuters, June 24, 2009](#)

U.S. court cuts off appeals in Monsanto alfalfa case

The Ninth District Court of Appeals upheld a 2007 injunction barring Monsanto from planting its genetically modified (GM) alfalfa. George Kimbrell, staff attorney for the Center for Food Safety says, "This is a major victory for consumers, for farmers and for the public as far as protecting their rights and the rights of farmers to sow the crop of their choice and consumers to eat the food of their choice."

45. [Gourmet magazine, July 24, 2009](#)

Politics of the Plate: Roundup Ready—or Not?

The decision of the Ninth District Court of Appeals in the GM alfalfa case is a victory for opponents of genetically modified crops. However, a similar case against the USDA for its decision to allow Monsanto to grow GM sugar beets has yet to be decided. Also, Monsanto has announced that it would redouble its research efforts into GM wheat.

CHEZ PANISSE FOUNDATION

\$185,000 awarded since 2002, including \$150,000 since 2006 for the *School Lunch Initiative* and \$35,000 in 2002 for the *Edible Schoolyard*

46. [California magazine, May/June 2009](#)

The skinny on school lunch

According to a study conducted by Berkeley's Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health, the Berkeley Unified School District's students are discovering vegetables in a big way. Credit is due the Chez Panisse Foundation for the creation of the Edible Schoolyard at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in 1995 and for the hiring of Ann Cooper in 2004 as Director of Nutrition Services for the school district. School lunch in Berkeley is now a model for the rest of the country.

47. [The New York Times, August 19, 2009](#)

Stars Aligning on School Lunches

The School Nutrition Association invites Ann Cooper to a conference to discuss the Lunch Box, a system she developed to help school districts "wean themselves from packaged, heavily processed food and begin cooking mostly local food from scratch."

48. [San Francisco Chronicle, August 30, 2009](#)

Schools must lead healthy foods effort

There is an impending healthcare crisis in the U.S. Diet-related illness is a big part of it. By reforming the National School Lunch Program, much of this can be prevented. Ann Cooper writes, "If as a country we could link what we feed our children in school and what we teach them about sustainable food to their lifelong wellness, we might be able to avert this impending disaster."

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE WITH FAMILY FARMERS (CAFF)

\$490,000 awarded since 1992, including a three-year \$225,000 grant in 2008 for *Buy Fresh Buy Local*

49. [San Francisco Chronicle, July 13, 2009](#)

Crops, Ponds Destroyed in Quest for Food Safety

Since the outbreak of E. Coli in spinach, federal regulators push blanket food safety regulations that have negative effects on sustainable farmers, while industrial agriculture is the real culprit. Michael Pollan says, "Sanitizing American agriculture, aside from being impossible, is foolhardy" [features CAFF.]

CONSERVATION CORPS NORTH BAY

\$30,000 awarded in 2009 for the *Indian Valley Organic Farm and Garden*

50. [North Bay Business Journal, August 17, 2009](#)

Grant boosts Marin 'sustainable food' program

The College of Marin is able to move ahead with a sustainable food program systems program after receiving approximately \$375,000 in support from the chancellor. The project is a collaboration between the Conservation Corps North Bay and the University of California Cooperative Extension, designed to provide the education and training resources for a skilled, entrepreneurial work force in the fields of organic agriculture and sustainable local food systems.

KLAMATH RIVERKEEPER

\$50,000 awarded in 2008

51. [The Oregonian, August 21, 2009](#)

Toxic blue-green algae fouling Klamath River

Since 2005, portions of the Klamath River watershed have shown prolonged blue-green algae blooms during the summer seasons. The algae, which have been stagnating behind dams, have now spread downriver. The EPA has posted warning signs along the river as the hazard exceeds public-safety limits [features Klamath Riverkeeper.]

52. [The Times-Standard, August 22, 2009](#)

The river runneth out: Conservation groups raise worries about Klamath River tributaries

Three years of drought along the Klamath River have put salmon in serious jeopardy. Klamath Riverkeeper says that recovery of salmon runs on the river depends on increasing the amount and quality of water in them quickly.

ORGANIC FARMING RESEARCH FOUNDATION (OFRF)

\$250,000 awarded from 1990-1999

53. [Reuters, May 5, 2009](#)

\$50 million in EQIP for farmers going organic: USDA

From May 11-29, farmers can apply for \$50 million in land stewardship funding to help convert to organic production. Six practices will be eligible for support – conservation crop rotation, cover crops, integrated pest management, nutrient management, rotational grazing, and forage harvest management – for a maximum of \$20,000 a year per farm in organic transition funding and up to \$80,000 per farm over six years [quotes Mark Lipson, senior policy analyst of OFRF.]

54. [TheUnion.com, July 8, 2009](#)

He's off to D.C. to push organic farming

OFRF hosts a visit to Washington D.C. by a group of growers from across the country in an effort to boost federal support for small organic farms [quotes Ted Quaday of OFRF.]

POLARIS INSTITUTE

\$110,000 awarded since 2007, including \$30,000 in 2009 for the *California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative (CAWSI)*

55. [The Oakland Tribune, April 22, 2009](#)

EcoChef: Drought prompts water efficiency

After three years of below average precipitation in California, a variety of groups and governmental agencies are studying the problem and making recommendations. Katy Mamen, coordinator of the California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative, says “This drought presents an opportunity to advance both practices and policy that encourage sustainable water management.”

56. [California Farmer, May 2009](#)

Grasses improve water, wildlife

Hedgerow Farms, one of just a few native-seed growers in California, grows more than 60 species of native-grassland seeds. Hedgerows improve water quality significantly and provide important benefits for wildlife [written by Lisa Kresge of the California Institute for Rural Studies, a partner in CAWSI.]

ROOTS OF CHANGE FUND (ROC FUND)

\$1,600,000 since 2002, including a five-year grant of \$1,000,000 awarded in 2007

57. [Good Magazine, April 2009](#)

Making California America's Organic Farm

With the growing awareness that current agricultural practices are unsustainable, people are beginning to rally around the idea of creating a wholly sustainable food system in California by the year 2030. Roots of Change has outlined a 12-point manifesto for this agricultural system that emphasizes local food, humane animal raising, and environmental protection. Founded in 1999 to oppose the growing industrialization of food, ROC is uniting various leaders and institutions who share the 2030 vision.

58. [SFGTV, July 8, 2009](#)

Mayor Newsom Announces Regional Food Policy for San Francisco and Several New Food Initiatives

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom today issued the first ever comprehensive food policy for San Francisco [video embedded in attachment; Newsom is introduced by Michael Dimock, executive director of the ROC Fund.]

59. [San Francisco Chronicle, July 9, 2009](#)

Newsom's fresh idea: mandates on healthier food

Newsom's directive mandates that all San Francisco departments have six months to conduct an audit of unused land that could be turned into community gardens or farms that could benefit residents, either by working at them or purchasing the fresh produce; food vendors that contract with the city must offer healthy and sustainable food; all vending machines on city property must also offer healthy options; and farmers' markets must begin accepting food stamps, although some already do. Further, Newsom will send an ordinance to the Board of Supervisors within two months mandating that all food served in city jails, hospitals, homeless shelters, and community centers be healthy [ROC Fund conceived of and convened the San Francisco Urban-Rural Roundtable, a group of 40 urban and rural leaders charged with forming a market-development and food-access plan for the city and its rural neighbors, and to further develop the concept of regional foodsheds. Hosted by the ROC Fund, the process included a series of workgroups, which included participation from city staff and the mayor. It resulted in a series of recommendations upon which Newsom based his directives.]

60. [Civil Eats, July 10, 2009](#)

Roots of Change Breaks Ground with Sustainable Food Summit

ROC Fund and the USDA host the West Coast Direct Marketing Summit in Oakland for organizations to share information and best practices in working to develop sustainable foodsheds that serve the needs of everyone.

61. [Civil Eats, July 10, 2009](#)

San Francisco's New Sustainable Food Mandate

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom issued a directive at City Slicker Farms in Oakland during the summit organized by Roots of Change.

62. [California Farmer magazine, September 2009](#)

First-ever regional food policy

Newsom's plan is to boost support for area farms and ensure regional access to healthy food. More than 8,500 Californians have joined Roots of Change.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
PROGRAM (UC SAREP)

A three-year \$120,000 grant awarded in 2003 for the *Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program*

A two-part series in World Watch magazine about local food, May/June and July/August 2009

63. [Is Local Food Better?](#)

Discusses the localization of food and suggests that sustainable agricultural practices are an important part of mitigating environmental impacts of agriculture [quotes Gail Feenstra, a food systems analyst for UC SAREP.]

64. [Local Food: The Economics](#)

Eating local has benefits for local economies. However, the entire food system is draining money from local economies. Reform must extend beyond just encouraging consumers to purchase local food.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DAVIS AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY INSTITUTE

A two-year \$100,000 grant awarded in 2008 to create a major in sustainable agriculture that integrates learning across broad disciplines to give students the knowledge, skills, and expertise to enhance their career opportunities and become leaders in sustainable agriculture and food systems

65. [Sustainable Agriculture, Fall 2008](#)

New sustainable Ag classes set, major on the way

Starting in the fall of 2008, freshmen classes in food systems and sustainable agriculture and upper division classes in agroecology are available for students at UC Davis. The article notes that the Columbia Foundation provided grant support for the development of the major.

66. [Inside Higher Ed, April 23, 2009](#)

Green Revolution

Academic programs in sustainable agriculture are cropping up at colleges throughout the country, including at UC Davis.

XERCES SOCIETY

\$130,000 awarded since 2007, including \$30,000 in 2009 for *Pollinator Conservation in California Agricultural Landscapes*

67. [Courthouse News Service, May 5, 2009](#)

New Pesticide Could Hurt Honeybees, Groups Claim

The Xerces Society and NRDC are suing the EPA because even though bee populations are in decline, the agency decided to approve the use of a new pesticide, spirotetramat, despite evidence that it could cause serious harm to bees.

68. [National Wildlife Magazine, June/July 2009](#)

The Buzz on Native Pollinators

Native pollinators may be able to fill the void left by the decline of non-native honeybees. However, the Xerces society has documented the decline of native bumblebees as well. Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society, says that the most likely culprit for the native bumblebee decline is exotic disease introduced by commercially reared bumblebees.

69. [California Agriculture magazine, July-September 2009](#)

Native bees are a rich natural resource in urban California gardens

A research group at UC Berkeley and UC Davis complete a three-year study on bee pollinators in California. “Results indicate that many types of urban residential gardens provide floral and nesting resources for the reproduction and survival of bees, especially a diversity of native bees.” The Xerces Society is credited as a partner to the research group in efforts to conserve and protect native pollinators.

YALE UNIVERSITY

\$15,000 awarded in 2007 for public speaking to promote the book The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment and the Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability

70. [Environment: Yale, Spring 2009](#)

A Dean Who Raised the School's Profile and Broadened Its Reach

Gus Speth steps down from his post as dean at the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies at Yale University [chronicles his tenure; mentions his book Bridge at the End of the World.]

Urban Community

EXPLORATORIUM

\$250,000 awarded in 1979 to support the Exploratorium's endowment fund

71. [San Francisco Chronicle, August 30, 2009](#)

'Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens'

Review of the book Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens – Frank Oppenheimer and the World He Made Up; the writer says, “So Oppenheimer launched his Exploratorium 40 years ago in a cavernous half-ruined building left over from the city's 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, and in the years since then virtually every science museum in America - and countless others from France to China - have used the ever-changing experiments and exhibits first built in the Exploratorium's own workshop to be inspired and duplicated everywhere by Oppenheimer's concepts.”

Articles by or about Program Advisors

CLAIRE CUMMINGS

A four-part video series with Claire Cummings by Cooking Up a Story on problems in the food system and the solution to them – sustainable agriculture, Summer 2009

72. [A Conversation with Claire Cummings: Part 1](#) [video link]

73. [A Conversation with Claire Cummings: Part 2](#) [video link]

74. [A Conversation with Claire Cummings: Part 3](#) [video link]

75. [A Conversation with Claire Cummings: Part 4](#) [video link]

76. [Resurgence Magazine, March/April 2009](#)

Certain Peril

Review of Claire Cummings's book Uncertain Peril: Genetic Engineering and the Future of Seeds; the writer says, “In sum this is a must read for anyone concerned about the future of food in the 21st century.” [written by Andrew Kimbrell, executive director of the Center for Food Safety]

PAUL HAWKEN

77. [University of Portland, May 3, 2009](#)

Commencement Address to the Class of 2009

Paul Hawken says, “The generations before you failed. They didn't stay up all night. They got distracted and lost sight of the fact that life is a miracle every moment of your existence. Nature beckons you to be on her side. You couldn't ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hope only makes sense when it doesn't make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it.”

MAS MASUMOTO

78. [San Francisco Chronicle, August 9, 2009](#)

'Wisdom of the Last Farmer'

Review of Wisdom of the Last Farmer, a new book by Mas Masumoto; the writer says that it is “a book that portrays the farmer's life with so much passion, warmth and honesty that it's hard to avoid seeing farming's beauty and gritty appeal. Written from the author's perspective, in language that is poetic yet unadorned, it's part memoir, part manifesto, part philosophical discourse and wholly enjoyable.”

79. [The Boston Globe, August 19, 2009](#)

Nearing peach perfect

Mas Masumoto says, “Just as a peach takes three to four years from planting to first crop, so too with a good idea developing into a book” [interviews Mas Masumoto.]

80. [Civil Eats, August 21, 2009](#)

Mas Masumoto Gives Young Farmers the Wisdom of the Last Farmer

Mas and Nikiko Masumoto lead a workshop together for young farmers at Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Tarrytown, New York [references Wisdom of the Last Farmer.]

81. [Los Angeles Times, August 26, 2009](#)

Preserving the fruits of a season's labors

An organic farmer ponders the meaning of “preservation” on the farm [written by Mas Masumoto.]

STEPHEN TAYLOR

82. [Marcel Quillevere, June 2009](#)

Il Trovatore

A review of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* directed by Stephen Taylor at the Grand Theatre in Geneva, Switzerland; the writer says, “Finally, on June 4, the Grand Theatre came up with a new production that did justice to this splendid work. The stage director Stephen Taylor is obviously fascinated, like Verdi, by the darker side of the Spanish romantics whose plays inspired the composer.”

83. [Opera News, June 5, 2009](#)

GENEVA — Il Trovatore, Grand Théâtre de Genève

Review of *Il Trovatore*; the writer says, “Verdi's masterpiece, with its flickering twilight hue, has often been criticized for its muddled libretto, which places atmosphere above dramatic clarity, but the principal quality of this staging was its presentation of the drama as a cogent whole. Taylor updated the drama to the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s – a period of suitable violence and vengeance, complemented by the austere, monumental sets of Laurent Peduzzi.”

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT APRIL 16, 2009

Fierce Imagery, Serene Tone

By **MICHAEL J. YBARRA**

San Francisco

He looks like a demon from an especially bad nightmare: a blue monster with horns and three eyes on his head, which is in turn topped by another eight heads, culminating in a strangely serene Buddha face. His main hands hold a chopper and a cup made from a human skull. Thirty-two other hands wield an array of weapons. He wears a belt of human heads and his 16 feet trample small humans and animals. A nimbus of orange flames surrounds his body. Even his penis is angry, brandished like an avenging sword.

'Sacred Arts of Bhutan'



Asian Art Museum San Francisco

Thangka of Vajrabhairava (18th century).

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It's a shocking and fascinating image, not one immediately likely to conjure up the peaceful kingdom of Bhutan, a Switzerland-size country in the Himalayas that extols "gross national happiness" rather than gross national product as a measure of its wealth and development.

Yet the 18th-century *thangka* (painting) opens a window on the cosmology of Bhutan, something of a hermit nation, where foreigners were not permitted to enter until 1974 and even now aren't encouraged to visit very long or range widely. Most of Bhutan's 700,000 people practice Vajrayana Buddhism, in which wrathful deities such as Mr. Blue (or -- to give him his rightful, if hard to pronounce, name -- Vajrabhairava) are protectors of the faith. He also symbolizes the struggle to tame negative impulses -- a critical part in every person's journey to transcend the prison of the self.

The *thangka* is one of many striking artifacts on offer at a rare exhibit of more than 150 works from Bhutan, most drawn from working monasteries and few of which have ever left the country before. Organized by the Honolulu Academy of Arts, where the show opened, the exhibit is on view at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco through May 10.

Two monks have accompanied the works and perform a ritual observance at an altar in the museum's courtyard daily at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Dance is also an integral part of Bhutan's religious practice, and videos of monks twirling in crimson robes play in each gallery.

Bhutan calls itself Druk Yul (Land of the Thunder Dragon), and the show is called "The Dragon's Gift." *Thangkas*, sculptures, votive decorations -- gallery after gallery overflows with wondrous imagery that can seem both utterly alien to the Western tradition and yet remarkably familiar at the same time. A number of *thangkas* center on a bodhisattva (or enlightened being who delays entering Nirvana in order to help others) displaying great poise amid the chaos of the world, while in the lower reaches of the picture devils pull people toward a violent netherworld. Looking at several of these, I kept being reminded both of Bosch and the Last Judgment scenes that are a staple of Christian iconography.

Many of the *thangkas* fairly drip with gore. Flayed human skins abound, warriors -- striking a pose familiar to anyone who practices yoga -- stomp on enemies, a devil rides a mount across a sea of blood. One of the stand-out images is an iron statue of Vajrakila, a multifaced warrior with outstretched wings, his body ending in a dagger that plunges into the middle of a prone figure.

Such dualities reflect not only Buddhist thought but also Bhutan's own history. Bhutan didn't exist as a unified state until the 17th century, when a warrior-monk named Ngawang Namgyal built a network of fortress-monasteries, called *dzongs*, which to this day are the religious and political centers of the country. Most of the art on display comes from these *dzongs*.

Ngawang Namgyal (also called Zhabdrung, or At Whose Feet One Submits) appears in several *thangkas* and statues, including a magnificent woodcarving that portrays the monk sitting cross-legged in meditation, his distinctive tapering beard painted blue, as is his ceremonial cap. His eyes hover half-closed, looking inward. It was apparently a typical pose. Zhabdrung once went three years without talking. After he died, the country's rulers kept the news from the public for 54 years.

Despite the fierceness of much of the imagery, the overriding tone that emerges is one of serenity. One beautiful 19th-century thangka depicts Avalokitesvara, the Lord of Compassion, who despaired over his inability to save all beings. The painting shows him after his head split into 11 pieces and he sprouted 1,000 arms -- the better to help ease the suffering of the world. The arms radiate out in a kaleidoscope of hands and bejeweled wrists, a creamy white the dominant color, accented by a lush green landscape with flowers, deer, elephants and snow-topped peaks in the distance.

Avalokitesvara is my favorite bodhisattva. He cried when he realized how much unhappiness there was in the world. His tears created two goddesses: Green Tara and White Tara, helpmeets in his never-ending work.

A lovely Green Tara is portrayed in a gilt bronze image, which shows a well-built woman, her body adorned by turquoise dots, sitting on a lotus flower, her hands open and inviting, so too her legs. Long hair tumbles down her back. It's an image that manages to be both provocative and pacific at the same time.

A gift, indeed.





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Stimulus Bill Funds Go to Art Houses Showing 'Pervert' Revues, Underground Pornography

Emergency grants from the National Endowment for the Arts may be going to help fund nude simulated-sex dances, Saturday night "pervert" revues and the airing of pornographic horror films at art houses in San Francisco.

By Joseph Abrams

FOXNews.com

Thursday, July 30, 2009

Talk about a stimulus package.

The National Endowment for the Arts may be spending some of the money it received from the Recovery and Reinvestment Act to fund nude simulated-sex dances, Saturday night "pervert" revues and the airing of pornographic horror films at art houses in San Francisco.

The NEA was given \$80 million of the government's \$787 billion economic stimulus bill to spread around to needy artists nationwide, and most of the money is being spent to help preserve jobs in museums, orchestras, theaters and dance troupes that have been hit hard by the recession.

But some of the NEA's grants are spicing up more than the economy. A few of their more risque choices have some taxpayer advocates hot under the collar, including a \$50,000 infusion for the Frameline film house, which recently screened Thundercrack, "the world's only underground kinky art porno horror film, complete with four men, three women and a gorilla."

"When you spend so much money in a short amount of time ... you're going to have nonsense like this, and that's why the stimulus should never have been done in the first place," said David Williams, vice president for policy at Citizens Against Government Waste.

Williams said such support for the arts is a luxury at a time when the president and Congress have been telling the public to make sacrifices to manage the recession.

"When taxpayers see this, they realize that's just a bunch of hot air," he told FOXNews.com.

Some members of Congress raised alarms as the stimulus bill was being drafted and approved, but President Obama, while admitting there were problems with the \$787 billion legislation, stressed the need for immediate action to resuscitate the economy.

"We can't afford to make perfect the enemy of the absolutely necessary," Obama said at the time.

But he presumably didn't intend to have stimulus money help fund the weekly production of "Perverts Put Out" at San Francisco's CounterPULSE, whose "long-running pansexual performance series" invites guests to "join your fellow pervs for some explicit, twisted fun."

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CounterPULSE received a \$25,000 grant in the "Dance" category; a staffer there said they were pleased to receive the grant, "which over the next year will be used to preserve jobs at our small non-profit."

Similarly, the director of Frameline, the gay and lesbian film house, told FOXNews.com in an e-mail that their \$50,000 grant was not to support any program in particular.

"The grant is not intended for a specific program; it's to be used for the preservation of jobs at our media arts nonprofit organization over the next year during the economic downturn," wrote K.C. Price, who listed four other NEA grants his organization has received.

An NEA spokeswoman defended the agency's choices and said its grants would help "preserve jobs in danger of going away or that had gone away because of the economic downturn."

"Our review process is very comprehensive -- we take great care with applicants and with grantees," said NEA spokeswoman Victoria Hutter. "It's a thorough, rigorous process that they all go through, and we're proud of the projects that we've been able to support."

Though the process was sped up, the NEA's 109 panelist reviewers handled the compressed schedule by giving their \$50 million in direct grants only to individuals and groups that have received funding in the past and have already passed muster. An additional \$30 million was given to state agencies to parcel out to local artists during this year.

One project that has received past NEA funding and stands to get an additional boost from a \$25,000 stimulus grant is "The Symmetry Project," a dance piece by choreographer Jess Curtis.

The show depicts "the sharing of a central axis, [as] spine, mouth, genitals, face, and anus reveal their interconnectedness and centrality in embodied experience," according to a description offered on Curtis' Web site.

In the flesh -- and there's a lot of it -- it amounts to two people writhing naked on the floor, a government-funded tango in the altogether.

Curtis said that diminished support from regular funders like San Francisco Grants for the Arts "would mean lots less work and less ability to organize ... to get the work out in front of people." He said the NEA funding will help keep his art afloat.

"I think art is an incredibly important part of our culture and our life and ... that it's very much appropriate that our government should be supporting it," he told FOXNews.com.

San Francisco's economy is driven by the arts, which provided nearly 30,000 jobs in the city last year, according to Luis R. Cancel, director of cultural affairs for the San Francisco Arts Council.

"The city's non-profit arts and cultural sector generates \$1.03 billion in local economic activity annually and, therefore, it will play a critical role in our recovery," Cancel said in a statement.

"With these stimulus funds San Francisco arts organizations will be able to weather the storm and continue to provide jobs and to generate revenue while enriching people's lives through innovative, high quality programming."

Williams, the taxpayer advocate, allowed that the \$100,000 granted to the three groups "isn't going to make or break the country financially," but he said arts institutions should try to raise money by raising ticket prices -- not by taxing individuals.

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, he said. "These sorts of programs really do need to be funded by the patrons that go to the performances -- not by the federal government."

guardian.co.uk

Kronos Quartet: Floodplain

(Nonesuch)

★★★★★

John L Walters

Friday 22 May 2009



Recent Kronos albums have been exemplary reminders that classical music is "world music", too, and vice versa. And that traditional music has a vital place in the contemporary repertoire. This generous, 12-track album is based around the concept that the world's great floodplains, such as those of the Nile, Ganges and Volga, are the cradles of humankind, and sublime sources of sustenance and fear. Kronos's selection of music from these regions is engaging, challenging, complex and rewarding. Four tracks foreground solo virtuosity: leader David Harrington shines on the Azeri piece Rahman Asadollahi, while violist Hank Dutt gives an impassioned reading of a raga by north Indian classical composer Ram Narayan. Floodplain includes several blockbusters: the electrically charged Tashweesh (Interference) with Ramallah Underground; the tangled, 22-minute "... hold me, neighbour, in this storm ..." by exiled Serbian composer Aleksandra Vrebalov; and a thrilling live recording with Alim Qasimov's band from the Barbican's Ramadan Nights season last year.

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May 24, 2009

Kronos Quartet: Floodplain

Clive Davis



David Harrington and his colleagues may be no strangers to border-crossing experiments, but this journey has to be one of their most inspired so far.

If the unifying theme — flood plains as zones of cyclical fertility — seems strained, the pieces, from the Middle East, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa, combine classical rigour with the unquenchable vitality of folk music. From the sensual, habanera-tinged strains of the Arabic song *Ya Habibi Ta'ala* to the Turkish dance rhythms of *Nihavent Sirto*, the Kronos players — aided and abetted by the occasional collaborator — display a preternatural ability to speak in tongues. In short, this is one of the albums of the year.

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Interview: Kronos Quartet



Kronos Quartet

Few ensembles have done more for the string quartet in recent years than the **Kronos Quartet**, pushing the boundaries of a long-established instrumental medium that can be traced back over two and a half centuries.

Yet when we meet with leader and first violinist David Harrington to discuss the Quartet's new *Floodplain* album, we find him in relatively humble mood.

Sitting in his hotel room, Harrington talks with incredibly measured tones of the recording process for the new record. "Floodplain involved many years of listening to music from a lot of different places and perspectives, groups, sounds and artists," he explains. "At a certain point it began to feel there was a vocabulary we had to choose from, and using the experiences we've had to draw on from other albums like *Early Music*, *Pieces Of Africa*, *Caravan* and *You've Stolen My Heart*, it became clear there was something that had a gravitational pull to it. There's a lot that could have been on this album but isn't, and music that will be on future albums, so it began to feel like a body of information that belonged together."

Was it their objective to link different musical cultures within the medium of the string quartet? He ponders. "I think the aim is more to give the listener a sense of connection and travelling, more than linking cultures themselves. I think things are unavoidably linked together; we don't have to do anything about that! What we need to do is to find a way of dramatically taking a listener into whatever experience they are a part of."

The hope being, presumably, that listeners go off and explore the other artists afterwards? He nods. "That's exactly what I hope will happen. I hope that the audience for *Floodplain* will hear *Tashweesh* and want to know a lot more about **Ramallah Underground**, and that they'll want to know a lot more about **Alèmu Aga**, from Ethiopia, or **Aleksandra Vrebalov**. I'm hoping that our explorations and discoveries will lead our listeners to want to experience a lot more music."

This is a familiar principle of the Kronos Quartet, running through their existence from when they began with recordings of modern classical repertoire. I suggest that my own introduction to their music, the *White Man Sleeps* record, is a good illustration of what a string quartet can

achieve. He considers this for a while. "I think we're just getting started." Really? "Really. That's how it feels even now!"

His spirit of discovery confirmed, he continues. "I am - literally - on the edge of my chair! And I continue to be. I think the world of music has never been more thrilling or exciting than it is right now. We've never had a time when so many things are possible, and I want to make experiences, concerts and recordings that point to new possibilities or ways of imagining this art form, the string quartet, that Haydn started in around 1750".

Those possibilities include the internet, where Harrington discovered Ramallah Underground. "Absolutely. YouTube, MySpace - there are so many ways to access interesting things in the world, and I hope Floodplain gives our audience a sense of that, and a potential for enlarging one's sense of things".

We move on to talk about the challenges on the new album, and in particular on his violin achieving the Galan sound for Mugam Beyati Shiraz. He takes up the story. "I first met **Rahman Asadollahi** in San Francisco, and he just opened his case and started to play for me, and the music he played was Mugam Beyati Shiraz. I was overwhelmed by the experience of hearing that music, having my own private concert, and I was totally overwhelmed. There was a quality of the sound and feel of this music, it felt connected to so many events, ecstasies and tragedies that I have no idea of, so much life over the centuries. It felt like I was suddenly involved in a connection that I had never been aware of through the music and instruments of this great musician, so when I began to play what I wanted to do was to give our audience the same feeling I had that day. It was quite a challenge!

"I am - literally - on the edge of my chair!" - Kronos Quartet founder David Harrington shows the pioneering spirit his quartet retain.

More recently Harrington oversaw an anniversary concert of Terry Riley's *In C* anniversary, a cornerstone of the minimalist repertoire. "In C exceeded anything I could have possibly imagined, it was one of the most ecstatic moments in my musical life," he proclaims enthusiastically. "We had 69 musicians on stage altogether - several of the original 'In C-ers' from 1964, some from the original recording in 1968, a lot of friends of Terry Riley, and friends of Kronos - people we've worked with together over many years.

"I spent a year and a half curating that concert! I started out with the Uilleann Pipes actually, because a couple of years ago Terry Riley went to Ireland and found his 'inner Irish', and I thought 'alright Riley, we're gonna start this with some Irish pipes'. But then I was then told the pipes can't play in C, and so we had to fashion a pipe to allow that. The concert was assembled one instrument at a time, in a very similar way to how our albums are put together, one layer at a time, then one piece at a time until something feels connected".

Politically, the concert, given at the end of April, could not have been more appropriately timed. "I am - literally - on the edge of my chair! And I continue to be". says Harrington. "At the time, when I was invited to curate that concert we were in some of the darkest hours of the Bush

administration, and at that point one could only hope there would be some light at the end of that darkness, and fortunately there was and there is. It's the same way with Floodplain; the years that it took to assemble this album were some of the darkest points in American history. Trying to find some way of expressing some confidence in what music can actually do has been a very important consideration for me, and I'm very happy to say that it's coming out in another point in our history. I'm very cautiously optimistic that we might be in another chapter".

As you might expect, the Kronos have a long list of commissions in progress. "I'll start with the 'elder statesmen'", says Harrington. "**Steve Reich** is working on a new piece for us, also **Henryk Górecki**, and **Vladimir Martynov**. We're also working on music with **Damon Albarn**. I've got ideas for a new album myself too, but it's already taken me 20 years! I'll reveal things about that at the right time."

And the newer crop? "We have a host of wonderful new composers writing for us. Bryce Dessner is one of them, the guitarist from **The National**, he's a fantastic composer. We're also continuing a lot of our collaborations with people like **Terry Riley** and **Michael Gordon**. At any point there are generally about twenty people writing pieces for us".

Was the Albarn collaboration a result of his more recent Chinese explorations? "What we just recorded was the music for the Manchester International Festival, so we created this studio piece together. He's a magical musician who I admire very much." Cards close to his chest, then - we'll have to wait and see.

My final question to Harrington centres on what each member of Kronos brings to the quartet in terms of their personality. "Well I'll start with myself," he says, and laughs modestly before deviating wildly. "I think what I bring to the quartet is probably the idea that the sound of two violins, a viola and a cello is almost infinitely malleable, and it's a marvellous tool in the hands of composers, and it can become almost like a sculpture or a liquid, it can become so many things. To me it's the sound that I first encountered when I was twelve years old and has become the sound of my own mind and thinking. I want it to be vital and totally expressive, and want it to be fearless and go in as many directions as it can. So that's what I bring to the quartet!"

He laughs, pauses again, and then continues. "John Sherba, our second violinist, brings this stability and solidness, he's been a magical partner for all of 31 years now. He also is in charge of the recordings of all of our concerts, and is frequently making recordings for me of our various repertoire, so when our recordings are being assembled he and I are working together very closely. **Hank Dutt** has been in Kronos for the same length of time and has been our music librarian. If we need to drive somewhere, Hank is the driver! I think he brings this practical sense, and if you think of the string quartet as a turkey and avocado sandwich, the cello would be the bread on the bottom, the first violin would be the bread on top, second violin would probably be the avocado and the viola would be the turkey. To me the viola is at the heart of the string quartet, and to me no-one is better at that than Hank Dutt. Jeff Ziegler, our cellist, has been with us four years now, and I think he brings a perspective to our work having grown up with Kronos. He was born the month we had our first rehearsal."

At this point room service arrives and it's time for Harrington to tuck into his lunch - not a turkey

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and avocado sandwich, I note - and he bids a cheery farewell, having provided an in depth insight into one of the world's busiest, eclectic and perhaps most creative ensembles.

- Ben Hogwood, 6/2009

Kronos Quartet's Floodplain is out now on Nonesuch.

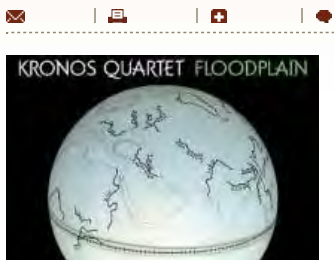
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June 23, 2009

Venturing Onto Kronos' *Floodplain*

KRONOS QUARTET

BY JEFF KALISS



Floodplain

There's so much music, and more, in Kronos' latest CD that I felt compelled to question the quartet's founder and violinist David Harrington at his Sunset District base of operations, seeking details and explanations beyond the liner notes. Much of that conversation will be the source of a future artist profile. But in examining this album, it's worth considering its inception as Harrington's reaction to the undeclared war in Iraq. "At a certain point," he says, "I decided that, if [certain countries] are on George Bush's 'enemies' list, I needed to know more about them." The album thus showcases traditional, contemporary, and commissioned works from Iraq, Iran, and Palestine, as well as other parts of the Middle East, along with Egypt, Ethiopia, India, and Serbia. Most of these places, and many of the album's tracks, share roots in Persian and Arabic musics — manifest in particular harmonic modes and rhythms and in the use of microtones and slide techniques, all successfully and creatively adopted and adapted, as always, by Harrington, fellow violinist John Sherba, violist Hank Dutt, and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler.

Listen to the Music

Significant syntheses and varieties are also evident among the tracks, some of which have prompted Kronos to alter its instruments or take up new ones. Harrington, for example, fitted his violin with two A and two D strings to produce the primal sound of an Iranian lullaby, and even took instruction from YouTube videos on the single-stringed Balkan *gusle*. The results overall are as dazzling as they are broadly educational, in the spirit of Northern California guitarist Bob Brozman's similarly adaptive global explorations. Scenes on *Floodplain* shift from the saturated sound of an Egyptian orchestra on the opening track (achieved with extensive, meticulously staged studio overdubs) to a patient display in free time of the Indian affect of Dutt's viola, an awesome (in the true sense of the word) contemplation of solitude evoked by a melody from Kazakhstan, the disturbing buzz of an Iraqi love song (enhanced by sound engineer and coproducer Scott Fraser),

and a very different and gorgeous traditional love song from Lebanon that, in its melodic and harmonic structure and applied instrumental approach, suggests some of the historical sources of Western early music.

Folk string and percussion instruments figure on some tracks, and an entire Azerbaijani ensemble, with passionate father-and-daughter vocalists Alina and Fargana Qasimov, is heard on "Getme, Getme," recorded live in London last fall. For what's arguably the most sui generis selection, from Ethiopia, Kronos had one-of-a-kind instruments designed and built by Bay Area artisan Walter Kitundu, so delicate and large that they were untransportable for the Quartet's recent concertizing across the U.S. and abroad, behind this album. (Harrington promises that they'll be heard locally, with the onset of Kronos' fall 2009 season.) The album's final track, by the young Serbian composer and former San Francisco Conservatory student Aleksandra Vrebalov, is one of the album's several longer suites, achieving an almost cinematic evocation of the perpetuation of differing religious and musical traditions and family values under the threat of persecution and armed conflict. This is music both timely and timeless, conceived and executed beautifully.

Jeff Kaliss has written about opera and other classical forms for the *Marin Independent-Journal* and *The Oakland Tribune*. He is based in San Francisco, and also covers jazz, world music, country, rock, film, theater, and other entertainment. The second edition of his authorized biography of Sly and the Family Stone will be published in Fall 2009 by Backbeat Books.

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Thursday, May 7, 2009

ODC expanding Mission District theater

ODC has begun a \$6.5 million expansion and renovation of its Mission District theater.

Better yet, the contemporary dance company is within \$200,000 of its fundraising goal.

This expansion will make ODC's 36,000 square foot campus the largest, state-of-the-art dance center in the region.

Founded by Brenda Way in 1971, ODC bought its first building in 1979. Two years later it added a two-story rehearsal studio and annex, and it has steadily increased its space ever since. The company added the 23,000 square foot ODC Dance Commons in 2005.

The new expansion and renovation of the ODC Theater, scheduled to open in 2011, will include a new 50-seat venue for intimate works, third floor studios to expand ODC's education programs, a corner cafe, as well as a host of new technological features from lighting to staging to cooling.

Mark Cavagnero Associates of San Francisco is the architect for the project; Oliver and Co. will manage construction

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ARTS

Theatre & Dance

A Ukrainian play in Stratford

By Peter Aspden

Published: August 15 2009 02:50 | Last updated: August 15 2009 02:50

Natal'ia Vorozhbit, serious, small-framed and quietly spoken, cannot suppress a smile when she recalls the first rehearsal of her new play *The Grain Store* on the stage of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Courtyard Theatre. "It was so strange, to see British actors playing the roles of Ukrainian peasants. To be honest, it made me giggle a little bit."

It is an understandable reaction, even though the subject of her new work – the Ukrainian famine of the 1930s that killed millions – is deadly serious. Cultural dislocation can be a funny business. What is more curious is that *The Grain Store* will be receiving its world premiere not in the land in which the play is based, but in Stratford-upon-Avon as part of the RSC's new season of post-Soviet theatre, "Revolutions".

Even for the RSC, which has a tradition of throwing its doors open to works from all around the world, this is a bold move: *The Grain Store* is one of two new plays, along with *The Drunks* by brothers Mikhail and Vyacheslav Durnenkov, to be entirely commissioned and premiered by the company on its main stage next month.

If any reason were needed for the commission, the company's artistic director Michael Boyd, who is also directing *The Grain Store*, provides it. Speaking about the theatrical culture of Russia and its neighbouring states, he says: "It just wouldn't have been put on in Moscow; it is too much of a touchy political issue."

Vorozhbit, 34, is inspired by her new surroundings. "I know the play will be transformed," she says through an interpreter in one of the theatre's rehearsal rooms, "but that way it may become more of a universal story. I think every country has something like this in its history."

The three playwrights were picked out following a visit to Moscow by a team from the RSC, whose audacious commissioning instructions failed to faze Kiev-born Vorozhbit: "We were told to do something with a Shakespearean scale to it," she says undramatically. "It needed to have that epic quality. I was intimidated but also very excited."

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Her thoughts turned to the Ukrainian famine, or *holodomor*, not out of a sense of career opportunism but out of her own family's reminiscences: her grandfather was the only one of 11 siblings to have survived one of Stalinism's most appalling catastrophes.

She admits that the subject's heavyweight content frightened her at first. I ask if the play is a tragedy. "No, that would have been boring. I wanted a sense of contrast, to write with humour too. A strong element in the Ukrainian tradition is that of 19th-century village literature – about the people who live in rural areas, their lives and losses, the divide between rich and poor. I have all those elements in my work. And fairy tales: there is also a fairy tale in the play." If the rich mix sounds Shakespearean, it is not down to the author's overexposure to the Elizabethan theatre. "I wouldn't say I was a 'fan' [of Shakespeare]; it is certainly not on my bedside table," confides Vorozhbit when asked about her feelings on her distinguished antecedent. "I have a lot of respect for his work, but he is not my national writer and he is never going to be."

For Boyd, who spent part of his early career in Moscow in the late 1970s, "Revolutions" represents something of a pet project. It was Russian theatre, he says, that opened his eyes to a different way of directing. "I was suddenly working in a culture where the director was asked to take an aesthetic, political and moral responsibility for the work.

"Back home, we were very much in the text-based tradition of theatre, which was essentially a collaboration between charismatic performer and profound author, with the odd piece of scholastic intervention from a gentle director-figure. In Russia, the director was central. It was great for my ego."

Boyd found that youth counted against him in a theatrical milieu that prized experience above almost all else. "The idea that I, at the age of 22 or 23, would be given responsibility for even a rehearsal was laughable," he says. "Although they were always very lovely and charming about it.

"I came away with a strong sense of how much there was to learn. And also what it was like to work with a KGB officer in the room at all times."

Boyd also speaks of a new urgency: "There was a lull after the fall of the Wall and we no longer had nightmares about nuclear holocaust. But now there is deep alarm over the resurgence of Russia. And because this is the largest country in the world, it is going to be fascinating, by sheer force of gravity."

I ask, remembering Vorozhbit's giggles, what kind of difficulties the RSC's actors will face, performing in such an unfamiliar tradition. "It is a good, robust challenge. But it is actually more like playing Shakespeare than doing a contemporary British play, because of the directness of the voice. There is a lot of playfulness and humour, not gentle irony, but more red-blooded, like the humour of Shakespeare."

The Grain Store, says Boyd, depicts a "society in great turmoil, just as there was in all of Shakespeare's plays. When I did the 'Histories' cycle, I found I could not have done it without

my Russian experience – there was that hard-nosed understanding of the connections between power politics and the simple act of walking down the street.”

The story of the Ukrainian famine is not well-enough known, he says. “It caused the death of millions, and it was the result of a systemic failure. Natal’ia is like the great essayists, trying to bear witness to this story of her own family.”

For her part, Vorozhbit says she wants British viewers to take a wider message from her play. “It would be good if it changed their feelings about aesthetics rather than politics; I would like them to think about contemporary writing in a new way. It would be very good if they forgot that this was a play about Ukraine at all.”

I ask about the play’s future, but she is fatalistic about its prospects in her homeland. “I doubt if there would be wild interest in the project,” she says drily. “We are in a very depressing political and economic situation, and culture is the last thing on people’s agenda.”

If *The Grain Store* did open in Ukraine, she says she would feel “uncomfortable” with the consequences. “There is a big difference between ordinary people, who do not really want old memories stirred up, and the political classes, for whom it would become a propaganda issue. And I don’t want to be involved in that.”

So it is Stratford-upon-Avon, a quiet town with a mighty stage presence, that will first present Vorozhbit’s reflections on an event that continues to reverberate clamorously in her own culture. Michael Boyd has no doubts that the play will also make waves in its strange, new context. “When I read the first draft, I had one of those feelings – ‘I know I want to do this.’ And that has only happened three times in my life.”

The RSC’s ‘Revolutions’ season runs from August 21 to October 1; ‘The Grain Store’ opens on September 10; www.rsc.org.uk, 0844 800 1110

Amazonia at the Young Vic - review

Charles Spencer
05 Dec 2008



Disjointed and confusing: Amazonia at the Young Vic

Charles Spencer reviews *Amazônia* at the Young Vic

The road to theatrical hell is often paved with good intentions. Reading the programme for *Amazônia* at the Young Vic, and Hilary Whitney's fascinating feature in the arts pages this week, the whole production sounds like an amazing adventure.

There were trips into the interior of Brazil, the discovery of exotic local dances in a car park at midnight, and research into the life of the Brazilian rubber tapper turned environmentalist Chico Mendes, who first drew attention to the environmental dangers of clearing the rainforest for pasture - and was assassinated 20 years ago.

The trouble is that everyone seems to have been so excited about the worthiness of the project, the exotic local colour, and the feeling that this was a production that would raise the green consciousness of young audiences, the play itself appears to have come a poor second to the research process.

Frankly, *Amazônia* is an often incomprehensible mess, with a disjointed and confusing story-line based on unfamiliar myths, characters you don't learn enough about to care for, and an acting style that seems based on the erroneous belief that if you shout loudly enough and rush dementedly around the stage then you are bound to be entertaining. The only time the children in

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the audience seemed really enthralled was when actors either fell into, or emerged from, tanks of water and there was a great deal of splashing.

The script by Colin Teevan, and Paul Heritage, the latter the mastermind behind the project who also doubles as the shambolic show's director, is woefully short of decent jokes, but full of moments when the audience feels it is being lectured. And a traditional story about a villager who kills the lucky local dancing bull, and cuts out its tongue to satisfy his pregnant wife's craving hunger pangs, is combined with fleeting appearances by the ghost of Chico Mendes and echoes of Shakespeare. I often found it hard to follow. What are 10-year-olds going to make of it?

The worst thing about the show is its dishonesty. At the end, the village leader's nephew has felled all the trees and the characters' traditional way of life is doomed. But that doesn't prevent an interminable celebratory ending of colourful costumes and traditional quadhrilha dancing.

The music, in which you can hear echoes of Brazilian bossa nova, is enchanting, and the stage is dominated by a hugely impressive tree design which fills the whole auditorium but is absurdly underused. Surely characters ought to be scrambling all over it in death-defying chases?

Among the performers, the usually excellent Simon Trinder works his socks off as the plucky comic hero but the gags are so poor that even he struggles.

Jeffery Kissoon plays the village leader with steely authority and Daisy Lewis is beguiling as his daughter who falls in love with a hunky river god and performs a thrilling acrobatic dance with him.

But compared with the Young Vic's legendary Christmas shows past, Amazonia is a dead loss.

RATING: **

Theatre

Amazonia

Young Vic, London

1 / 5 stars



Lyn Gardner

Saturday 6 December 2008



Rehearsals of the show Amazonia at the Young Vic. Photograph: Linda Nyland

There are saving graces in Amazonia - including a giant water cobra and an unexpected erotic coupling between a girl and a fish - but they are pretty hard to spot in a production that will surely go down in the annals of theatrical history as one of the most misguided Christmas shows ever. Even more surprising when it comes from the Young Vic, a venue that raised the bar on Christmas shows with Grimm Tales more than a decade ago, and has been sailing over it since.

Set in the Brazilian rainforest, Amazonia tells of the all-singing, all-dancing local villagers whose traditional way of life is threatened by deforestation. With the fish dying in the rivers, the rubber tappers losing their livelihood, and the best bull in Amazonia refusing to dance, things look bleak, particularly when farmer Seu Antonio leaves his nephew - who believes that cutting

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down the forest is modernisation - in charge. Fortunately the spirit of murdered activist Chico Mendes is on hand to make sure that wrongs are righted, and everyone can have another nice dance after he has dressed up like a sparkly yeti and issued a manifesto.

Meanwhile, there is a sub-plot - based on a traditional tale - about a pregnant woman whose cravings turn her into a harridan who demands that her husband slaughter the prize dancing bull and give her its tongue to eat.

There is so much wrong with this show that it's hard to know where to begin, though the cock-eyed nature of the enterprise - apparently two years in the making and involving goodness knows how many air miles on trips to Brazil and back - is that essentially this is a show about not cutting down trees that has a whopping great set made of wood. But it is the sheer po-faced earnestness of the turgid script that scuppers any joy, as if those making it thought that watching it would make us better people, when actually the preachiness makes you long to rush out and lop down a tree.

It can't even tell a straightforward story with any coherence, there is minimal characterisation (people turn from heroes to villains and back again in a twinkle), and the mixture of reality and fantasy is so poorly meshed that you start doubting your own state of mind. The dancing is the best thing in this piece of key stage 2 exotica, and there's even too much of that. Poor hard-working cast, poor rainforest, and poor, poor us.



Likeable Landlords in the Mission?

2 August 2009

By RIGOBERTO HERNANDEZ

Like many Mission District landlords these days, Michele Di Pilla has a problem: a commercial tenant owes him back rent. He also has his fair share of tenants who rent below market rates or need a few more days to get the check in.

Instead of sending eviction notices, however, Di Pilla said, “I want them to make progress, make money and be able to pay.”

Unlike the caricature of the evil landlord, it’s surprising how many times in reporting along Mission or 24th streets that tenants talk about landlords like Di Pilla who give them a break and make it possible to do business in a difficult economy.



Michele Di Pilla and Nicola Fiduccia sitting down at the Argentina Gift Shop.

“Landlords who understand their tenants are people that get involved in the community and understand what the business means to the community,” said Dairo Romero, a Community Organizer for the Mission Economic Development Agency.

The owner of a clothing store in one of Di Pilla’s buildings who has not paid rent for months is testing the goodwill she built up over years of paying rent on time.

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Nowadays, the tenant, who asked not to be identified, works full time at a pharmacy to contribute to the rent on the clothing store, but the already reduced rent of \$1625—even with an additional reduction to \$1575 is untenable, she said.

“I like her that’s why I want to give her a chance, but if there is no business there is no business,” said Di Pilla, who spends much of his time hanging out in front of the Argentina Shop at 3250 24th St. which he owns. He said he has yet to decide what to do about the tenant.

Many of his tenants, such as Guadalupe Salazar, whom he has known for 30 years, have become friends.

After renting from Di Pilla at his 29th Street building for 20 years, Salazar moved out to help her niece with her mortgage, but in 2003 she began renting commercial space in the building he owns next to the Argentina Shop.

“He has always been understanding to me,” Salazar said. “He is a good person because he helps someone when they need it.”

Colleen Meharry, the owner of several Mission District properties including the building Foreign Cinema has occupied for the last ten years, also gets high marks for the way in which she manages her property.

“I always believed in this neighborhood,” Meharry told Mission Loc@l last month.



Colleen Meharry and husband inside one of her buildings.

John Clark, who owns Foreign Cinema with his wife Gayle Pirie, agreed. Meharry, Clark said, is good at “making sure that everything were doing is good for the block, that rent is fair. She’s active in the block and Mission Street and interested in making sure that her properties are kept up.”

Thought not picture perfect, next-door neighbor Hawk Lou, 53, the owner of 2578 Mission St. is a landlord trying to keep afloat and respond to tenants in need.

Lou inherited the building and the debt after his father passed away in 2007. The debt includes taxes on the building and a remaining mortgage.

“If I had a choice I would not be a landlord, it’s stressful keeping up with the payments,” he said, adding that the water and garbage charges have gone up. “I can go to China and live a good life, but I got to stay and take care of my family.”

The temptation to cash out increases he said because at least one-third of his residential tenants are behind on rent. But evicting them is difficult for a couple of reasons. First, he has known them since he became his father’s business partner ten years ago. Second, eviction is costly.

So, his solution is to see if they can all survive by sticking together.

“He is a good landlord because he pays attention to us,” said Juan Ramon Bueno, the 47-year-old owner of J.R. Jewelers that has been in Lou’s building for 18 years.

“He walks around here often, and there is an emergency contact if we ever need something,” Bueno said.

Bueno’s sales have dropped as much as 80 percent in the past two years, and he barely makes enough money to pay his monthly rent of \$2,200 or \$1.83 a square foot, but he calls the rent fair.

Lou said he wants his commercial tenants to be there “for the long run.”

As he fixed a light for his tenant Cinderella Fashion, Lou added. “I just do common sense stuff. I know that things are tough so I try to give them a chance.”

Ramon Madrigal, 57, and the owner of 2801 24th Street where St. Francis Fountain and Candy kitchen opened in 2006, agreed.

“What’s the point of renting a locale to someone for high rent if in six to seven months they are going to leave,” he said.

When Madrigal acquired the building in 2000, he ran the diner for two years before selling it to the current business owners.

The plan, Madrigal said, was to offer them cheap rent to become established and then to raise the rent.

“One has to work thinking what you want from them and what they aspire to be,” Madrigal said.

Derailing California's money train

Campaign contribution laws in California are far too lax.

By Robert M. Stern and Molly Milligan

April 20, 2009

Over the last eight years, California politicians raised \$1 billion -- \$344,503 per day, or \$14,354 per hour, 24 hours a day -- according to a recent report by the California Fair Political Practices Commission, or FPPC, which detailed sources and amounts raised. Perhaps most disturbingly, the report -- "The Billion Dollar Money Train" -- found that California's contribution limits did not apply to nearly one-fourth, or \$225 million, of this money.

Why is this disturbing? Because money buys influence over legislation that donors support or oppose.

The state's campaign contribution laws, put on the ballot by the Legislature as Proposition 34 and passed by voters in 2000, are badly in need of reform. We recommend lowering contribution limits and closing the loopholes that have permitted these end-runs around the laws.

With respect to the \$225 million raised outside of the law's contribution limits, the FPPC asks, "Is it logical to limit the size of contributions to an officeholder's committee ... and yet allow the same special interests to contribute vastly greater amounts to other committees controlled by the same officeholder?"

About two-thirds of the \$225 million was raised through committees controlled by candidates and officeholders. Contributions to these committees are unlimited (some top \$2 million from a single individual), and there is little control over how the money is spent. And because there are few controls in place, contributions made to candidate-controlled ballot measure committees increased more than 200,000% between the time Proposition 34 went into effect and the end of 2006, according to the FPPC.

California candidates and officeholders can also solicit unlimited sums through so-called behested payments, which are contributions to a candidate or officeholder's favorite charity or organization. Nearly one-fifth of the \$225 million raised were behested contributions. In fact, because officeholders only report behested payments of \$5,000 or more in a single year from a donor, the amount of funds raised in this category was substantially more than the figure reported. For example, an officeholder who serves a four-year term could raise \$24,999 from a single source over his or her campaign and term, and not have to report any of those funds.

Unfortunately, even contributions given directly to candidates -- and therefore subject to limits -- are potentially misused. There's nothing to stop candidates and officeholders from using

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campaign contributions to supplement their lifestyles while claiming that these expenses are for political, legislative or other governmental purposes. State Sen. Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles), for example, reported spending more than \$125,000 of his campaign contributions over the last six years on gourmet meals, entertainment, travel and shopping. While candidates and officeholders can permissibly use contributions for such purposes, the problem is that Cedillo apparently spent lavishly and without restriction.

It's time to change the contribution laws. First, all money raised by candidates and incumbents -- directly or indirectly, through campaign and non-campaign entities -- should be publicly disclosed. This will greatly increase transparency and alert voters to potential undue influence by large donors and possible corruption of elected officials and candidates.

Contribution limits should be lowered to the federal level, whether the money is raised directly or indirectly. Under federal law, candidates can raise \$2,400 from a single individual donor per election. California's limit ranges from \$3,900 to \$25,600 per donor per election, depending on the office sought. Also, an aggregate limit of \$10,000 should be placed on the amount of money individuals and groups can directly or indirectly donate to *all* candidates, officeholders and political committees each year.

Lastly, campaign funds used for travel, hotels or meals should be subject to per diem restrictions. For overseas trips, campaign contributions should only pay for hotels and meals according to State Department rules, with the official personally paying any charges in excess of those limits. Though officials should not be forced to stay in a dump, neither should they be staying at the plushiest hotel if paid for by campaign contributions.

The questions raised by the FPPC's report should be only a first step to implementing badly needed reforms. The outdated money train must be derailed and replaced with a more effective, modern vehicle of campaign finance that can restore public confidence in our political officials.

Robert M. Stern is president of the Center for Governmental Studies and a principal coauthor of the 1974 Political Reform Act of California. Molly Milligan is a senior fellow at the center's Governance Project.

Activists Urge Top Democratic Groups to Ban Lobby, PAC Donations

By Kate Phillips

In the last few months, there's been an interesting dynamic going on between some progressive bloggers (we'd call them lib-bloggers) and the traditional elective arms of those aiming to ensure Democrats are elected (and re-elected) to the Senate and the House. (Not to mention disagreements between the left-leaning activists and netroots and some of President Obama's policies.)

The latest missive, or perhaps missile, concerns a fund-raiser in mid-June, when President Obama has agreed to appear on behalf of two organizations — the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. For just that night, in agreement with the White House apparently, the two groups will forgo contributions from political action committees and lobbyists, according to an earlier report by Politico. That one-time ban is in keeping with Mr. Obama's policies.

But to a number of activists, liberal bloggers and campaign finance reformers, that one-day hiatus doesn't go far enough. Organizations and blogs, from Change Congress, a group created by Larry Lessig and Joe Trippi, to Jack and Jill Politics, have set up a new Web site on Tuesday called Stop Fake Reform.

A letter posted on the site addressed to the D.S.C.C. and the D.C.C.C. urges the groups to ban contributions from PACS and lobbyists throughout the year:

For 364 days a year, your rules would allow members of Congress to leave a hearing about regulating Wall Street and then walk straight to the DSCC and DCCC offices to "dial for dollars" from Wall Street lobbyists who want more bailout money and less accountability to taxpayers. Most Americans would find that conflict of interest repulsive.

We call on you to ban PAC and lobbyist contributions 365 days a year, just as President Obama did.

The list of those who signed the letter can be viewed on the new Web site, and includes leading bloggers from some lawmakers' home states — like, say, Nevada, the home state of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

We'll keep you posted on reaction to this latest move to rein in special-interest money.

Part of the goal here is to restore and expand public campaign financing in elections. Adam Green, the head of Change-Congress.org, pointed to the donor strike organized there, which discourages donations to congressional members who won't sign on as sponsors of the proposed

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Fair Elections Now Act, which Senators Richard Durbin, the Democratic whip from Illinois, and Senator Arlen Specter, Republican from Pennsylvania (soon to be a Democrat), have been promoting. Senator Durbin and other lawmakers have tried repeatedly to get similar versions of the bill passed, but have faced significant opposition on several fronts.

In a briefing last month on Capitol Hill, Senator Durbin and others explained that the latest proposal would allow House candidates to qualify for public funds if they raised \$50,000 or more from at least 1,500 residents of their states. Senate amounts and minimums would vary according to the population of individual states.

The Washington Post

To Lure Obama, Fundraisers Briefly Ban Contributions

By Dan Eggen
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, April 28, 2009

To get President Obama to headline a June 18 fundraiser, the Democratic congressional committees agreed to ban contributions from political action committees and lobbyists -- for all of one day.

For every other day of the year, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee will continue to collect money from such groups, just as their Republican counterparts do.

The arrangement has raised hackles on the left and the right, prompting allegations that the fundraising arms for Democratic lawmakers are being hypocritical. A group co-founded by Democratic consultant Joe Trippi launched a campaign today arguing that the two committees should follow the lead of Obama and the Democratic National Committee in refusing contributions from PACs and lobbyists year-round.

"This isn't just hypocritical -- it defies common sense that you'd think the public would believe this was a principled stand against special-interest influence," more than 50 activists wrote in a letter released this morning by Change Congress, which advocates public financing for lawmakers. "For 364 days a year, your rules would allow members of Congress to leave a hearing about regulating Wall Street and then walk straight to the DSCC and DCCC offices to 'dial for dollars' from Wall Street lobbyists who want more bailout money and less accountability to taxpayers."

Officials with the committees said that while they are adhering to Obama's rules for the June fundraiser, they are comfortable with collecting donations from other sources for the rest of the year.

"The fundraising we do is fully transparent," said Jennifer Crider, spokeswoman for the DCCC. "We show where all the money is coming from."

The dispute illuminates the rapidly shifting terrain surrounding ethics and campaign finance issues during the early months of the Obama administration, which has taken dramatic steps to limit the influence of lobbyists and corporate interests at the White House but must also contend with the realities of political fundraising in Washington.

Obama won election in November with the help of an unprecedented fundraising campaign that relied on millions of small donors and a cutting-edge Internet donation system that drew on Obama's unique appeal as a candidate. He has pledged to continue to forgo political contributions from PACs and registered lobbyists. The DNC, which is headed by Obama pick

Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia and is home to Obama's 13 million-name e-mail list, has agreed to abide by the same rules.

"The president instituted these rules because he believes it's important to fulfilling his pledge to change the way business is done in Washington," said DNC spokesman Brad Woodhouse. "He thinks it's important whenever he's involved that those rules and restrictions are abided by."

But other parts of the Democratic money machine lag badly behind Republicans, and party officials say privately that they would fall even further behind without being able to collect money from PACs, lobbyists and other major donors. Federal Election Commission records show that the three major GOP campaign committees had more than \$20 million on hand at the end of March; the three Democratic committees, by contrast, were \$5.5 million in the red.

One Democratic official, who declined to be identified discussing political strategy, said the committees would be at a fundamental disadvantage to Republicans if they swore off all contributions from PACs, lobbyists and other large donors. "It's hard to understand this attack," the official said. "The fact that we're holding a different standard for this event at Obama's request should not be a reason for criticism."

The dispute over the fundraising rules also highlights continuing tensions between senior Democrats in Washington and "net-roots" activists, who played a major role in the 2004 presidential run by former Vermont governor Howard Dean and have become an influential force within the Democratic base. Change Congress, which endorses expanded public financing for candidates, was co-founded last year by Trippi, who managed Dean's campaign, and Lawrence Lessig, a Stanford University law professor and Internet activist.

The letter released today was signed by Lessig and 50 national and local political bloggers across the country.

"The public is tired of political gamesmanship," the letter reads. "Please recognize that your 'one day of reform' is absurd on its face and, if left standing, an embarrassment to your organizations. We urge you to announce a 365-day ban of PAC and lobbyist contributions -- at a minimum."

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY



Sam Stein

Progressives Call Out Dems' "Hypocritical" Fundraising

04/28/09



The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and its counterpart in the House likely thought they were making a big concession by forgoing lobbyists and political action committee cash during a June fundraising event with Barack Obama.

But, in a town where anger over the power of special interests groups reigns supreme, a group of progressives are now calling out the two committees for making the pledge only a one-night affair.

On Tuesday, a coalition of good government group executives, online organizers and state and local bloggers released a petition lashing out at the DSCC and DCCC. The committees, the letter reads, are "hypocritical" for publicizing the anti-lobbyist component of the president-attended fundraiser when, during the other 364 days of the year, they eagerly take in cash from these same sources.

Accompanied by a new website, www.StopFakeReform.com, the petition concludes that "most Americans" would deem such behavior "repulsive," and calls on the committees to "ban PAC and lobbyist contributions 365 days a year, just as President Obama did."

We read that you have chosen to accept President Obama's ban on fundraising from PACs and lobbyists, but only for June 18 -- the day he headlines a fundraiser for you.

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This isn't just hypocritical -- it defies common sense that you'd think the public would believe this was a principled stand against special-interest influence.

For 364 days a year, your rules would allow members of Congress to leave a hearing about regulating Wall Street and then walk straight to the DSCC and DCCC offices to "dial for dollars" from Wall Street lobbyists who want more bailout money and less accountability to taxpayers. Most Americans would find that conflict of interest repulsive.

The letter is signed by, among others Lawrence Lessig, Co-Founder of Change Congress; Nick Nyhart, President of Public Campaign; David Arkush, Director of Public Citizen's Congress Watch Division; Glenn Greenwald of Salon.com and Chris Bowers of OpenLeft. Joining them are bloggers in the home states of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and DSCC Chair Robert Menendez.

Officials with the DSCC did not immediately return a request for comment. Jen Crider, a spokesperson for the DCCC noted that: "Democrats enacted the strongest ethics and lobbying reform in history. Our fundraising is fully transparent."

The two party committees are caught in a bit of a bind when it comes to the scope and nature of their fundraising apparatuses. Obama set a standard of not accepting lobbyist and political action committee money during his run for the president, and he dictated that the Democratic National Committee do the same. For the House and Senate committees, however, practical political needs may overshadow those ethics standards. As noted by Politico: "In January and February, the period covered by their most recent electronically available filings, the DCCC raised \$990,000 from PACs and \$4.8 million from individuals -- a tally that includes contributions from lobbyists. The DSCC, meanwhile, had raised \$2.6 million from PACs and \$2.7 million from individuals."

Activists, bloggers rip DCCC, DSCC

By KENNETH P. VOGEL | 4/28/09



Clean elections advocates, liberal bloggers blast DCCC, DSCC for refusing lobbyist, PAC cash.
Photo: Composite image by POLITICO

A coalition of clean elections advocates and liberal bloggers is blasting the two major Democratic congressional fundraising committees as “hypocritical” for refusing lobbyist and political action committee cash when President Obama helps them raise money, but accepting it the rest of the time.

At the White House’s behest, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee last week agreed to forego contributions from lobbyists or political action committees at a June fundraiser in order to land Obama as the keynote speaker. But while Obama required both his presidential campaign and the Democratic National Committee to forego lobbyist and PAC cash year-round, the

DCCC and DSCC have only agreed to the Obama rules for fundraising efforts involving the president, and will continue accepting the funds the rest of the time.

That “isn’t just hypocritical – it defies common sense that you’d think the public would believe this was a principled stand against special-interest influence,” reads a letter to the party campaign committees from Change Congress, a coalition of nonprofit groups founded by Democratic operative Joe Trippi and Stanford Law School professor Lawrence Lessig, an online activist.

Change Congress advocates public financing of congressional campaigns, but it cast a wider net with its letter to the DCCC and DSCC, which is signed by clean elections groups including Public Citizen and liberal bloggers including the founders of OpenLeft, CrooksandLiars, Jack and Jill Politics and a slew of regional political bloggers.

Their letter, which also asks the congressional campaign committees to reject contributions from executives of bailed out companies and to support public financing of congressional elections, asserts that the committees’ “‘one day of reform’ is absurd on its face and, if left standing, an embarrassment to your organizations.”

DSCC spokesman Eric Schultz wouldn’t comment on the specific concerns raised by the letter, but said “all of our fundraising is completely transparent and follows the law.”

DCCC spokeswoman Jennifer Crider pointed out that her committee’s refusal of PAC and lobbyist cash isn’t just for one day – it’s for any fundraising effort in which Obama is involved,

including potential direct mail and email solicitations.

“Our fundraising is fully transparent,” she said, asserting that congressional Democrats proved their commitment to cleaning up politics by pushing through recent ethics reforms, including the 2007 Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, which required disclosure of contributions bundled by lobbyists. That provision was championed by Rep. Chris Van Hollen, the DCCC chairman, and then Illinois-Sen. Obama, who during the campaign cited it as among his top legislative accomplishments.

Obama also used his refusal of lobbyist and PAC cash during the campaign to assert he wasn’t beholden to the special interests he derided as controlling Washington.

Change Congress seemed willing to give Obama a pass for not pushing the DCCC and DSCC to accept his policy as he did with the DNC when he became the titular head of the party.

“It’s up to us on the outside who actually believe in the tone that he is trying to set to pressure the DSCC and DCCC to change the way that they do business,” said Change Congress spokesman Adam Green. The group plans to ask Obama soon to endorse congressional public financing, said Green, who pointed out that Obama backed such a proposal when he was in the Senate.

“That will be his real big test when it comes to reducing the clout of special interests,” said Green.

The White House did not respond to questions about whether Obama will endorse congressional public financing legislation or whether he will pressure the DCCC and the DSCC to refuse cash from lobbyists and PACs year-round.

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GOP Senators Leave Interior Post Empty But Fill Campaign Coffers With Big Oil Money

Thu May 14, 2009

WASHINGTON -- In a nod to the oil and gas industry, Republican Senators voted against cloture on the nomination of David J. Hayes to be Deputy Interior Secretary. A Public Campaign Action Fund analysis of campaign finance data found that the 38 Senators who voted against the nominee received more than four times the amount of donations, on average, from Big Oil than those Senators who voted for him -- \$456,757 compared to \$110,696.

Senate Republicans conceded they have no problem with the Hayes nomination but wanted to send a message to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and the Obama administration that they are still fuming from Salazar's decision to end oil and gas leases in Utah. In an almost party line vote, Democrats, absent three members, couldn't muster the 60 votes needed to bring the nomination to a final confirmation vote. In a procedural move, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) switched his vote to no so that he could bring the matter back up next week when Hayes is expected to be confirmed.

"This vote was purely symbolic and Republicans in the Senate wanted to deliver a message to the Administration on behalf of their Big Oil donors that they're looking out for political contributors," commented David Donnelly, national campaigns director of Public Campaign Action Fund. "Americans have had enough and want to end the pay-to-play system that has dominated our Congress. All Senators should follow the lead of Sens. Dick Durbin and Arlen Specter and support the Fair Elections Now Act. This important bill will end big money's dominance and make elections about voters, not big money donors."

Public Campaign Action Fund's analysis found that just five Senators who voted "no" -- Sens. John Cornyn (R-TX), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), James Inhofe (R-Okla.), John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) -- received approximately \$1.6 million more in campaign contributions over their career than all 61 Senators who supported the nomination -- including those absent from the vote -- and confirmation vote, according to data compiled from the Center for Responsive Politics' website. The analysis did not include newly appointed Senators in the averages who have not previously run for federal office. A full list of Senators and their total campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry follows this release.

The Fair Elections Now Act was introduced by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Arlen Specter (D-Pa.) and Reps. John Larson (D-Conn.) and Walter Jones (R-N.C.) on March 31, 2009. It would establish a system of small dollar contributions and public financing for congressional campaigns, freeing candidates from taking special interest dollars and the expectations that often accompany them.

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Based in Washington, D.C., Public Campaign Action Fund is a national non-profit non-partisan organization dedicated to sweeping campaign reform laws and holding politicians accountable.

<u>Senators Who Voted Yes</u>	<u>Oil/Gas Money</u>
Akaka (D-HI)	\$33,500
Baucus (D-MT)	\$277,715
Bayh (D-IN)	\$130,998
Begich (D-AK)	\$28,850
Bennet (D-CO)	N/A
Bingaman (D-NM)	\$402,529
Boxer (D-CA)	\$21,075
Brown (D-OH)	\$52,400
Burris (D-IL)	N/A
Byrd (D-WV)	\$65,250
Cantwell (D-WA)	\$30,000
Cardin (D-MD)	\$55,400
Carper (D-DE)	\$58,960
Casey (D-PA)	\$44,650
Conrad (D-ND)	\$267,003
Dodd (D-CT)	\$117,383
Dorgan (D-ND)	\$92,468
Durbin (D-IL)	\$62,550
Feingold (D-WI)	\$14,996
Feinstein (D-CA)	\$158,375
Gillibrand (D-NY)	\$6,418
Hagan (D-NC)	\$11,050
Harkin (D-IA)	\$175,186
Inouye (D-HI)	\$43,000
Johnson (D-SD)	\$88,506
Kaufman (D-DE)	N/A
Klobuchar (D-MN)	\$4,250
Kohl (D-WI)	\$300
Kyl (R-AZ)	\$320,882
Landrieu (D-LA)	\$694,044
Lautenberg (D-NJ)	\$88,300
Leahy (D-VT)	\$9,250
Levin (D-MI)	\$92,244
Lieberman (ID-CT)	\$177,800
Lincoln (D-AR)	\$268,375
McCaskill (D-MO)	\$29,850
Menendez (D-NJ)	\$83,450
Merkley (D-OR)	\$2,000
Murray (D-WA)	\$41,400
Nelson (D-FL)	\$58,900
Nelson (D-NE)	\$147,955

Pryor (D-AR)	\$137,900
Reed (D-RI)	\$12,350
Rockefeller (D-WV)	\$289,650
Sanders (I-VT)	\$4,550
Schumer (D-NY)	\$166,851
Shaheen (D-NH)	\$19,525
Snowe (R-ME)	\$119,554
Specter (D-PA)	\$436,128
Stabenow (D-MI)	\$26,850
Tester (D-MT)	\$7,200
Udall (D-CO)	\$68,210
Udall (D-NM)	\$118,500
Warner (D-VA)	\$49,350
Webb (D-VA)	\$11,000
Whitehouse (D-RI)	\$19,050
Wyden (D-OR)	\$78,600

Switched Vote

Reid (D-NV)	\$265,736
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Senators Not Voting

Kennedy (D-MA)	\$136,901
Kerry (D-MA)	\$407,090
Mikulski (D-MD)	\$45,060

Senators Who Voted No

Alexander (R-TN)	\$392,775
Barrasso (R-WY)	\$162,250
Bennett (R-UT)	\$202,165
Bond (R-MO)	\$446,310
Brownback (R-KS)	\$387,839
Bunning (R-KY)	\$311,456
Burr (R-NC)	\$348,652
Chambliss (R-GA)	\$343,642
Coburn (R-OK)	\$349,062
Cochran (R-MS)	\$226,235
Collins (R-ME)	\$168,293
Corker (R-TN)	\$280,100
Cornyn (R-TX)	\$1,494,825
Crapo (R-ID)	\$227,199
DeMint (R-SC)	\$134,588
Ensign (R-NV)	\$400,524
Enzi (R-WY)	\$298,400
Graham (R-SC)	\$119,525
Grassley (R-IA)	\$152,300
Gregg (R-NH)	\$87,405

Hatch (R-UT)	\$241,479
Hutchison (R-TX)	\$2,145,825
Inhofe (R-OK)	\$1,219,173
Isakson (R-GA)	\$146,014
Johanns (R-NE)	\$72,850
Lugar (R-IN)	\$365,754
Martinez (R-FL)	\$168,850
McCain (R-AZ)	\$2,608,364
McConnell (R-KY)	\$838,011
Murkowski (R-AK)	\$220,663
Risch (R-ID)	\$69,800
Roberts (R-KS)	\$394,200
Sessions (R-AL)	\$292,300
Shelby (R-AL)	\$304,300
Thune (R-SD)	\$482,872
Vitter (R-LA)	\$532,135
Voinovich (R-OH)	\$359,329
Wicker (R-MS)	\$361,310

SOURCE Public Campaign Action Fund



July 22, 2009

It's Time to Implement 'Fair Elections'

By Alan Patricof and Arnold Hiatt
Special to Roll Call

Between the two of us, we have more than a half-century of experience donating and raising political money. So we've seen firsthand how the cost of campaigning has skyrocketed. The 2008 elections broke candidate spending records, as likely will the 2010 and 2012 political cycles, unless Congress makes significant changes.

The presidential race cost more than \$1.8 billion, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. Paid less attention to, but still quite costly, were the 470 House and Senate seats that were at stake last year. Combined, those elections cost roughly \$2 billion.

Compare this to the situation three decades ago. In 1976, it cost, on average, \$87,000 to win a House seat and \$609,000 to garner a Senate seat. By 2008, those averages had escalated to roughly \$1.3 million and \$8.1 million.

The money pressure on candidates is intense. Our incumbents are forced to a third of their hours by one academic estimate toward finding their next campaign dollar. That's time that could be better spent on serving constituents, developing policy, winning over colleagues and enacting legislation. The potential pool of new candidates shrinks as many talented and public-spirited individuals decide not to run because of money concerns, depriving our nation of extraordinary leaders.

Just as candidates tire of the endless rounds of calls asking people for money, many donors have also grown tired of this arrangement. Neither of us will sit on the sidelines while we can help good people get elected with our donations, but we'd rather have lawmakers and candidates solving problems and making their case to the voters instead of being on the fundraising circuit.

There is a practical, proven way to do this: "Fair Elections" campaign finance reform. It has been in place in Maine and Arizona for five full political cycles, recently took root in Connecticut, and is the law in other states and cities as well. Under these systems, voters make small contributions to help their chosen candidates meet qualifying thresholds. Then, qualified candidates receive a public grant. If they require more money for their races, they may accept additional small contributions,

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which are matched by limited public funds on a 4-to-1 basis. At no point during the campaign can a Fair Elections candidate receive a contribution of more than \$100.

It's a system that embraces the burst of small donations we saw in last year's races. It attracts new people to run for office regardless of their ability to raise significant sums of money or self-finance their campaigns. The candidate's time is refocused on voters and the issues of the day. And the public perception of candidates indebted to big campaign givers disappears.

Most importantly, this kind of reform works. In states with Fair Elections, the donations arms race is no longer dominant, and funding promotes a level playing field. Where it has been enacted, more candidates are competing for office and elected officials are more accountable to their voters. In Arizona, eight of 10 current statewide officeholders ran and won using the system, as did more than 80 percent of state legislators in Connecticut and Maine.

The idea is gaining traction in Congress. Drawing on the successful state experience, the bipartisan, bicameral Fair Elections Now Act, introduced by Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Arlen Specter (D-Pa.) in the Senate and by John Larson (D-Conn.) and Walter Jones Jr. (R-N.C.) in the House, would give candidates the option of running for Congress without raising big contributions from the very people who will lobby them post-Election Day. Similarly, the proposed bipartisan Presidential Funding Act would modernize the outdated partial presidential public financing system, strengthening the voice of small donors within the process.

The time has come to make changes in the way we finance political candidates so that the 2008 elections will be the last in which campaigning for votes is undermined by the race for money.

Alan Patricof is managing director of Greycroft. Arnold Hiatt is a former CEO of the Stride Rite Corp.

April 30, 2009

New Hampshire Senate Passes Gay Marriage Bill



Jim Cole/Associated Press
Senator Margaret Wood Hassan discussing the marriage bill.

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

CONCORD, N.H. — The New Hampshire Senate voted narrowly on Wednesday to legalize same-sex marriage, paving the way for the state to potentially become the fifth in the nation — and the third this month — to allow gay couples to wed.

The Democratic-controlled Senate voted 13 to 11 in favor of the bill, but only after a last-minute amendment strengthened language granting legal protections for religious groups and organizations that do not want to perform or help carry out same-sex marriages.

The House, which approved the marriage bill by a seven-vote margin last month, must vote on the Senate's amended version. But supporters and opponents predicted that version would pass the House, which is more liberal and was more enthusiastic about same-sex marriage from the start.

It is unclear whether Gov. John Lynch, a Democrat, will veto the bill or whether the new language will persuade him to endorse it. The bill probably cannot gain enough support in either house for an override, so its fate almost certainly rests with Mr. Lynch.

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The governor has consistently opposed same-sex marriage, but he could also let the bill become law without his signature. Mr. Lynch did not reveal his intentions after the Senate's vote but restated his belief that the state's two-year-old civil-union law provides sufficient rights and protections to gay couples.

"To achieve further real progress," he said in a statement, "the federal government would need to take action to recognize New Hampshire civil unions."

The Defense of Marriage Act, passed by Congress in 1996, prohibits the federal government from recognizing same-sex marriage. It denies federal benefits, like Social Security survivors' payments, to spouses in such marriages.

Brian Brown, executive director of the National Organization for Marriage, which was established to fight same-sex marriage around the country, said the group would intensively lobby Mr. Lynch to veto the bill.

"This vote is in no way representative of what folks in New Hampshire want," Mr. Brown said, adding that the Senate leadership had used "arm-twisting" to change the votes of a few crucial Democrats. "If the governor is going to stand by his words," he added, "he will veto this bill."

To some extent, the support for same-sex marriage reflects a sea change in New Hampshire politics since 2006, when Democrats gained control of the legislature for the first time in over a century. While staunchly conservative on fiscal matters, New Hampshire has been less so on social issues, partly because its residents' famous libertarian streak resists government intrusion in personal matters.

But last-minute politicking also played a role in the Senate's vote. Last week the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 3 to 2 against the marriage measure, and the committee's chairwoman, Senator Deborah Reynolds, a Democrat, said afterward that New Hampshire was simply not ready for same-sex marriage.

Ms. Reynolds, the only Democrat who opposed the bill in committee, emphasized that civil unions were still new in New Hampshire and that Vermont, whose legislature approved same-sex marriage on April 7, had done so only after living with civil unions for nine years.

But on Wednesday, Ms. Reynolds, who represents a fairly conservative region, said the new language made the bill acceptable. She described it as a compromise that was "respectful to both sides of the debate and meets our shared goals of equality under the state laws for all of the people of New Hampshire."

Gov. Jim Douglas of Vermont, a Republican, vetoed that state's same-sex marriage bill, but the Democratic-controlled legislature overrode his veto, making Vermont the first state to adopt same-sex marriage legislatively instead of through the courts. Days earlier, the Iowa Supreme Court found a state law banning same-sex marriage to be a violation of the State Constitution.

In New Hampshire, more than 650 same-sex unions have been registered since they became legal in January 2008.

Same-sex marriage was among several contentious bills that the Senate took up Wednesday, all passed by the House in recent weeks. One, a measure to allow people with certain illnesses to possess marijuana for medical purposes, passed in a vote of 14 to 10. But the Senate voted unanimously against a bill that would guarantee transgender people protection from discrimination in housing and employment. It also put off action on a bill to repeal the death penalty.

Democrats hold a 14-to-10 majority in the Senate, but it is generally more centrist and cautious than the House, where Democrats hold a 223-to-175 majority.

Opponents of same-sex marriage appeared better organized here than in Vermont. Cornerstone Research Institute waged an intense phone campaign with help from the National Organization for Marriage, but the New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition and other gay-rights groups also lobbied fiercely.

Mo Baxley, the coalition's executive director, described the Senate bill as a fair compromise.

"It is in keeping with New Hampshire's live-free-or-die tradition to stand up for individual liberties and against discrimination of any kind," Ms. Baxley said.

"I have to say," she added, "America is at a turning point."

August 30, 2009

Gay marriage pioneers look back

Law special to Vermont couples who led the way

*By Nancy Remsen
Free Press Staff Writer*

A dozen years ago, Stan Baker lent his name and the story of his love and commitment to partner Peter Harrigan to a cause and a lawsuit: the fight for marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Tuesday, the legal and legislative events set in motion in 1997, when Baker and Harrigan and two other same-sex couples tried unsuccessfully to get marriage licenses in their local town offices, culminates with a historic change in Vermont marriage law.

A decade after the Vermont Supreme Court ruled in the Baker case that the state constitution guaranteed same-sex couples rights and benefits identical to those granted to heterosexual married couples, and nine years after the Legislature enacted civil unions as the remedy, marriage in Vermont now becomes available to any two individuals.

The Legislature enacted new marriage provisions in April, overcoming a gubernatorial veto and making Vermont the first state to legalize same-sex marriage by legislative vote rather than judicial decree.

"This thing my name is attached to has reached the conclusion I wanted it to reach," Baker said. "I'm grateful. I'm thrilled. I feel a real sense of completion — a kind of 'Wow!'"

Baker said he plans to take time Tuesday to let the historic nature of the day sink in, despite a hectic schedule: "I want to just be present with it, feel it."

The other couples to the lawsuit say they, too, will savor the moment.

"It is what we initially started out to do," said Lois Farnham of Burlington, whose committed partnership with Holly Puterbaugh runs nearly 37 years.

"We never thought we would see this in our lifetime," said Stacy Jolles of South Burlington, who has been with partner Nina Beck since 1991.

"When Nina proposed to me 18 years ago on a beach in California, we were certain we were just creating our own ritual to mark our love for each other," Jolles said. "Although it seemed that legal marriage was just a fantasy, we committed ourselves to working toward that goal."

Farnham and Puterbaugh, who formed a civil union on the first day the parallel institution to marriage became legal in 2000, will marry Saturday.

Jolles and Beck will exchange their civil union for a marriage in two weeks.

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Baker and Harrigan, however, will wait to marry until next August and the 10th anniversary of their civil union.

“That makes it more memorable,” Baker said.

“We already feel married,” Harrigan added, recounting details of their ceremony in 2000 at Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Burlington and the reception that followed aboard a boat on Lake Champlain. “We really did it up big.”

In the meantime, their civil union — and those of any same-sex couple that doesn’t marry — remains a valid protection of their rights in Vermont even though the state will stop offering new civil unions after Monday.

Getting involved

Right time, right voice, might explain how Baker and Harrigan ended up as plaintiffs in Vermont’s gay-marriage lawsuit. A friend thought Baker had a good voice to narrate a video Vermont Freedom to Marry was making to help with a public-education effort.

The video, intended to reach out to straight Vermonters, moved the two men to consider what role they could play in the marriage movement.

The pair met in 1993, moved in together and then bought a house. By 1996, Harrigan said, “we were at the point where a straight couple might have considered marriage, but that wasn’t open to us.”

Freedom to Marry had two female couples willing to challenge Vermont’s marriage law, but no male couple. “We felt, if not us, who?” Harrigan said. With secure jobs and family support, he explained, “we were safe enough we could step forward.”

The decision plunged the pair into the public spotlight, but Baker praised Vermonters for their civility during even the tensest times. “Vermont is able to let people have their private lives,” he said. “Nobody harassed us.”

Accepting the Legislature’s compromise in 2000 — civil unions instead of marriage — was a difficult but necessary stepping stone, the pair agreed.

Still, gaining access to civil marriage in Vermont falls short of the ultimate goal, Baker said. “The end of the journey,” he said, “is when marriage is recognized federally.”

Family matters

Beck and Jolles committed themselves to a shared life in a religious ceremony March 22, 1992, before family and friends — but it wasn’t a legal marriage.

“We vowed at the time that if there was ever a way to make it legal, we wanted to be part of that,” Jolles said. The birth of their first son, Noah, showed them all the roadblocks and shortcomings they faced as a family compared with a married man and woman with children.

For example, Beck was the biological parent of Noah, and Jolles had adopted him. “We realized that while we each had a legal relationship to Noah, we didn’t have a legal relationship to each other,” Jolles said.

Like Baker and Harrigan, Beck and Jolles enjoyed support from family, friends and employers.

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"We weren't like a lot of gay and lesbian families that stood to lose family, friends or jobs if they became involved in the freedom-to-marry lawsuit," Jolles said. "We felt since we were lucky and were not risking anything, that we had to put ourselves forward."

The couple's commitment to the cause was tested. In the midst of the litigation, 2-year-old Noah died of a rare heart malady. Their second son, Seth, was born a month before the Supreme Court announced its decision. During some of the lengthy legislative debates in 2000, Beck or Jolles sat in the gallery cuddling their infant.

Last winter, Seth, now 9, returned to the Statehouse with his parents.

"Seth was able to witness the legislative process and is just as excited as we are to see that this change has come," Jolles said. She added, "September 1 is a critical step toward all families' receiving the same rights and responsibilities in Vermont, and hopefully eventually across the country."

Beck and Jolles plan a party Sept. 13 to celebrate their ability to enter into the legal contract of marriage.

"We got 'married' 17 years ago," Jolles said. "It just took a while to get the paperwork."

Their turn

Farnham and Puterbaugh joined the lawsuit because they thought it was their turn.

"We had benefited from other people sticking their necks out," Farnham said, noting she had been able to receive health-insurance coverage as a domestic partner under Puterbaugh's policy at the University of Vermont.

They also believed the public needed to meet some of the people behind the movement, Farnham said: "People told us we were a role model."

During their 37-year relationship, they raised a daughter and pursued careers, Farnham as a school nurse and Puterbaugh as a college math teacher. They are now retired.

The pair embraced civil unions in 2000 even though the new institution fell short of what they wanted. Cameras captured the moment Farnham and Puterbaugh entered the South Burlington town office to get their license on the first day civil unions became legal, nine years ago.

Farnham noted how quickly events elsewhere, such as the 2004 Massachusetts court decision legalizing same-sex marriage, transformed the radical concept of civil unions into a conservative fallback. Still, she sees civil unions as a step that Vermont had to take.

"Marriage would not have passed then," she said. "Now we Vermonters are ready for it."

The couple talked about having a small ceremony to mark their official marriage, "but it looks like now there are going to be 100 people there," Farnham said. It will be a casual — but catered — picnic in a park, she said.

"Many people want a chance to celebrate."

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Additional Facts

Gay rights, marriage milestones

- **1975:** Plainfield same-sex couple denied marriage license.
 - **1992:** Vermont civil rights act identifies sexual orientation as protected class under all the state's anti-discrimination laws. Addison County couple become first lesbians to adopt a child.
 - **1993:** Vermont Supreme Court rules a woman can adopt her same-sex partner's children — the first such ruling in the country.
 - **1995:** Two women issued marriage license in South Burlington, but by order of city attorney the marriage isn't recorded.
 - **1996:** Vermont adoption-reform law makes clear same-sex couples may adopt.
 - **1997:** Three same-sex couples in Vermont are denied marriage licenses, and they sue.
 - **1999:** Vermont Supreme Court rules same-sex couples have rights to all benefits given to opposite-sex couples who marry. Ruling compels Legislature to establish a legal remedy or allow same-sex couples to marry.
 - **2000:** Vermont enacts civil-unions law granting same-sex couples the same rights as men and women who marry.
 - **2001:** Vermont House of Representatives votes to repeal civil-unions law, but Senate lets bill die.
 - **2003:** Rep. David Zuckerman, P-Burlington, and Rep. Sarah Edwards, P-Brattleboro, sponsor same-sex marriage bill, but bill dies.
 - **2005:** Rep. Mark Larson, D-Burlington, introduces same-sex-marriage bill, but it dies.
 - **2007:** Same-sex-marriage bill introduced again in Vermont House, this time with 33 sponsors. It dies, but Legislature creates a commission to document whether civil unions are delivering as promised.
 - **2009:** Vermont Legislature enacts same-sex marriage law after votes in the House and Senate to override a gubernatorial veto. Law takes effect Wednesday.
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N.H. ties gay-marriage knot

Revised bill assures religious protections

By Eric Moskowitz, Globe Staff | June 4, 2009

CONCORD - New Hampshire became the fifth state in New England yesterday and the sixth in the country to allow same-sex marriage, as lawmakers approved and the governor signed revised legislation designed to balance personal and religious freedom.

Hang-ups over the wording had threatened to kill the bill multiple times this spring, but in a flurry of activity yesterday, Senate and House lawmakers approved a final version acceptable to Governor John Lynch.

"Today we're standing up for the liberties of same-sex couples by making clear that they will receive the same rights, responsibilities, and respect under New Hampshire law," said Lynch, a former opponent of gay marriage, in the Executive Council Chamber just before he signed the bill. "But we are also standing up for religious liberties."

Lynch, a Democrat, called it "a day to celebrate in New Hampshire." The law, which takes effect Jan. 1, 2010, clarifies that religious institutions and their employees are free to determine whether to participate in weddings between gay and lesbian couples and whether to recognize same-sex unions granted by the state and other religious groups.

Amid the cheers of lawmakers and activists who crowded in to watch him sign the legislation, Lynch also expressed support for changing federal marriage law to allow the marriages. It was a scene scarcely imaginable just a few years ago.

In the 200-seat House Gallery, supporters of same-sex marriage outnumbered opponents approximately 10 to 1. After lawmakers cast the decisive vote, the gallery erupted in thunderous applause.

"We're thrilled to death," said Mo Baxley, executive director of the New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition, which led the campaign to legalize same-sex marriage. "We're equal. Equal isn't nothing - it's everything."

As people spilled out amid hugs and cheers, same-sex marriage opponent Barbara Haines stood to the side and whispered, "Repent, repent."

"The basis of marriage is in God, and he created the male and the female to be married and have a family," Haines, a 54-year-old architecture student from Manchester who leads her own ministry, said as she stood beneath a row of oil paintings of 19th-century officials. "These people are deceived."

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Outside the State House, supporters touted messages of individual liberty, equality for same-sex couples, and freedom for the religious institutions that want to consecrate their marriages. Opponents focused on religion.

"It's not for us to go against what the Creator has said, in his word," said Darla Davis, a 47-year-old homemaker from Pembroke, N.H., who carried a sign reading "Truth: One Man One Woman." Davis brought her two adolescent sons because, she said, she knew that same-sex marriage advocates would bring a large, vocal crowd.

"I know God is on my side," she said, sitting on a bench with a friend at the plaza outside the granite-block State House. "I don't feel outnumbered."

Until the 2006 state elections, Republicans had more than a century of nearly uninterrupted control of the New Hampshire Legislature, but a new Democratic majority legalized civil unions in 2007. A marriage bill proposed this year seemed less than a sure bet but squeaked through the House in March.

Massachusetts and Connecticut already allow gay marriages. Recent legislation in Maine and Vermont legalized same-sex marriage there, to take effect in September.

Beyond New England, Iowa is the only state in which gay and lesbian people can marry. California previously issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples but ceased doing so last year after voters enacted Proposition 8, a ballot measure that ended same-sex marriage in the state. The California Supreme Court upheld that ban last week.

Many of the supporters in New Hampshire yesterday came from Massachusetts. Christine Hurley, 38, of Quincy, said she was motivated by the California high court's action.

"I think it's important for people to come out and stand up for what they believe in," said Hurley, who had previously demonstrated only in Massachusetts. "We have to win it state by state."

The New Hampshire bill nearly died in the Senate, but lawmakers amended it on the floor to add language protecting religious freedoms. It passed narrowly, winning 13 of 14 Democrats but none of the 10 Republicans. Although the House agreed to that version in May, Lynch said he would be forced to veto the bill without the addition of even more wording to ensure religious freedom.

The Senate agreed, but the House balked two weeks ago, declining to approve the revised bill by a narrow margin. The measure went instead to a joint committee for more refining, and supporters made sure they had sufficient attendance when the legislation returned yesterday. It passed in the House, 198 to 176.

At a celebratory rally on the State House plaza, Bishop V. Gene Robinson, the openly gay leader of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, told supporters to savor the moment so they can tell their children and grandchildren "you were here and you made it happen."

But Robinson also encouraged younger members of the crowd to study history and realize that the gains had come only after years of struggle - with more work ahead.

"I couldn't be prouder to be the speaker of the New Hampshire House today," said Representative Terie Norelli. Citing the turnaround by some lawmakers who had rejected even civil unions two years ago, she added: "It's an evolutionay process." ■

In Vt., same-sex couples rush to wed

Dawn of new law draws cheers, jeers



At a minute after midnight, Bill Slimback, left, and Bob Sullivan, both of Whitehall, N.Y., married in Waterbury, Vt. (Andy Duback/Associated Press)

By John Curran
Associated Press / September 2, 2009

DUXBURY, Vt. - After 17 years together, Bill Slimback and Bob Sullivan couldn't wait another minute to get married. So they didn't.

With Vermont's new law allowing same-sex marriage only a minute old, they tied the knot in a midnight ceremony at a rustic lodge, becoming one of the first couples to legally wed under a law that took effect Tuesday.

The start of same-sex weddings, which came nine years after Vermont's first-in-the-nation civil unions law, prompted demonstrations yesterday in Montpelier and Burlington.

Five members of the Westboro Baptist Church, based in Topeka, Kansas, carried antigay signs and sang songs but were outnumbered by counter-demonstrators preaching love and tolerance.

The state's same-sex marriage era dawned well before sunrise, with a pair of midnight weddings.

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At the Moose Meadow Lodge in Duxbury, Slimback and Sullivan tied the knot at 12:01 a.m. The two men from Whitehall, N.Y., spoke their vows under a large, wall-mounted moose head, promised their love, exchanged rings, and held hands during a modest 17-minute ceremony. Moose Meadow Lodge co-owner Greg Trulson, who is also a justice of the peace, presided.

“It feels wonderful,” said Slimback, 38, an out-of-work Teamster who is taking Sullivan’s last name as his own. “It’s a day I’ve been long waiting for, and a day I truly, honestly thought would never come.”

Slimback said he and Sullivan, 41, have long wanted to cement their relationship with a wedding, but because they couldn’t legally marry in New York, they chose Vermont.

Vermont is one of four states that allow same-sex couples to marry. Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Iowa are the others.

New Hampshire’s law takes effect on Jan. 1.

Vermont, which invented civil unions in 2000 after a same-sex couple challenged the inequality of state marriage statutes, was a mecca for gay couples who, to that point, had no way to officially recognize their relationships.

Since then, other states have allowed same-sex marriage, as did Vermont, which in April became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage through a legislative decree and not a court case.

In another midnight ceremony, Claire Williams, 34, and Cori Giroux, 27, were married in their South Burlington home, with about 20 people attending. They were wed by attorney Beth Robinson, a founder of Vermont Freedom to Marry.

California's gay marriage trailblazers look East for signs of progress

Tuesday, Apr. 21, 2009

California's legislators were gay-rights trailblazers when a majority passed the first same-sex marriage bill in the United States in 2005.

But Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the bill, and voters passed a ban on gay marriage with Proposition 8. Now gay activists in the Golden State find themselves looking East for fresh inspiration.

In a dizzying series of events, Iowa's Supreme Court and Vermont's legislature legalized gay marriage just this month.

Now New Hampshire and New York – with the Empire State governor's blessing last week – are considering their own state laws approving marriage for same-sex couples.

Marc Solomon, marriage director for Equality California, said his group is hopeful that the Iowa decision will have an impact on public opinion in California, where the state's highest court must issue its second ruling on gay marriage rights by early June.

"Iowa is not thought of as, quote, a usual suspect. It's not Massachusetts. It's not the liberal Northeast," said Solomon, who fought for same-sex marriage in Massachusetts.

Frank Schubert, the Sacramento-based campaign director for Proposition 8, said gay activists' national strategy seems to focus on organizing heavily in states that don't have ballot-measure procedures like California's that could allow voters to foil gay marriage laws or court decisions.

"The other side certainly picked up a few victories in recent weeks," he said.

The battle over gay marriage in California has been waged for nearly a decade in all possible legal areas – in the Legislature, at the ballot box in 2000 and 2009, and the state's Supreme Court, also twice.

Californians are now waiting for justices to rule on whether voters had the right to change the state constitution last November with Proposition 8, which defines marriage as only between a man and a woman.

California's high court made history last May when it issued a 4-3 decision that gays had a constitutional right to marry – but that ruling was handed down before voters changed the constitution.

Iowa's Supreme Court referred to the California court's decision when it declared on April 3 that gays had a basic right to marry.

The National Organization for Marriage – an anti-gay-marriage group – will support attempts to overturn the Iowa court decision with a ballot initiative, said Maggie Gallagher, the group's president.

"It's not over in Iowa," she said. "From where we sit, this really energizes us. We're finding that activists are flocking to us. We're going to fight it in New Hampshire and New York. We're going to fight it everywhere."

But Gallagher acknowledged that it would far more "arduous" to challenge the Iowa court ruling at the ballot box than it was in California.

Proposition 8's Schubert, who now does work for Gallagher's group, said it would take four years to get a measure banning gay marriage through Iowa's legislature.

To put a measure on the ballot, a majority of lawmakers must vote for it twice in two legislative sessions.

"It's not going to happen," Schubert said of attempts to overturn Iowa's court ruling.

On April 7, on the heels of the Iowa decision, Vermont's legislature made Vermont the fourth state to legalize gay marriage after lawmakers garnered enough votes to override a veto by the governor.

Vermont doesn't have an initiative process, Schubert noted.

Solomon said that Massachusetts has a ballot process, but that gay-marriage opponents were unable to meet the requirements to get a measure before voters that would have overturned a 2004 decision by that state's high court to allow same-sex couples to wed.

In Massachusetts, he said, a ballot measure first needs to pass through two legislative sessions with a quarter of lawmakers approving it.

The momentum is gone now, he said, because "most people in Massachusetts are fine with gay marriage, or don't care that much."

He recalled organizing meetings in Massachusetts between lawmakers and gay couples "who told their stories" and tried to generate a sense of "common humanity."

Gay-rights activists in California say they still can take credit as a leader in the movement despite the fact that their side is making more progress in some other states.

"We are slowly changing the country," said a jubilant Richard Aviles, 18, a self-described Chicano gay teen from Los Angeles.

Aviles and scores of other teens were in Sacramento on Monday for a Capitol rally and to press lawmakers to pass state bills declaring a Harvey Milk Day and to permit teens to seek mental health services without parental permission.

Opinion surveys show a majority of younger voters are supportive of same-sex marriage. It's a matter of time, gay activists say, before public opinion shifts enough that they can win a gay-marriage initiative at the ballot box.

Zac Toomay, 16, Uriel Mendoza, 17, and Graham Smith, 18, shared their personal stories with staff members of Republican legislators from their hometowns in San Luis Obispo and Ventura counties.

Harvey Milk is a figure they look up to, they said, and gay teenagers would benefit from a bill that would allow them to seek confidential counseling.

Prop. 8 stands; more ballot battles ahead

Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer

Wednesday, May 27, 2009



(05-26) 14:30 PDT SAN FRANCISCO -- California's voters, not its courts, are the final judges of same-sex couples' right to marry. And even if they're barred from marrying, gays and lesbians are not the victims of unconstitutional discrimination.

Those were the two clearest messages in Tuesday's 6-1 ruling by the state Supreme Court that upheld Proposition 8, the November initiative that amended the California Constitution to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. They came from a court that had seemingly said something quite different a year earlier.

In May 2008, a 4-3 majority led by Chief Justice Ronald George said California's voter-approved law that allowed only opposite-sex couples to marry violated the rights of gays and lesbians to choose their spouses and discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation.

Defenders of the law argued that it merely preserved the traditional definition of marriage and that same-sex couples who registered as domestic partners had all the rights of heterosexual married couples under state law. George responded then that denying gays and lesbians the "historic and highly respected designation of marriage" deprived their families of "equal dignity and respect."

But on Tuesday - after an \$85 million campaign that ended Nov. 4 with Prop. 8 winning 52 percent of the vote - George led a majority that declared the right to marry was not essential for gays' and lesbians' equality and that the people were the ultimate deciders of what should be included in their Constitution.

Same-sex weddings stand

The 18,000 same-sex couples married before Nov. 4 remain legally wed, the chief justice said in a unanimous portion of the ruling. Applying Prop. 8 retroactively to dissolve those marriages, he said, would disrupt "thousands of actions taken in reliance on (last year's ruling) by these same-sex couples, their employers, their creditors and many others."

But George said California's domestic-partner law and portions of the 2008 ruling that survived Prop. 8 give same-sex couples "the same substantive core benefits" as heterosexual spouses.

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Those include "the constitutional right to enter into an officially recognized and protected family relationship," he said.

The "sole, albeit significant, exception," George said, is that "the designation of 'marriage' is ... now reserved for opposite-sex couples."

Separate but equal

The lone dissenter, Justice Carlos Moreno, said the court was accepting the same separate-but-equal status for gays and lesbians that it rejected last year.

"Granting same-sex couples all of the rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples, except the right to call their officially recognized and protected family relationship a marriage, still denies them equal treatment," Moreno said. He said the ruling "places at risk the state constitutional rights of all disfavored minorities."

The majority, however, said that unlike most other states, California gives its voters nearly unlimited power to define constitutional rights, including the rights of minorities.

The main legal argument by Prop. 8's opponents - two groups of same-sex couples, local governments led by the city of San Francisco, and a collection of civil-rights, gay-rights and feminist organizations - was that the state Constitution contains a "core guarantee" of equality that limits voters' amendment powers. A minority group's fundamental rights, they argued, should not be subject to repeal by majority vote.

Prop. 8, they said, was so far-reaching that it was a constitutional revision, which, unlike an amendment, requires legislative approval or a constitutional convention before reaching the ballot.

No 'fundamental' change

George, however, said revisions are measures that "make a far-reaching change in the fundamental governmental structure or the foundational power of its branches" - something he said Prop. 8 did not do.

"It is not our role to pass judgment on the wisdom or relative merit" of the state's constitutional amendment process, George said in a 136-page opinion. Any further change in the marriage law, he said, "must find its expression at the ballot box."

The majority included Justice Joyce Kennard, who joined last year's ruling legalizing same-sex marriage, and Justices Marvin Baxter, Ming Chin and Carol Corrigan, who voted to uphold the earlier law. Justice Kathryn Mickle Werdegar, part of last year's majority, agreed with George's conclusion on Prop. 8 but not with his reasoning, saying the court should not uphold constitutional amendments that eliminate minority rights.

Several analysts said a court that boldly declared new protections for gays and lesbians a year ago has trimmed its sails since voters asserted their own constitutional prerogatives.

"This seems to be a green light for voters to do whatever they want, in terms of expanding or contracting rights," as long as they don't violate the U.S. Constitution, said Richard Hasen, who teaches election law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. He said George and his colleagues have evidently concluded that "social change is better accomplished through popular will than through the court."

The right to amend

"The last decision was about the right to marry. This decision is about the right of the people of California to amend the Constitution," said Evan Gerstmann, chairman of the political science department at Loyola and author of two books on the constitutional rights of gays and lesbians. "I think the court simply feared popular backlash undermining their power."

Tuesday's ruling was the court's third on the subject since 2004, when the justices intervened a month after San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom authorized the city clerk to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The court nullified the nearly 4,000 City Hall weddings in August 2004 and ruled that Newsom lacked authority to defy the state's marriage law - the same law that the court struck down in May 2008.

Newsom said Tuesday he was both "disappointed and resolved" by the latest ruling, regretting that the issue must again be put before the voters.

Federal courts next?

Prop. 8, meanwhile, is heading for federal court, though not through the efforts of established gay-rights groups, which tried to avoid raising an issue that could bring the marriage dispute before the conservative-led U.S. Supreme Court.

An organization called the American Foundation for Equal Rights plans to announce a federal court challenge to the ballot measure in Los Angeles today. Its lawyers are Theodore Olson, who represented George W. Bush in the dispute over who won the 2000 presidential election, and David Boies, Al Gore's attorney in the same case.

Adversaries in last year's campaign had anticipated Tuesday's ruling after hearing the justices' comments at a hearing in March, and are looking ahead to another battle as early as November 2010 on an initiative to overturn Prop. 8.

Back to voters

"Despite this injustice, we are prepared to return to the ballot box together with our allies to restore the freedom to marry," said Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California, which took part in the legal challenge. "As more and more states across the nation allow same-sex

couples to marry," he said, he is confident that California voters will respond to the next campaign.

Same-sex marriage has been legalized by the Supreme Courts of Iowa and Connecticut and the legislatures of Vermont and Maine. Those states joined Massachusetts, whose high court issued the first such ruling in 2003.

Ron Prentice, chairman of Protect Marriage, the sponsor of Prop. 8, said his coalition will fight any renewed effort to redefine marriage in California.

"We will now turn our attention to public education and outreach," he said, "so that citizens come to better understand and appreciate the many benefits that traditional marriage provides for society and our families."

What was said about Tuesday's California Supreme Court ruling upholding Proposition 8

From the majority opinion by Chief Justice Ronald George:

Proposition 8 "carves out a narrow and limited exception to these state constitutional rights (of equality and privacy), reserving the official designation of the term 'marriage' for the union of opposite-sex couples ... but leaving undisturbed all of the other extremely significant aspects of a same-sex couple's state constitutional right to establish an officially recognized and protected family relationship."

From the concurrence by Justice Kathryn Mickle Werdegar:

The majority opinion "avoids the daunting task of reconciling with our constitutional tradition a voter initiative clearly motivated at least in part by group bias."

Prop. 8 is a valid amendment because, "excepting the name, same-sex couples are entitled to enjoy all the rights of marriage, leaving the state with a continuing duty to "eliminate the remaining important differences between marriage and domestic partnership, both in substance and perception."

From the dissent by Justice Carlos Moreno:

The ruling "places at risk the state constitutional rights of all disfavored minorities. It weakens the status of our state Constitution as a bulwark of fundamental rights for minorities protected from the will of the majority."

"Their decision says minorities do not matter. This has great implications. Watch out, everyone - who is next? Who is that 51 or 52 percent going to come after next?"

- **state Sen. Mark Leno, D-San Francisco**

"I believe that one day, either the people or the courts will recognize gay marriage."

- **Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger**

"I never thought I'd live in a state where the legislative branch, the executive branch and the judicial branch are all made irrelevant in a context of protecting a minority's rights - that's where we are in California today."

- **San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom**

"I'm really happy that Prop. 8 was upheld, but I was just told by somebody that she's going to harass me until the day I die. ... I didn't expect that. I'm shaking right now."

- **Yana Kulinich** of Sacramento, a pro-Prop. 8 protester outside the state Supreme Court building

"It's just a damn shame I have to do this after 40 years."

- **Peter Fiske**, who took part in the Stonewall Riots in New York, considered the start of the gay liberation movement, and was arrested protesting Tuesday's ruling

Read the ruling

The state Supreme Court's decision in the Prop. 8 case, *Strauss vs. Horton*, S168047, can be read at links.sfgate.com/ZHFH.



Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

Demonstrators sit down at Van Ness at Grove streets. Protestors took part in a civil disobedience demonstration that blocked traffic on Van Ness following the California Supreme Courts decision upholding of Prop 8 vote, the ban on gay marriage.

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Mike Kepka / The Chronicle

Stuart Gaffney and John Lewis (left) and Diane Sabin and Jewelle Gomez, who were plaintiffs in the suit that prompted the 2008 Supreme Court ruling in favor of same-sex marriage, react to the decision on Proposition 8. "We're deeply disappointed," Sabin said.

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Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

Brady Pearson from Oakland kneels down to pray in the center of Van Ness at Grove streets. Pearson was taking part in a civil disobedience demonstration following the California Supreme Courts decision upholding of Prop 8 vote, the ban on gay marriage.

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Mike Kepka / The Chronicle

Friends Amber Burkan (left) and Lilia Tamm react to the decision outside the California Supreme court Tuesday in San Francisco.

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Paul Sakuma / AP

People pick up copies of the California State Supreme Court ruling as the on Tuesday. The court upheld the ban on gay marriage voters approved when they voted in favor of Proposition 8 last fall, but it also decided that the estimated 18,000 gay couples who tied the knot before the law took effect will stay wed.

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Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

(Left to right) Robert Franco and Shawn Higgins both from San Francisco embrace in the center of Van Ness at Grove streets in San Francisco. The couple took part in a civil disobedience demonstration that blocked traffic for a couple of hours on Van Ness following the California Supreme Courts decision upholding of Proposition 8.

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Next same-sex battle will begin in Fresno

Joe Garofoli, Chronicle Staff Writer

Wednesday, May 27, 2009



(05-26) 19:44 PDT -- The next same-sex marriage battle in California will be fought over a referendum aimed at the November 2010 ballot that is likely to include door-to-door campaigning in Bible-belt areas of the state that backed Proposition 8.

The battlegrounds will not be in San Francisco or West Hollywood but in places like Fresno, the geographic center of California where proponents of same-sex marriage will hold their first high-profile event Saturday.

Starting with a 14.5-mile march in Selma - the Fresno County town with the same name as the Alabama city iconic to the 1960s civil rights movement - and ending with a rally in Fresno, the event foreshadows efforts by same-sex marriage advocates to branch into middle America-like regions of interior California where opponents of Prop. 8 did little outreach last year.

Organizers hope to reach Latinos, faith communities and African Americans, constituencies into which they previously failed to make in-roads. Their approach aims to blend slain San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk's put-a-human-face-on-the-issue activism with Barack Obama's neighbor-to-neighbor organizing.

Opponents celebrate

Same-sex marriage opponents will hold an event in Fresno on Sunday to celebrate Tuesday's state Supreme Court decision upholding voters' November approval of Prop. 8 and to prepare for the next battle.

Yes on 8 Chairman Ron Prentice said Tuesday that Prop. 8 supporters are planning a statewide, multimillion-dollar campaign supporting marriage between men and women only.

"We're enjoying today," Prentice said after the court's ruling. "We'll be ready for a new campaign if a new campaign comes."

Meanwhile, same-sex marriage advocates are changing some of the tactics they were criticized for last year.

More gay couples are being featured in TV ads that began airing this month. Shortly after the court's decision Tuesday, the Courage Campaign, a 700,000-member online hub, released a TV commercial in English and Spanish featuring same-sex couples. Earlier this month, Equality California released similar ads statewide.

300,000 conversations

In a nod to Milk, organizers are encouraging same-sex couples to have what organizers call "uncomfortable conversations" with their friends and neighbors about how important getting married is to them.

Over the next 100 days, advocates aim to have 100,000 Californians engage in such conversations with three people. Equality California plans to have supporters knock on 40,000 doors in targeted communities during that time and recruit 1,000 clergy members from a variety of faiths. It plans to hire 25 full-time field organizers.

"What most gay and lesbian Catholic people hear on Sunday is silence about these issues that affect their lives," said Geoffrey Farrow, a Catholic priest for 23 years in the Fresno area until he was suspended last fall for speaking publicly against Prop. 8.

Same-sex marriage proponents hope these initiatives rally enough support for an initiative on next November's ballot, a move supported by most members of Equality California as well as state Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento

It starts with Fresno

But before there is a referendum, there is Fresno.

"Fresno is everything," said Rick Jacobs, who founded the Courage Campaign. "If we're going to win our rights, we're going to have to win in places like Fresno. We're not going to win a two-thirds majority there, but I do believe that we can move a few people. And the only way to move people is to meet them face-to-face."

While elected officials from outside the region are invited to Saturday's event, few will speak. Politicians such as San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who are likely candidates for governor next year, would polarize communities the campaign aims to win over, organizers said.

"It shouldn't be about politicians," Newsom said Tuesday. "It should be about people. The Yes on 8 campaign tried to make it about politicians, activist judges and school curriculum. The No on 8 campaign never tried to assert a political face on this and I don't imagine they're going to start now."

If Newsom wins the Democratic primary next June, he would be on the fall ballot along with a marriage initiative if it qualifies. In 2004, when he allowed same-sex marriages to take place in

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City Hall against state law, Democrats criticized his timing, saying it boosted turnout among conservative voters and helped George W. Bush's re-election.

"It's always the right time for a good thing," Newsom said Tuesday. "This is something I believe in, something I'm fighting for. I look forward to voting to protect the rights of all Californians."



Michael Macor / The Chronicle

Same-sex marriage supporters listen to speakers at a rally on the San Francisco City Hall steps after the high court's ruling.

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Lea Suzuki / The Chronicle

Rabbi Camille Shira Angel of Congregation Sha-ar Zahav cheers with others during service at St. Francis Lutheran Church in San Francisco on Tuesday.

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Lea Suzuki / The Chronicle

Pangaea Garza of San Francisco marches with others up Market Street in San Francisco.

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Lea Suzuki / The Chronicle

Pangaea Garza of San Francisco marches with others up Market Street in San Francisco on Tuesday.

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Lea Suzuki / The Chronicle

Spouses Frank Capley-Alfano (left to right) and Joe Capley-Alfano of San Francisco hold each other while listening to speakers during a meeting for an action before the service at St. Francis Lutheran Church in San Francisco.

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Lea Suzuki / The Chronicle

Marchers make their way down Market Street in to the Supreme Court Building to gather to hear the California Supreme Court decision on Prop 8 in San Francisco.

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Gay activists not impressed with Obama's move

Carolyn Lochhead, Chronicle Washington Bureau

Thursday, June 18, 2009



(06-18) 04:00 PDT Washington - -- President Obama's first official overture to the gay and lesbian community, granting a handful of benefits to same-sex partners of federal employees Wednesday, did little to quiet gay rights activists who want him to push for repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act.

Obama reiterated at a White House ceremony his "long-standing commitment" to try to overturn the law, which bars federal recognition of same-sex marriages.

But the memorandum he signed Wednesday was a far cry from the frontal assault on the 1996 marriage law, which denies federal benefits to same-sex partners, or the 1993 "don't ask, don't tell" ban on gays in the military that Obama the candidate talked about.

The memorandum aims at the fringes of anti-gay discrimination by the federal government, leaving open the question of if or when the White House will move against the underlying federal laws.

Under the new rule, domestic partners of civil servants will be eligible for long-term care insurance, and employees may use their sick leave to take care of ailing partners or non-biological, non-adopted children.

Controversial brief

Obama's action comes as the gay community is raging over a Justice Department brief last week asking a federal judge to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a gay California couple, Arthur Smelt and Christopher Hammer of Orange County, that challenges the marriage law. The couple want to have their marriage, which was upheld by the state Supreme Court because it took place before Proposition 8's ban on same-sex marriage took effect, recognized by other states.

The White House argued that it is obligated to defend the marriage act, known as DOMA, until Congress repeals it.

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But what has riled the gay and lesbian community is the wording of the brief. It found the statute "entirely rational," said it was a savings to taxpayers and cited as precedents states rejecting marriages from other states that involved under-age females or close relatives.

Rep. Barney Frank, the gay Massachusetts Democrat, told the Boston Herald in a story published Wednesday that Obama made a "big mistake" with the brief. Several activists have pulled out of a gay Democratic National Committee fundraiser in Washington next week.

Obama's action Wednesday "doesn't mollify anyone for the horrendous brief that was filed about DOMA or the failure to act on the issues the president promised to act upon when he was running," said Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California, a San Francisco group pushing for legal same-sex marriage in the state.

John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management and the administration's top-ranking openly gay official, called the memorandum on federal benefits "a first step, not a final step."

Months of review

"This is an attempt to get our federal house in order," he said, so that the administration is "practicing before preaching."

Berry said the memorandum signed Wednesday is the product of months of agency review to determine what benefits federal employees could receive and still comply with DOMA.

Same-sex partners of Foreign Service employees will be allowed to use overseas medical facilities and be eligible for medical evacuation. The employees also will be allowed to have their families counted when their housing needs are determined.

Still, a bill to repeal the ban on gays in the military has languished in Congress, and there is no effort to repeal DOMA.

Senate leader waiting

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Tuesday that he is moving on hate-crimes legislation but is waiting for guidance from the White House on a repeal of the military ban.

The administration contends it must continue to dismiss homosexual soldiers until Congress repeals the ban.

"The reality is ... there has been no public call from the president on 'don't ask, don't tell' or to repeal DOMA," Kors said, "or any of the other things he said he was committed to when he ran for office."

The gay community is a big source of campaign funds for Democrats, and its lobbyists work closely with the White House. Until the Justice Department's brief, gay lobbying groups were giving the administration a long leash.

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Rea Carey, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said gay groups in Washington "have asked the president to take the many steps he can take that do not require legislative action," and the memorandum is one of those.

But she also said the community should hold Congress and the administration's feet to the fire.

Asked when the White House might try to repeal the marriage act, Berry said, "Anybody who works in Washington who tells you a specific timeline is kidding you. A timeline is 218 votes in the House and 60 votes in the Senate."

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said the presidential plate is piled high, most recently with an overhaul of financial regulations.



Alex Wong / Getty Images

President Obama shakes hands with gay rights activist Frank Kameny after signing a memorandum on federal benefits as Vice President Joe Biden (from left), Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., and Sen. Joe Lieberman (independent-Conn.) look on.

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Los Angeles Times

Group that spearheaded effort against Prop. 8 postpones push for amendment until 2012

Equality California says a delay until the presidential election year will aid fundraising in the campaign to legalize same-sex marriage. Other groups want voters to decide issue in 2010.

By Ari B. Bloomekatz and Jessica Garrison

August 13, 2009

One of the state's largest gay rights groups announced Wednesday it will wait until 2012 to push for an amendment to the California Constitution permitting same-sex marriage, but other organizations with the same agenda insisted they want to bring the issue back to voters in 2010.

Leaders of Equality California, which spearheaded the campaign against Proposition 8, said they planned to wait until the next presidential election and released a road map for repealing the 2008 ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage.

"If we thought November 2010 was the best time to go, the time when we thought we could win back the freedom to marry, we would go . . . But we don't," said Marc Solomon, Equality California's marriage director.

In the analysis and plan titled "Winning Back Marriage Equality in California," the organization said it would wait until 2012 to allow more time for fundraising and outreach, among other reasons. Most of the group's top 100 donors to last year's No-on-8 campaign said they would be reluctant or unwilling to participate in a campaign in 2010.

Equality California estimates that a winning campaign would need between \$30 million and \$50 million.

Meanwhile, some organizations, including the Los Angeles-based Courage Campaign, which bills itself as a multi-issue advocacy group, have said they would try to bring an initiative to the ballot next year. The Courage Campaign sent an e-mail to its members Wednesday touting fundraising efforts that leaders say prove there is momentum in challenging the ban as soon as possible.

The e-mail said the group had raised \$136,000 in the previous few days to "finance the research necessary" to go to the ballot in 2010.

"We're not going to let the calendar decide for us when we can win," said Courage Campaign Chairman Rick Jacobs.

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"This is an enormous issue for our members. A lot of our growth occurred in the post-Proposition 8 era. Our members have been adamant."

Opponents of same-sex marriage have said both dates are inappropriate, pointing out that California voters have twice in the last nine years said no to gay marriage.

Also Wednesday, U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn R. Walker ordered all parties in a federal lawsuit challenging Proposition 8 to resubmit their case management statements because the originals failed "to get down to the specifics of how we are going to proceed," according to a copy of the legal order.

Walker ordered that the new statements be submitted by Monday.

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Marriage is more perfect union: In gay marriage debate, separate but equal won't cut it

Tuesday, April 21st 2009

As the debate over same-sex partnerships heats up in Albany, let's put one distraction to rest right away.

Civil unions are in no way a legitimate substitute for gay marriage.

They fail on principle, because - as America should have learned from racial segregation - separate is never equal.

And they fail in practice, because couples who enter into this second-class marriage alternative in New Jersey and elsewhere are constantly denied the rights and benefits that married couples take for granted.

Which brings up a third way in which they fail - verbally. Imagine getting down on one knee and saying, "Will you civilly unite with me?"

All kidding aside, semantics matters when it comes to labeling our most important and intimate relationships. Denying gay and lesbian couples the right - and the joy and the responsibility and the ordinariness - to use the M-word is a profound slap in the face.

"When you say, 'I'm married,' everyone knows who you are in relation to the primary person you're building your life with," says Freedom to Marry director Evan Wolfson. " 'Civil union' doesn't offer that clarity, that immediately understood respect."

Wolfson has a question for politicians who tout civil unions: "Would they swap their marriage for a civil union? If not, why should gay Americans have to?"

Civil unions were a cutting-edge concept back in 2000, when then-Gov. Howard Dean signed them into law in Vermont. But in public-opinion years, that was a very long time ago. As the initial shock passed and the culture war quieted, Americans have gotten increasingly comfortable with the notion of full-fledged gay marriage.

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Is everyone ready? Of course not. But the tide is turning.

A Siena College poll released yesterday found that New Yorkers favored passage of a gay marriage law, 53% to 39%. Among young people - who grew up understanding that gays and lesbians are normal human beings, not possessed or perverted or mentally ill - the results were even more lopsided: 70% for, 20% against.

Just as Americans' attitudes about homosexuality have come a long way, so has our understanding of how civil unions work - or rather, don't work.

A government commission that studied New Jersey's three-year-old civil unions law concluded unanimously in December that the experiment has been a failure.

It found that couples who obtained civil unions faced legal hassles at every turn. They were denied spousal health and retirement benefits from their employers. They found themselves arguing with hospital officials while their loved one and life partner lay at death's door. Many were forced to hire lawyers simply to win rights and benefits the law was supposed to guarantee.

The law "invites and encourages unequal treatment of same-sex couples and their children," the commission wrote - which is pretty much exactly the opposite of what was promised.

One way or another, almost every other state trying civil unions has reached the same judgment. Connecticut's highest court ruled last year that civil unions violate the constitutional guarantee of equal rights under law. Vermont voted earlier this year to switch to full marriage rights for same-sex couples. Legislators in New Hampshire are studying the same move.

Given that experience, it makes no sense for New York politicians - such as Rudy Giuliani - to pretend that civil unions are a viable alternative. It's a muddled middle ground that satisfies no one - not the shrinking minority who oppose gay rights, and certainly not same-sex couples seeking equal treatment.

"They can't have it both ways," Wolfson says. "Either civil union is the same as marriage - in which case, why do we need two lines at the clerk's office? Or it's not the same - in which case, what is the government withholding?"

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Commentary

Marriage Equality Is Inevitable

Bernard Whitman, 04.29.09

Marriage equality is going to happen in this country. It's only a matter of time.

For some, this reality is exciting, uplifting and extraordinary. For others, it is scary, frightening, even unfathomable. But no matter your opinion on the subject, this truth is inexorable: Gays and lesbians will one day be able to wed legally in all 50 states. Our relationships will finally be recognized as valid under the law and protected by our government. And America will be a stronger country for it.

How did we get here? And how did this happen so quickly? Change is not easy and usually takes much time, particularly a shift as dramatic as this one. But the fight for marriage equality has been particularly quick.

A generation ago, few thought it possible that gays and lesbians would ever be able to get married. When my good friend Evan Wolfson, the "godfather" of marriage equality, began arguing his case 20 years ago, most LGBT leaders privately said, "Evan, you're a great guy, but enough with this marriage stuff, it's never going to happen, and you're hurting the movement." Fortunately, he and others kept pressing forward, and in just a few months, marriage equality will be legal in at least four states--including Iowa, in the heartland of America.

Why is the freedom to marry so important? For starters, marriage is the most universally recognized social institution in the world. So if the ultimate goal is to achieve full equality for gays and lesbians in all aspects of society, then achieving equality in this most prominent arena will certainly go far toward realizing this vision. More important, marriage is, at its core, a public recognition of a private commitment that two people in love make to each other, a commitment that transcends gender.

At the end of the day, all gays and lesbians--and their many straight allies--are looking for is basic respect for themselves as human beings, equal to any other human being, no more and no less.

Is that such an unreasonable request? After all, this country was founded on the promise that all men are created equal, with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Along the way, this great country of ours has had to make changes to ensure that everyone can realize this American dream--most notably, ensuring that blacks and women are afforded the same rights and privileges as everyone else. And now America is realizing the same needs to be done for gays and lesbians, a group that some argue is the last one many believe it is acceptable to discriminate against.

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The explanation for such a dramatic shift is actually quite simple: Americans began to come out-in droves. Suddenly, it seemed, gays and lesbians were everywhere: friends, family members, co-workers, characters on TV and in the movies, celebrities. Seven in 10 Americans know someone who is gay, and nearly half say they have a gay friend, colleague or family member, up from less than 40% only a decade ago.

Of course, the number of gay people hasn't changed, it's just that people started living openly and being honest with others about their sexual orientation. As soon as "mainstream" America started realizing just how many gay people they knew, Americans became much more accepting.

But still, isn't it a big cultural leap from accepting gays and lesbians in general to supporting the freedom to marry? Actually, no. The primary reason cited for opposition to marriage is religion. But marriage equality isn't about religion at all. Marriage equality is a civil rights issue.

No one, not even the most ardent supporters of marriage, suggests that any particular religious institution be required to perform a wedding between two men or two women if that would go against that institution's religious teaching. After all, who would require Baptists to take communion, or Jews to accept Christ as their savior?

Religions have plenty of prohibitions against actions that are perfectly legal in our society, including working on the Sabbath, eating shellfish, drinking alcohol or coffee or celebrating Halloween. Would anyone think to suggest that these activities be prevented *by law* simply because some people's religions are opposed? Of course not.

What many people tend to forget is that marriage in our society is a legal contract between two individuals that is sanctioned by the state. Couples may choose to celebrate their wedding in a church, synagogue or mosque, and have a religious leader perform the ceremony, but in order for that marriage to be legal the officiant must be recognized by the state.

And while religions certainly have rules that married couples are supposed to follow, it is the state that decides who may get married and who may not, when marriages begin and end, and what rights, benefits and privileges are awarded to married people. There are currently over 1,100 rights, protections and responsibilities guaranteed to married couples by the federal government alone--rights that are denied to gay couples no matter how long they have been together.

Many people suggest that gays and lesbians should simply accept civil unions in the place of marriage. They argue that if it's just a matter of rights, we should create a separate institution that could serve as a vehicle to deliver the same benefits of marriage. And with more than two in three Americans supporting some form of legal status for gay couples, shouldn't we just accept civil unions, be grateful and move on? What's in a name, anyhow?

The truth is, everything. Marriage needs no explanation; everybody gets it. Most people have no idea what a civil union is, making it a terrible way to guarantee anything. The New Jersey Civil Union Review Commission concluded that civil unions have "not delivered equality to LGBT couples ... a separate scheme does not create equality." The Supreme Courts of California and

Connecticut came to the same conclusion, as did the Vermont State Legislature when last month it overrode the governor's veto to establish marriage equality, effective Sept. 1 of this year.

The problem with much of the discussion around marriage equality and civil unions is the false choice between marriage, civil unions or nothing at all. It allows many well-meaning individuals to avoid grappling with the M-word and still feel they are being supportive. But "separate but equal" never works. Didn't we learn that the hard way in the last century?

Particularly encouraging in the debate over marriage is the dramatic increase in support among young people. A majority (53%) of those aged 18 to 34 already support the freedom to marry--and in some states, like New York, that figure jumps to 71%. Nearly half of all adults nationwide now believe gays and lesbians should have the freedom to marry, almost double the figure recorded just a decade ago.

Not surprisingly, then, we are beginning to see significant cracks in the GOP's opposition. In his first public address since the election, John McCain's former chief strategist, Steve Schmidt, spoke out forcefully in favor of marriage at the Log Cabin Republican convention, warning his party that "if you put public policy issues to a religious test you risk becoming a religious party, and in a free country a political party cannot remain viable in the long term if it is seen as sectarian."

Meghan McCain, speaking at the same gathering, was equally clear: "I am a pro-life, pro-gay marriage Republican. So if anyone is still confused, let me spell it out for you: I believe life begins at conception, and I believe that people who fall in love should have the option to get married."

I'm delighted to hear conservatives step up on this issue, as I've always found it strange that the party of limited government and personal responsibility is opposed to marriage. It's been said that Republicans want government small enough to fit in your bedroom. Perhaps this sentiment is beginning to change.

And with good reason. I was recently on Fox News, and during the break asked my fellow guests--all prominent conservatives--how they justify denying gays and lesbians the freedom to marry when they agree that government should have less influence in our lives and that we need to do all we can to strengthen our families and communities.

I was met by stunned silence. The reality is that the freedom to marry is entirely consistent with the fundamentals of the Republican Party. Last time I checked, allowing two men or two women to marry will only strengthen the free market. They've got to buy a cake, right?

What we need now is leadership, and that needs to come from Democrats too. The party that says it stands for gay and lesbian equality must support the freedom to marry. While a handful of senators and representatives support marriage, including the Speaker of the House, we need far more of our national leaders to step up--including President Obama, who was himself the son of a marriage that was illegal in 22 states when he was born. He did leave the door ajar, writing in *The Audacity of Hope* that I "remain open to the possibility that my unwillingness to support gay

marriage is misguided. ... I may have been infected with society's prejudices ... and that in years hence I may be seen as someone who was on the wrong side of history."

I always found it interesting that the first presidential candidate I ever heard come out in favor of the freedom to marry was the Rev. Al Sharpton, who said that asking him "if he was in favor of gay marriage was like asking if he was in favor of white marriage or black marriage."

As a pollster, I'm well aware of the political danger of getting out in front of public opinion. But sometimes leadership demands as much. The truth is, we should never put people's civil rights up for a vote. Our constitution was designed to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority.

At the end of the day, marriage equality will come: partly through the courts; partly through the legislative process. More and more community and political leaders will offer their support, and someday soon gays and lesbians all across America will be able to choose get married, or not.

Which side of this history do you want to be on?

Bernard Whitman is president and CEO of Whitman Insight Strategies, a public opinion polling firm. A frequent commentator on MSNBC, CNN and Fox News, his clients include a wide range of companies, political leaders, and issue advocacy organizations. He lives with his husband and son in New York City. Weekly columnist Dan Gerstein will be back next week.



May 6, 2009

Same-Sex Marriage The Law in Maine; Governor Signs Bill

AUGUSTA, ME—Governor John Baldacci has signed a bill making Maine the fifth state to allow gay marriage.

Earlier in the day, the Maine Legislature gave final approval to gay marriage and sent the bill to Baldacci, who had been undecided on the issue. The state Senate voted 21-14 and the state House of Representatives voted 89-57 to pass the legislation and send it to Gov. Baldacci for signature.

"Just one year ago, a single state allowed same-sex couples to marry. Now, with the historic step taken by Gov. Baldacci and the Maine legislature, five states will provide equal dignity, equal respect, and equal rights under state law for same-sex couples by recognizing their freedom to marry, and we hope more will follow soon," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "Congratulations to Gov. John Baldacci, Senator Dennis Damon, and Speaker of the House Hannah Pingree for making sure all loving, committed couples in Maine, and their families, will have equal rights and responsibilities under state law, and congratulations to Equality Maine for the hard work it has done over the years to make today a reality."

Solmonese continued: "No religious institution will have to recognize any marriage under this law. This law is simply about making sure that loving, committed couples, and their families, receive equal rights and responsibilities. This is a step that will strengthen Maine families."

Four other states currently allow same-sex marriages. Connecticut, Massachusetts and Iowa have been ordered by the courts to do so, and Connecticut has enacted a law codifying a court ruling. Vermont passed a gay marriage law in April over the governor's objection.

"Throughout weeks of conversations, constituent visits, town halls, and hearings, Maine legislators carefully listened to the stories of families, neighbors, businesses, and professional groups from around the state, and then democratically voted to end the denial of marriage that unfairly harmed gay Mainers and served no legitimate purpose," said Evan Wolfson, executive director of Freedom to Marry and author of *Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality and Gay People's Right to Marry*. "Couples that have made a personal commitment in life deserve an equal commitment under the law—and in Maine, that's called marriage."

Unless anti-gay forces take action, committed same-sex couples in Maine will be able to start getting married 90 days after adjournment of the legislative session, expected around the end of

June. Opponents of equality are threatening to spend millions of dollars to gather signatures and mount an attack campaign to put a referendum on the November ballot.

"The fight is not over in Maine," Wolfson said. "To avoid a Prop 8-type assault in Maine, all who believe in fairness and equality under the law must take action now and over the next several months to ensure that the people in Maine get the information they need to reject the deceptive, anti-gay campaign we are likely to see mounted."

Freedom to Marry salutes the leadership of Equality Maine, who worked intensely in the legislature and the public over the last few years, and brought together a gay and non-gay coalition to build support for marriage equality in Maine who now will fight against any attempts to deny the freedom to marry.

Momentum for the freedom to marry continues across the nation. New Hampshire's House and Senate passed a marriage bill, which now awaits action by the Governor. Marriage bills are pending in the New Jersey and New York legislatures, and the governors of both states have pledged to sign the bills once they reach their desks. The California Supreme Court is weighing a challenge to the discriminatory Proposition 8, brought by a broad array of civil rights organizations and other groups.

Chasnoff's latest documentary takes on gender

Justin Berton, Chronicle Staff Writer

Monday, April 20, 2009



The news of Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover's suicide two weeks ago stung Debra Chasnoff, the San Francisco filmmaker who will premiere her new documentary, "Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up," on Thursday at the Grand Lake Theatre in Oakland.

Walker-Hoover is the 11-year-old boy from Springfield, Mass., who hanged himself with an electrical cord after relentless gay taunts from schoolmates, members of his family say. It was the fourth middle-school suicide connected to bullying this year, according to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

"The news read exactly why we needed to make this film," Chasnoff said.

Chasnoff, who won an Academy Award for her short documentary "Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons and Our Environment" in 1991, spent two years interviewing hundreds of teenagers for "Straightlaced," many in Northern California high schools. As in Chasnoff's previous recent works, the film is remarkable for the candor with which its subjects speak - in this case, teens discussing their frustrations with gender roles and stereotypes.

The results may both please and confuse adults who hope today's teenagers are growing up in a more tolerant society.

On one hand, viewers meet students like Claire Starks, an Oakland high school sophomore who can proudly and articulately discuss her bisexuality. She was encouraged by a teacher to participate in the film, to serve as an inspiration to other students who feared coming out.

Yet on the other side, the students in the film admit to a paralyzing fear of being labeled gay - "the ultimate insult," as one student declares. "A powerful tool to control you," another says.

In an opening scene where Chasnoff follows a group of males to a Bay Area clothing store, the teenagers freely explain the male fashion code: Clothes must be baggy, and no questionable colors allowed, such as purple. "That's what a pretty boy would wear," one student says of a shirt with pink stripes. "That'll get you shot."

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"The film captures the contradictory experience," Chasnoff said. "We're a far more open culture, more aware of our differences - and, at the same time, the fear of being perceived (negatively) is way more intensified."

For example, when Chasnoff interviews the refreshingly kind student Hamadah, a Pacifica High School basketball player who is unfazed by peer pressure, viewers learn that taunting on school campuses can come from unexpected sources. After Hamadah decorates his girlfriend's desk with balloons, flowers and a box of Goldfish snacks for Valentine's Day, Hamadah expects the razzing from his buddies. But he's surprised when his teacher also gets in on the action, ribbing him for the romantic gesture.

"Even my teacher said something. He told me if I have to work that hard to get a girl, then I've got no game."

Starks, now 19 and studying behavioral psychology at a junior college in Southern California, said that while she never witnessed overt homophobic bullying at her school, the teasing was rampant and part of the schoolyard culture.

"People who start out talking smack, inside it will grow into homophobia," Starks said.

Starks said as fellow students learned of her role in the film, at least five younger females approached her to discreetly ask her about bisexuality.

"A lot of girls also expressed to me how scared they were to come out," Starks said.

After word spread on campus about Starks' bisexuality, the teasing and jokes soon followed, she said. Starks said the pestering mostly came from male students, who peppered her with questions such as, "Are you into that girl?"

"The jokes could be pretty annoying," Starks said. "But I had good sense of humor."

Chasnoff said she hopes the film will help start a larger discussion among teens, adults and teachers about the need for sexual tolerance and for codes of behavior in and outside of school.

"I want all young people to feel really good about themselves and about who they are," she said, "and to have the courage to speak up for others who don't have such an easy path. And for schools to provide a supportive climate for everyone, regardless of how they express their identity."

Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up: 7 p.m. Thurs. \$10-\$30. Grand Lake Theater, 3200 Grand Ave., Oakland. (510) 452-3556. groundspark.org.



Carlos Avila Gonzalez / The Chronicle

S.F. filmmaker Debra Chasnoff (left) and producer Sue Chen made "Straighlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up."

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State Supreme Court to rule Tuesday on Prop. 8

Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer

Saturday, May 23, 2009

(05-22) 13:40 PDT SAN FRANCISCO -- With partisans on both sides holding their breath, and police braced for protests, the California Supreme Court is poised to deliver its final verdict Tuesday on same-sex marriage.

The court is scheduled to rule on whether Proposition 8, approved by 52 percent of the voters in November, validly amended the state Constitution to reinstate the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman. If the justices uphold Prop. 8, they will also decide whether to dissolve the marriages of 18,000 same-sex couples who wed before the Nov. 4 election.

The ruling will come just over a year after the court's 4-3 decision that declared that state law limiting marriage to opposite-sex couples violated the rights of gays and lesbians to marry the partner of their choice and discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation.

The ruling made California the second state, after Massachusetts, to legalize same-sex marriage. Since then, the supreme courts of Iowa and Connecticut have issued similar rulings, and legislatures in Vermont and Maine have also authorized same-sex weddings. Another such law is pending in New Hampshire.

This time, the California court faces a different question: whether a majority of the voters can amend their Constitution to take rights away from a minority.

Lawsuits challenging Prop. 8 were filed by two groups of same-sex couples and by local governments led by the city of San Francisco, joined by civil rights and feminist organizations.

They argue that the ballot measure made such fundamental changes to the rights guaranteed by the state Constitution that it amounted to a constitutional revision, not merely an amendment. A revision requires approval by two-thirds of the Legislature or by delegates to a new state constitutional convention to reach the ballot.

Attorney General Jerry Brown, who ordinarily defends state laws in the courts, joined the opponents of Prop. 8 and argued that the voters lack the power to eliminate "inalienable rights."

Supporters of the initiative, led by conservative Christian organizations, noted that the court has declared only two previous initiatives to be revisions and has denied similar challenges to such far-reaching measures as legislative term limits, the Proposition 13 tax cut and the reinstatement

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of the death penalty. They argued that the California Constitution places ultimate authority in the hands of the people, and that the court should defer to their judgment.

At a hearing in March, most of the justices seemed inclined to uphold Prop. 8 while validating the marriages that were conducted between mid-June, when the earlier ruling took effect, and election day. Gay rights advocates already are making tentative plans to return to the ballot in 2010 or 2012 if they lose Tuesday.

"If we must reverse Prop. 8 at the ballot, we will do so," Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights and a lawyer for couples in the case, said Friday after the court announced plans for the ruling. "We will win - if not on Tuesday, then one day soon."

In the meantime, advocates are planning demonstrations in Civic Center Plaza both before and after the court issues its decision Tuesday. If Prop. 8 is upheld, an interfaith group of clergy is planning to "surround those who are willing to be arrested in civil disobedience as we sing, and move aside as they are arrested." At 6 p.m., the group is planning to march from City Hall to Yerba Buena Gardens.

Police are preparing for huge demonstrations, said Sgt. Wilfred Williams, a police spokesman. He said the city has moved barricades to the Civic Center Plaza area and will have "enough officers to respond and deal with any incidents."

The court's decision will be posted on its Web site, www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme, at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

Marches and rallies

Same-sex-marriage advocates are planning several events in anticipation of the state Supreme Court's ruling on the validity of Proposition 8. Backers of the initiative have not announced any organized gatherings.

-- Monday: 7 p.m., interfaith service at Grace Cathedral, 1100 California St., San Francisco.

-- Tuesday: 8:30 a.m. Service at St. Francis Lutheran Church, 152 Church St., followed by march to Civic Center Plaza.

-- 5 p.m.: Rally at City Hall, followed by 6 p.m. march to Yerba Buena Gardens.

Outside San Francisco

-- Concord: 5 p.m., gathering at Todos Santos Plaza

-- Pittsburg: 5:30 p.m., gathering at Community Presbyterian Church

-- Napa: 5:30 p.m., gathering at Veterans Memorial Park

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-- Palo Alto: 11 a.m., gathering at corner of El Camino Real and Embarcadero Road; 6 p.m., candlelight vigil at the same corner.

-- San Jose: 6 p.m., march from Plaza Cesar Chavez to San Jose City Hall

-- San Mateo: 6 p.m., vigil at corner of El Camino Real and Fifth Avenue

-- Santa Rosa, 6 p.m., gathering at City Hall.

Times and locations may change; check www.dayofdecision.com for details.

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S.F. asks federal judge to toss Prop. 8

Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer

Saturday, June 20, 2009

(06-19) 15:10 PDT SAN FRANCISCO -- San Francisco has asked a federal judge to overturn California's ban on same-sex marriage, allying the city with a lawsuit that could reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

In papers filed Thursday night in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, City Attorney Dennis Herrera's office argued that Proposition 8 was motivated by hatred of gays and lesbians and violates their constitutional right to be free of discrimination.

Although sponsors of the November ballot measure said they were trying to promote traditional marriage and protect children, "excluding same-sex couples from marriage does nothing to advance those goals," Chief Deputy City Attorney Therese Stewart said in the 49-page brief.

Prop. 8's "real aim (was) harming gays and lesbians and expressing moral disapproval of them," Stewart said.

In arguing to throw out Prop. 8, Stewart cited the Supreme Court's 1996 ruling that struck down Colorado's ban on state and local gay-rights measures and said a law motivated by hostility toward gays and lesbians is unconstitutional.

A year after ruling that same-sex couples had the right to marry, the state Supreme Court upheld Prop. 8 last month, ruling 6-1 that voters could amend the California Constitution to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Four days before that ruling, two same-sex couples represented by Theodore Olson and David Boies, attorneys for opposing sides in the 2000 Bush vs. Gore presidential election case, challenged Prop. 8 in federal court.

The suit claimed the measure violated equal protection rights under the U.S. Constitution. Gay-rights groups that challenged Prop. 8 in the state court had avoided making any federal constitutional arguments to keep the case away from the conservative U.S. Supreme Court, where a ruling upholding the law would set a nationwide precedent against same-sex marriage.

San Francisco, which also took part in the state Supreme Court case against Prop. 8, has become the first of the state court plaintiffs to file in support of the federal court suit. Shannon Minter, legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights and lawyer for same-sex couples in the state court case, said Friday that his organization may take the same step.

The federal suit is "going forward, and we certainly want it to succeed," Minter said.

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Los Angeles Times

Prop. 8 foes clash over federal suit

ACLU, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights initially denounced the court action. Now they want to be part of it, but they are rebuffed.



Political consultant Chad H. Griffin is the force behind the federal challenge. (Ken Hively / Los Angeles Times / July 31, 2009)

By Maura Dolan

August 9, 2009

A high-profile federal lawsuit against Proposition 8 has exposed new strains and divisions within the same-sex marriage movement, as civil rights lawyers who initially condemned the suit now want on board -- and are being rebuffed.

The lawsuit against the anti-gay-marriage initiative, launched by Los Angeles political consultant Chad H. Griffin and backed by entertainment industry activists, drew scorn and anger from gay rights lawyers when it was filed in May.

The major gay rights groups called the challenge to California's same-sex marriage ban risky and

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rash, and warned that an adverse ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court could set the movement back decades.

Now that a trial is nearing, the lawyers who denounced the suit want to join as full participants, asking for seats at the table and the ability to shape legal strategy. But the consultant who defied their advice has vowed to "vigorously oppose" their intervention, and, in a court filing late Friday, lawyers formally opposed intervention.

The clash comes at a pivotal moment for the case, seen as the most likely vehicle for winning marriage rights for gays across the nation, and raises questions about who will control the legal agenda. A federal judge in San Francisco will decide the lineup of lawyers later this month.

"You have unrelentingly and unequivocally acted to undermine this case even before it was filed," Griffin told lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights in a letter last month. "In light of this, it is inconceivable that you would zealously and effectively litigate this case if you were successful in intervening."

Griffin's letter listed the groups' "strident" comments about the suit and revealed a tangle over the wording of a news release.

Proposition 8 supporters have been watching with glee.

"Advocates for gay marriage are in complete disarray, not only on the political fence but on the legal fence as well," said Andrew Pugno, a lawyer for Proposition 8. "Our job would be much harder if they were all unified in their efforts."

Griffin, 36, the force behind the federal challenge, was not at the forefront of the marriage movement until now. He is a successful political strategist who began his career in the Clinton White House and made his entertainment contacts there.

Griffin grew up in Hope, Ark., "came out" at 27 and speaks passionately about equality for gays while lamenting suicide and homeless rates for gay teens.

His firm was not brought into the anti-Proposition 8 campaign until its very end. Griffin quickly raised money, tapping such Hollywood luminaries as Brad Pitt, and his TV spots are believed to have helped change poll numbers. But it was not enough.

Proposition 8 passed last November with 51% of the vote, and many in the gay community faulted the marriage-rights campaign for failing to quickly challenge their foes' claims.

After a 24-hour bout of depression, Griffin said, he and others spent months talking to people around the country about a federal challenge.

He knew that a Proposition 8 challenge in the California Supreme Court was likely to lose, and he said he rightly foresaw that the gay rights groups would be unable to prevent individual federal marriage suits.

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Hoping to put together the strongest possible case, Griffin hired conservative legal giant Theodore Olson and acclaimed liberal lawyer David Boies to represent two same-sex couples who want to marry. The lawyers are considered to be among the best U.S. Supreme Court advocates in the country and faced off in *Bush vs. Gore*, which gave former President Bush the White House after the election in 2000.

Olson said in an interview that he wants the support of the gay rights groups, but "you like to keep control of your case." If the organizations intervene, "you are losing a certain degree of control to groups that didn't like the idea of the case in the first place."

Lambda Legal and the other groups have been careful and deliberate in challenging marriage bans, and they have a successful track record. They won the marriage case in the California Supreme Court -- which Proposition 8 partly overturned -- and helped win marriage rights in other states.

Fearing a defeat in the conservative-dominated U.S. Supreme Court, the groups have chosen to litigate in state courts. State high courts have the final word on whether marriage laws violate state constitutions. Proposition 8 amended California's Constitution.

Kate Kendell, head of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said opposition to the groups' intervention, "given the enormity of what is at stake, is perplexing."

"This case is about our community and not any transient misunderstanding or disagreement among the lawyers," Kendell said. "The stakes of this case for the entire community are legendary, and this is an all-hands-on-the-deck moment."

The groups want to bring more members of the gay community into the case, which their detractors say would cost time. Olson hopes to get the legal challenge to the U.S. Supreme Court in two years.

Some supporters of the suit also worry that the groups might eventually oppose Supreme Court review and that such a division among the main litigants would hurt their chances. The gay rights groups are now involved in the case only as friends of the court, which means they sit on the sidelines.

Constitutional scholars, from liberal to conservative, predict a 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on marriage that could go either way.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, a Reagan appointee who is the author of two major rulings backing gay rights, is considered the swing vote. He usually sides with the conservative wing.

"The lawsuit is extremely risky," said Laurence H. Tribe, a professor at Harvard Law School. Although Tribe believes that Proposition 8 is unconstitutional, "gambling that a basically conservative Supreme Court would agree requires a leap of faith that is beyond my capacity."

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"As I see it," Tribe added, "Ted Olson and David Boies have thrown a Hail Mary pass into the end zone without any basis for confidence that Justice Kennedy would be there to receive it."

The challenge amounts to a "perfectly good case," said UC Berkeley law professor Jesse Choper, "but that doesn't mean they will win. . . . They have a decent chance."

UC Irvine Law School Dean Erwin Chemerinsky said that only in hindsight will it be known whether the suit was wise. "So much at this moment is going to come down to one man," he said. "What do you guess Anthony Kennedy is likely to do?"

Gay marriage supporters tangle over legal strategy

By Howard Mintz

08/16/2009

As a federal judge this week tries to herd the legal challenge over Proposition 8 toward a trial, one of his tasks will be to sort through the simmering tensions over legal strategy within the pro-gay marriage movement.

The conflict, which until this summer percolated behind the scenes, went very public in recent weeks when the powerhouse group backing the latest lawsuit against Proposition 8 moved to block the direct involvement of gay rights groups that previously led the charge against gay marriage bans in California and other states.

In court papers filed Aug. 7, lawyers for the two same-sex couples suing to block Proposition 8 asked Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker to bar the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights from being parties to the lawsuit. San Francisco city officials also are trying to intervene, but the plaintiffs appear neutral on whether they should be allowed into the case.

Walker is expected to decide the issue on Wednesday.

The gay rights groups had openly questioned bringing the legal battle over gay marriage into the federal courts at this point, primarily out of concern that it could eventually land before a U.S. Supreme Court that may yet be too conservative to back the legal right of same-sex couples to marry.

That did not sit well with the American Foundation for Equal Rights, the group pushing the lawsuit with the legal team of former U.S. Solicitor

General Theodore Olson and famed lawyer David Boies. They believe the time is ripe to push the issue to the Supreme Court and still resent the criticism they drew from gay rights groups when they filed the federal suit in May, the same month the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 8.

In court papers, Olson and Boies say the groups could undermine the case, given past statements the lawsuit is "too risky" and that their involvement could cause "interference and delay." Chad Griffin, board president, went further in a letter to the groups in July, when he informed gay rights lawyers they would oppose their involvement because "you have unrelentingly and unequivocally acted to undermine this case."

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Griffin declined to comment through a spokesman.

Gay rights groups have tried to downplay the controversy, saying they believe they can work closely with Olson and Boies and support the same goal — getting the federal courts to declare Proposition 8 unconstitutional and restore same-sex marriage in California.

"There is nothing new about the challenge of managing diverse views within the civil rights movement," said Jennifer Pizer, Lambda Legal's senior counsel. "We're all professional people, and we all have the same goal."

Added Shannon Minter, legal director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, "This is just a transient issue. I'm absolutely confident we will be able to work with them."

Proposition 8 supporters are watching the feud from the sidelines, although they likewise oppose allowing the gay rights groups into the case, other than to file friend-of-the-court briefs. "It appears they're taking the position that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em," said Brian Raum, attorney for the conservative Alliance Defense Fund.

Proposition 8 backers, however, are also trying to keep an anti-gay marriage group, the Campaign for California Families, out of the case. Among other things, they note that the campaign originally "was an outspoken critic" of Proposition 8, undercutting their ability to defend the law.

Proposition 8 backers are the lone defenders of the law because Attorney General Jerry Brown and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger have chosen not to argue it is constitutional. Walker, meanwhile, is also expected Wednesday to outline a plan for pushing the case to a trial. At a hearing last month, the judge indicated he wants an extensive exploration of the issue to create a full record for the appellate courts but expressed frustration last week in an order chastising lawyers for all sides for not crafting a specific plan for a trial.

January trial set for U.S. court challenge to California's gay-marriage ban

By Howard Mintz

08/19/2009

A federal judge on Wednesday set a Jan. 11 trial date for the legal challenge to Proposition 8, setting the stage for the most exhaustive legal review of a state's ban on gay marriage in any court in the nation.

During a hearing in San Francisco, Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughn Walker ordered lawyers on both sides of the case to gear up quickly for the trial, which foes of California's same-sex marriage ban hope will be the first step in getting the legal fight over same-sex marriage to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Backed by former U.S. Solicitor General Theodore Olson and prominent lawyer David Boies, two same-sex couples sued in federal court this past spring to overturn Proposition 8, approved by voters in fall 2008 to restore California's ban on gay marriage. The lawsuit maintains Proposition 8 violates the federal constitutional rights of gay and lesbian couples by denying them the same right as straight couples to marry, and it marks what is likely to be the first crucial legal test in the federal courts concerning the issue.

The California Supreme Court this past spring upheld Proposition 8, which amended the California Constitution to outlaw same-sex marriage, but the justices left intact an estimated 18,000 gay marriages that took place last year before voters approved the measure by 52 percent to 48 percent. Those weddings took place after the state Supreme Court struck down the state's previous laws banning same-sex marriage.

In Wednesday's hearing, Walker refused to allow a coalition of gay rights groups to directly join the lawsuit, concluding that the current plaintiffs can adequately mount a challenge to Proposition 8 on their own.

The plaintiffs had urged Walker to deny the groups' request, still upset that those organizations originally opposed taking the legal fight over gay marriage into the federal courts at this point. The groups include the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, which have led the legal fight over gay marriage in state courts around the country but worry about how the conservative U.S. Supreme Court might rule on the issue.

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Walker also rejected a bid by the conservative Campaign for California Families to join the case to defend Proposition 8, finding that Proposition 8 supporters can defend the law alone. California Attorney General Jerry Brown, who has argued the law is unconstitutional, is not defending the law, nor is Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has taken no position.

Walker took a swipe at Schwarzenegger's reserve at the conclusion of Wednesday's hearing, saying, "I must say, I'm surprised at the governor's position in this case. "... This is a matter of some importance to the people of the state."

The governor's lawyer declined to comment on the judge's remarks.

The judge did permit the city of San Francisco, which has led the legal fight over California's marriage laws, to join the case, and indicated the other groups can present their legal arguments through friend-of-the court briefs.

The January trial is likely to be the first step in a long process before the Proposition 8 challenge reaches the Supreme Court. Even after Walker decides the case, it is certain to be appealed to the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals next year, and that court could take months or longer to rule before the challenge can reach the high court.

Walker previously said he wanted a full trial to provide the appeals court with a complete record, including testimony related to the history of discrimination against gays and lesbians, the impact of denying marriage rights to same-sex couples and evidence related to whether Proposition 8 had a discriminatory intent.

Produce pipeline running from farms to inner city

By Katherine Tam
West County Times
05/28/2009

Fruits and vegetables are being trucked from Brentwood's farm fields to Richmond's urban center under a new initiative aimed at making it easier for Richmond residents, especially the poor, to get fresh produce instead of processed foods.

"It's easier to buy a bottle of beer than a fresh apple" in West Contra Costa, said county Supervisor John Gioia, who represents the area. "We want to change that."

The county's new Farm 2 Table program also creates a customer base for Brentwood farmers at a time when the economic downturn and other forces are pummeling the local agricultural industry. Brentwood farmers will truck seasonal produce 50 miles to EcoVillage, a 7-acre farm in Richmond, which will add its own crops and assemble boxes of produce for families to pick up at any of three sites.

Participants will pay \$25 to receive a produce box twice a month. Five dollars of what they pay will subsidize boxes for low-income families, who will pay \$5 to \$15 per box depending on their annual income. The nonprofit Richmond Children's Foundation, which is partnering with LISC Americorp, is chipping in \$60,000 to help cover the cost of the subsidized boxes. LISC Americorp is a national collaborative group that works to revitalize communities.

Thirty nonsubsidized and 40 subsidized households receive boxes of food now after the program launched a test run in April, said Jim Becker, director of development at the Richmond Children's Foundation. The group hopes to have 100 nonsubsidized and 100 subsidized households on board this year.

The number of households Farm 2 Table eventually could reach is limitless, Gioia said.

"If we get more families paying market-rate, it helps subsidize more families who are not paying market-rate," he said.

The concept of residents bypassing supermarkets and buying produce directly from farms for pickup or delivery is far from new. But this is the first such effort in Contra Costa — and the first that allows low-income families to get subsidized food, Gioia said.

In East County, which boasts 12,000 acres of sprawling agricultural land, challenges from the recession to the globalization of agriculture are making it difficult for local farmers to survive,

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said Kathryn Lyddan of Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust and Supervisor Mary Piepho, who represents East County.

Three farmers are participating in Farm 2 Table, but Lyddan said she hopes that number will grow.

Supporters picked plums at Dwelley Farms in Brentwood on Thursday morning and helped pack boxes bound for Richmond. Owner Mark Dwelley, whose family has farmed in the area since the 1920s, said providing food for West County families through the program gives him a sense of pride.

"Growing stuff does," Dwelley said, "and that's an equal-opportunity thing. Everybody's got to eat."

In the afternoon, Tana Monteiro picked up a box of produce from the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center in Richmond and watched her son pluck a plum from the assortment of green beans, squash, asparagus, cherries and peaches. She pays \$15 per box, which feeds her family of six for about a week and a half.

"You don't really know what you're going to get," said Monteiro, whose children tried roasted beets for the first time because the box contained fresh beets. "Normally, I just get salad and broccoli from the store. Now, we're more adventurous."

About Farm 2 Table

Where to pick up an enrollment form:

- El Cerrito: County Supervisor John Gioia's Office, 11780 San Pablo Ave.
- Point Richmond: Richmond Children's Foundation, 125 Park Place, Suite 230.

Where to download a form online:

- Go to www.richmondchildren.org. Find the form under the "Programs" tab
- Go to www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/depart/dis1. Click on the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" tab.

Where to pick up produce boxes:

- El Cerrito: Gioia's Office, 11780 San Pablo Ave.
- Point Richmond: Richmond Children's Foundation, 125 Park Place, Suite 230.
- Richmond: MLK Center, 360 Harbour Way South

Farm Report: Keeping our farmland for farming

By Tom Powers and Kathryn Lyddan

Contra Costa Times correspondents

Posted: 08/07/2009 02:00:00 PM PDT

Brentwood farmers have been growing healthy, local food for the Bay Area since the Gold Rush.

With rich Delta soils, ample water and year-round growing season, East Contra Costa County is an ideal region for growing food. Local farms provide our communities with extraordinary fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as green jobs, open space and a sense of our history, place and seasons.

However, some qualities that make the Brentwood region perfect for growing food also make it attractive for suburban development.

Brentwood is close to cities and jobs, the land is flat and easy to build on, and the weather is beautiful.

During the past 20 years, the population of Brentwood has grown from 7,500 people to 50,000 people. Most new homes built for the burgeoning population have been built on the farmland that has provided us with local food for generations.

Fortunately, East Contra Costa County still has 12,000 acres of prime, irrigated farmland. While Brentwood has become a bedroom community for the Bay Area, the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust has been working to preserve Contra Costa's farmland so that orchards, fields and vineyards continue to be an important part of our landscape.

The land trust protects farmland with conservation easements. Conservation easements are used around the nation to conserve open space and farmland.

A conservation easement is an agreement between the farmer and the land trust that the land never will be developed in the future.

When a conservation easement is recorded on farmland, the farmer continues to own and farm the land but promises that the land will not be subdivided or developed in the future.

The Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust purchases conservation easements from farmers. The conservation easements compensate farmers for the many benefits that their farms provide to our community, provide farmers with capital to invest in their farms and offer an economic alternative to selling farmland for development.

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Dick and Maxine VrMeer nurtured their 23-acre organic apricot orchard south of Brentwood for decades. Maxine, a master gardener, planted a hedgerow of native plants around the farm's perimeter to provide habitat for beneficial insects.

When the VrMeers decided to retire from farming, they wanted to know that their farm would remain in farming for future generations. The Trust worked with the VrMeer's to create a conservation easement that protects both their farm and the wildlife hedgerow around the orchard.

Through the conservation easement, the VrMeers were able to sell their farm and retire, knowing that their farm will continue to be used as farmland forever.

Neil and Glenda Cohn of Hannah Nicole Vineyards also want to ensure that their 80 acres of vineyards would remain as farmland for future generations.

The Cohns also wanted to build East Contra Costa's first winery so that they would not have to ship their grapes out of the county to make their award-winning wines. The agricultural land trust recognizes that conserving farmland is just one step in building a sustainable future for agriculture in the Bay Area.

Farmers must be able to continue to make a living farming the land. The trust worked closely with the Cohns to structure a conservation easement that conserves their land but also allows them to develop a successful, vertically integrated viticulture operation.

Hannah Nicole Vineyards will open the first winery and tasting room in East Contra Costa this fall.

In December, the trust purchased a conservation easement on the largest parcel of privately held prime farmland in East County. It now holds conservation easements on five Brentwood farms, and anticipates protecting additional farmland this year.

Our communities will continue to grow as California's population increases. Our new neighbors will need a place to live. However, the prime farmland of East Contra Costa County is an irreplaceable resource that we cannot afford to lose.

By protecting farmland with conservation easements and directing development to other lands, we can grow our population and still keep our farmers farming.

Kathryn Lyddan is executive director of the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust and Tom Powers is the chairman of the trust board of directors and a farmer in Alhambra Valley. Reach them at brentwoodagtrust@sbcglobal.net.

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Cherry trees bloomed earlier this year on land that is protected from future development. (Tom Powers)



Making way for more subdivisions in the shadow of Mount Diablo. (Tom Powers)

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A young orchard takes shape in Brentwood. (Tom Powers)

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CIVIL EATS

Farmland Conservation: The Important Lesson of Brentwood, California

August 10th, 2009 By Naomi Starkman



The road to Frog Hollow Farm in Brentwood travels northern California's Highway 4, a hot and dusty corridor that was once lined with jeweled fields of cherries, peaches and apricots. Roughly 50 miles east of San Francisco on the Sacramento River Delta, this agricultural region is well-known for its stone fruit and corn. As with most places in the U.S., the landscape here has vastly changed in the past 30 years. Where once farmland reigned, endless rows of strip malls, big box stores, and tracts homes have sprouted, all to support a population explosion.

According to the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust (BALT)—which preserves productive agricultural land through farmland conservation and promotes local farming through the Community Alliance with Family Farmers' Buy Fresh Buy Local regional marketing campaign—the region includes more than 12,000 acres of contiguous, prime, irrigated farmland. The California Department of Conservation (CDC) has ranked the soils in East Country Costa (where Brentwood sits) as having the highest quality and yields per acre of farmland are among the highest in the state. With such incredible soil and yields, farmers produce agricultural products valued at more than \$100 million a year and contribute more than \$300 million to the county's annual economy.

But something happened in Brentwood that reflects a disturbing national trend: rapid urban development and new suburban communities sprawling out over prime farmland. In 2002, Brentwood was one of the fastest growing cities in California; the city's population grew from 7,500 in 1990 to over 50,000 in 2005. According to the CDC between 1984 and 2004, almost 20,000 acres of county agricultural land, including 9,100 acres of farmland, were converted to urban uses. Between 1997 and 2000, the county lost 4,381 acres of agriculture land and ranked fourth among counties in California in the loss to urban use.

BALT's Executive Director, Kathryn Lyddan, says Brentwood grew houses, not jobs, and failed to develop any significant industry. As the population moved in, they were willing to commute ever far distances to jobs outside of the city. "Brentwood is the poster child of what is not

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sustainable, both economically and socially,” says Lyddan. “Without real political commitment, there is a lack of support to protect the very land which makes this region so special.”

In 2002, in response to pressure from the environmental community, Brentwood adopted an agricultural mitigation program which requires developers who convert agricultural land to urban use to pay \$5,500 an acre into a fund to be used to conserve farmland. Brentwood has since collected over \$12 million of agricultural mitigation funds, which are held and controlled by the city. BALT was created and funded out of the mitigation fund to implement the program and developed independent, pro-active land conservation, as well as a grant funded agricultural marketing program. In November 2005, Brentwood placed a developer-funded initiative on the ballot asking the voters to move the urban limit line to allow additional development on the valuable farmland to the east of Brentwood. The initiative, which was actively supported by city, was narrowly defeated by only 148 votes. Then, in 2007, Brentwood stopped funding BALT.

Now that the economy has been devastated by the sub-prime mortgage crisis, rising fuel prices and resulting economic downturn, home values in Brentwood have dropped by 50 percent. According to BALT, Brentwood has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the Bay Area. The only silver lining of the failing economy is the reduced development pressure, which, according to Lyddan, provides significant opportunities to preserve agricultural land and build momentum for agricultural preservation.

Lyddan’s work supports farms like Frog Hollow, 133 organic acres of Eden in the middle of Brentwood’s sprawl. Run by farmer Al Courchesne, and his wife and business partner, pastry chef Rebecca, the farm is a prime example of the importance of preserving land and connecting to community through food. Farmer Al, who planted his first peach orchard in 1976, now grows 25 varieties of peaches, nectarines, apricots, cherries, pluots, table grapes, plums, pears, as well as olives. The farm has a 400-member weekly CSA and runs a wildly popular urban farm stand at the San Francisco Ferry Plaza Marketplace, where they sell their fruit, along side Rebecca’s outstanding sweet and savory pastries, as well as a Frog Hollow line of preserves, chutneys and marmalades.

Lyddan points out that farms like Frog Hollow and others create the components of a local food system: an extraordinary producing area that’s close to Bay Area populations and institutional purchasers seeking local food. What’s missing, she says, is a source-identified distribution system which would tell the story of Brentwood farmers to consumers, especially as more urbanites search for local connections to their food. Doing so, says Lyddan, would provide Brentwood farmers with new markets that could offer economic advantages over wholesale markets, provide urban residents with fresh, healthy food, and reduce food miles and while keeping food dollars in the community.

BALT is working hard to create these connections, while continuing its efforts to preserve family farms and fertile soils. Without BALT, vital farmland in East Contra Costa will continue to disappear. You can support their important work by becoming a member and/or volunteering. In addition, join BALT for their fifth annual harvest celebration September 20 at Taylor Ranch.

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THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Aug, 28, 2009

National sustainable economy organization to move headquarters to Bellingham

DAVE GALLAGHER / THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

A national sustainable business organization will move its headquarters to Bellingham in September.

The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies has appointed Michelle Long its executive director, and she is moving the headquarters from San Francisco to Bellingham.

BALLE hosts 75 community networks across the U.S. and Canada, with Bellingham's Sustainable Connections being the largest network. In total, the BALLE networks have 20,000 members.

The networks in BALLE focus on a variety of programs to build sustainable economies, including green building, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and zero-waste manufacturing.

With the appointment to BALLE, Michelle Long will be resigning her executive director position at Sustainable Connections. She will be replaced at Sustainable Connections by her husband, Derek Long.

BALLE will be in the Creekside Studio Lofts on Ellis Street, near the Sustainable Connections headquarters.

"As executive director of BALLE, Michelle Long will bring the experiences gained in advancing the Bellingham model to even greater social impact, helping communities across the continent learn from what Bellingham has accomplished," Judy Wicks, BALLE co-founder and board chair, said in a news release.

BALLE will maintain regional offices in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. In Bellingham, BALLE is expected to hire three people for administrative positions.

For details on BALLE, see liveingeconomies.org. For details on Sustainable Connections, see sconnect.org.

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August 27, 2009

Chemical consent

The pesticide lined up to replace methyl bromide in California farming is ... what?!

By Sena Christian

When scientists use the chemical methyl iodide in a laboratory setting, they slip on gloves and wear ventilation hoods. The chemical is so toxic, they transfer the liquid in sealed tubes with syringes to prevent accidental releases into the air. Sometimes, methyl iodide is used to induce cancer in lab animals.

Experts handle even small quantities of this chemical with extreme care.

Yet the state of California is now considering registering methyl iodide for use as a fumigant pesticide for agriculture. The chemical would replace methyl bromide, an ozone-layer depleter, but critics worry that while methyl iodine doesn't deplete the ozone, it may, in fact, pose more danger to human health and the environment.



Martha Guzman-Aceves of California Rural Legal Assistance spoke against the use of methyl iodide as a pesticide.

PHOTO BY SENA CHRISTIAN

"It's not a friendly chemical," said Susan Kegley, a consulting scientist with the Pesticide Action Network. "This is an old technology. This is going backward in creating sustainable agriculture in California."

Breathing the toxic fumes released by methyl iodide can cause lung, liver, kidney and neurological damage. Acute poisoning causes nausea, dizziness, coughing and vomiting. Additionally, California's Proposition 65 lists methyl iodide as a known cancer-causing agent.

While critics express concern about the potential impact of this pesticide on farmworkers who would interact with methyl iodide on a regular basis, those who support the registration said the chemical is safe when used properly and argue that California agriculture cannot economically withstand any more restrictions, as farmers already face a water crisis.

"I wish we didn't need these products, but reality is if we're going to have a domestic food supply, we have to have them to compete," said Barry Bedwell, president of California Grape

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and Tree Fruit League, during a special legislative hearing hosted by the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee last week. “To replant without a soil fumigant is suicide.”

The current fumigant of choice for specialty crops—methyl bromide—controls insects, nematodes, weeds, pathogens and rodents. Applicators inject the gas into the soil 12 to 24 inches deep before a crop is planted; the chemical sterilizes the soil by killing most of the soil organisms. Methyl iodide would function the same way, and would be applied to tomato and strawberry fields, nurseries and orchards across the state.

The international Montreal Protocol required developed nations to phase out the production of methyl bromide (and other substances that deplete the ozone layer) by 2005; but the United States received an exemption, saying it hadn’t yet found a viable and safe alternative.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency eventually found what it considered a “safe” alternative in methyl iodide, which it registered in October 2007 during the Bush administration, despite thousands of public comments in opposition and a letter signed by 54 scientists urging former EPA administrator Stephen Johnson to reject registration because of the product’s high risk.

The letter states: “Because of methyl iodide’s high volatility and water solubility, broad use of this chemical in agriculture will guarantee substantial releases to air, surface waters and groundwater, and will result in exposures for many people. In addition to the potential for increased cancer incidence, U.S. EPA’s own evaluation of the chemical also indicates that methyl iodide causes thyroid toxicity, permanent neurological damage, and fetal losses in experimental animals.”

After the EPA’s registration, 47 other states followed suit. California’s Department of Pesticide Regulation had already begun its registration process when, in July, state Assemblyman William Monning and Sen. Mark Leno authored a letter—signed by 25 legislators—urging an external scientific review panel to publicly consider public-health risks. Two days later, DPR agreed (the hearing will be held in late September).

During last week’s hearing, Martha Guzman Aceves of California Rural Legal Assistance said that the state’s farmworkers and their children will be most affected by methyl iodide. These workers—70 percent of whom lack health insurance—often don’t report getting “drifted” by toxic pesticides, accepting exposure as a regular risk of their occupation.

But farmers also care about the health of farmworkers and their own families who may live on the land, and don’t spray pesticides unnecessarily, a panel of farmers said at the hearing.

“Fumigation is taken very seriously, there’s no doubt about it,” said Bill Lewis, president and CEO of Arysta LifeScience North America, the manufacturer of Midas, the brand name of the fumigant.

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He added that he has received no reports of incidents in other states where farmers use methyl iodide. He said this fumigant—which is professionally applied—would actually reduce the use of other toxic herbicides and insecticides.

At the hearing, Jim Cochran, an organic farmer, talked about his experience growing strawberries successfully without soil fumigants since 1983. Organic farmers manage soil pathogens and fertility through such practices as crop rotation, composting, and the application of broccoli and mustard residues.

Cochran warned of the impact of registering methyl iodide on agriculture through an analogy to the automobile industry: “We have an opportunity like what Detroit missed 15 years ago.” The point being that the American automobile industry ultimately failed not because government over-regulated, but because industry refused to evolve.

US court cuts off appeals in Monsanto alfalfa case

Wed Jun 24, 2009 4:35pm EDT

*Appeals court says lower court ruling to stand

*Food safety advocates call ruling a major victory

By Gina Keating

LOS ANGELES, June 24 (Reuters) - A U.S. appeals court on Wednesday left in place an injunction barring Monsanto Co from selling its Roundup Ready alfalfa seed until the government completes an environmental impact study on how the genetically modified product could affect neighboring crops.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the company's request for a rehearing of its appeal and said it would accept no more petitions for rehearing in the three-year-old case.

Monsanto's only remaining avenue appears to be U.S. Supreme Court review. A Monsanto spokesman could not be reached for comment.

"This is a major victory for consumers, for farmers and for the public as far as protecting their rights and the rights of farmers to sow the crop of their choice and consumers to eat the food of their choice," said George Kimbrell, staff attorney for the Center for Food Safety.

Kimbrell, whose group is a plaintiff in the case, predicted that Monsanto's chances of getting Supreme Court review of the case were "slim to none and slim just left town."

Environmental groups and conventional seed companies, led by Geertson Seed Farms, sued the U.S. Department of Agriculture in February 2006 to force it to rescind its 2005 approval of the Monsanto seed until it does a full environmental study.

Monsanto intervened on the government's side in the suit.

The plaintiffs claimed cross pollination of genetically modified crops could contaminate conventional alfalfa fields and overuse of the herbicide Roundup, which the seeds were bred to resist, could foul soil and groundwater or give rise to Roundup-resistant "super weeds."

The trial judge, U.S. District Court Judge Charles Breyer, ruled in 2007 that an agency study had failed to address those concerns. The Ninth Circuit affirmed that ruling twice.

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The USDA did not join Monsanto in its petition for rehearing. The USDA has agreed to conduct the environmental impact study, but has not indicated when the study would be completed, Kimbrell said.

A USDA spokeswoman did not respond to requests for comment.

Genetically modified crops, particularly corn and soybeans that are resistant to herbicide, are popular with U.S. farmers. St. Louis-based Monsanto is the leading developer of such crops.

About two dozen countries allow the cultivation of biotech crops, but much of Europe, Japan, and most of Africa remain opposed to genetically altered crops.

The case is Geertson Seed Farms et al v. Mike Johanns as Secretary of the USDA, Case No. 07-16458, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

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Food Politics



Barry Estabrook

Politics of the Plate: Roundup Ready—or Not?

07.24.09

A court decision comes as good news for opponents of genetically modified crops. But is it the beginning of a political sea change, or just a blip?

Late last month, over objections from the giant agrichemical and seed company Monsanto, a United States Court of Appeals in Los Angeles upheld a 2007 injunction that banned the planting of the company's Roundup Ready alfalfa nationwide. The plant is genetically modified to survive being sprayed by the popular weed-killer Roundup, another Monsanto product.

The court determined that the USDA acted wrongly when it unconditionally deregulated Roundup Ready alfalfa in 2005 without preparing the required environmental impact statement. The injunction is to remain in effect until scientific assessment can show that the new crop does not harm the environment.

That decision came after seed companies and environmental groups sued to prevent the GM crop from being planted, claiming that there was a danger that unintentional cross-pollination would contaminate conventional alfalfa.

“This ruling affirms a major victory for consumers, ranchers, organic farmers, and most conventional farmers across the country,” Andrew Kimbrell, Executive Director of the Center for Food Safety, one of the litigants, said in a press release.

The alfalfa case is similar to a still-to-be-decided suit brought against the USDA over its decision to allow the planting of GM sugar beets. In March, the judge of that case asked the Justice Department if there had been any change in the government's position. To the disappointment of the Center for Food Safety and other groups, the Obama administration said it intended to continue the Bush-era policies on GM beets.

The alfalfa decision certainly has not dampened Monsanto's enthusiasm for GM products. Earlier this week, to cheers from the agribusiness community, the firm announced that it would

redouble its research efforts into GM wheat, which had been for the most part shelved since 2004. Monsanto put its money where its mouth is earlier this month when it bought WestBred, a company that specializes in wheat genetics.

It seems like the company is betting pretty heavily that, at least when it comes to GM crops, political change is not on the way.

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CALIFORNIA

2009 May / June

The skinny on school lunches

by Stacy Finz

Photographs by Marcus Hanschen

How to get kids to eat their vegetables.



Elementary students in the Berkeley Unified School District have some strange eating habits. No Pop-Tarts, no cheese-flavored Doritos, not even those little doughnuts with the powdered sugar. They prefer weeditos—their own version of burritos. At recess, the kids run to the garden—all 16 of the schools in the district have one—tear themselves off a big chard leaf, fill it with a handful of edible flowers and a plump radish, roll it up, and chow down. Sometimes they go back for seconds and thirds.

Then they go home and ask for spinach.

It seems a little too good to be true. But according to a study conducted by Berkeley's Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health, the district's students are discovering vegetables in a big way. "We have moms coming in asking 'What is jicama? My kid loves it and wants to eat it at home,'" says Suzanne Rauzon, director of the study.

In 2006, the center began a comprehensive examination of the children's eating habits and behaviors. They wanted to know whether the Berkeley district's School Lunch Initiative, one of the most ambitious programs in the country, would really change the way kids eat. And if it did, how would it affect students' academic performance and levels of fitness?

It all started in 1995, when Berkeley restaurateur Alice Waters '67 founded the Edible Schoolyard (soon after, funded by her Chez Panisse Foundation), a one-acre organic garden and kitchen classroom, at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. In the years to follow, other schools in the district planted gardens paid for with grant money from the Network for a Healthy

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California, a consortium of local, state, and national organizations working to improve the health of low-income families through increased fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise. Besides gardening, the district added nutrition and cooking classes.

Then in 2004, the Chez Panisse Foundation and the Center for Ecoliteracy along with educators, parents, and nutrition experts decided to revamp the district's cafeteria lunches. They hired celebrated school chef Ann Cooper as Director of Nutrition Services, and she in turn outlawed the serving of processed foods and went to an everything-from-scratch kitchen. Produce was purchased from local farms, dairy products from local creameries, and breads and pizza crusts from local bakeries—organic whenever possible.

"I think the Berkeley model is a role model for everyone around the country," says Kate Adamick, of the Orfalea Foundation's S'Cool Initiative, a nonprofit working with Santa Barbara County's school districts to start similar programs.



Orange you glad: Kids exposed to fresh food through gardening and cooking tend to develop a greater knowledge of nutrition as well as a taste for fruits and vegetables over junk food, according to early findings of a Berkeley study of 267 students.

The thought was that if kids themselves cultivated and cooked nutritious food, they might actually eat it. And if the cafeteria served lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, students would learn by example. It was a grand experiment. But would it work?

That's where the Center for Weight and Health came in. Researchers followed 267 students from four different elementary schools—two with garden, cooking, and nutrition programs that were highly developed, and two with a less developed curriculum that relied mostly on parent

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volunteers. Students were also asked to submit a food log and to answer a questionnaire about their eating habits. The center is reporting its preliminary findings, although the final results won't be out until 2010. For now, researchers are not releasing the names of the schools and are waiting for the results of the academic and fitness evaluations for this school year.

So far, "the nutrition knowledge of students from all four schools improved over a year's time," says Rauzon. But the kids participating in the advanced programs showed a significantly greater preference for leafy green vegetables than the students in the less-developed programs. They also scored higher on knowledge of nutrition, food, and environment and ate more nutritious foods and less junk, according to the study.

Pat Crawford, director of the center and an adjunct professor in public health and nutrition at Berkeley, is not surprised. "As one would expect, the impact is greater when the exposure is greater," she says. "The more ways you can support health changes, the more the children will adopt the behavior. There's nothing wrong with just having a salad bar or just having a garden. But what is resoundingly clear is that when you combine all these disciplines, you get the highest outcome."

Researchers took the study a step further. Anna Martin, a program specialist with the center, began documenting exactly what the students ate over the course of 133 lunches. She photographed each student's meal, whether it was a sack lunch brought from home or a lunch from the cafeteria, before the children started eating—but after they finished their trading. The lunch hour at elementary schools resembles something akin to the New York Stock Exchange. Kids trade everything from sandwiches and protein bars to cookies and apples. Then after they ate their lunches, Martin photographed what was left on trays and in lunch boxes. "At all four schools, the kids who got the cafeteria lunch ate three times the amount of vegetables as the ones who brought their lunches from home," Martin says.

The school lunches are accompanied by a help-yourself salad bar. At one time the cafeteria kids would have made a beeline for the croutons, cheese, and ranch dressing, but Martin was amazed to find them also loading their plates with leafy greens, carrots, celery, and various other vegetables.

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For many, that finding was key. The USDA recommends that everyone get five to nine servings of fruit and vegetables a day. "It's not difficult to get kids to eat fruit," says Martin. "But vegetables are a different story."

According to Juliet Sims, program coordinator for the Prevention Institute, an Oakland nonprofit dedicated to health and social issues, 30 to 50 percent of a child's daily diet is consumed during the school lunch period. So when done right, it is a meal that can play a significant role in reaching the daily produce quota.

At least some minimal work in the garden and sporadic nutrition instruction, in addition to school lunches rich in fresh, seasonal vegetables, went a long way to upping the students' produce consumption, according to the study. Students from all four schools listed chard, spinach, and kale among their favorite foods on their questionnaires; claims that were backed up by their parents. "The salad bar is the most popular food sold in the high school," says Eric Weaver, a Berkeley parent who remembers when it was junk food or nothing.

Michele Lawrence, who retired as superintendent from Berkeley Unified last year and was one of the architects of the School Lunch Initiative, says she is heartened by the progress. "This is really a national health issue and it's one that educators should be taking a lead on," she says. "I think it's possible for every California school to do what Berkeley has done."

Crawford says it's the best way to protect future generations from chronic disease. "Only 1 percent to 2 percent of children in the United States meet the recommended dietary guidelines," she says, adding that about one-third of the nation's youth is overweight. "The Center for Disease

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Control and Prevention predicts that one out of three children will have diabetes at some point in his or her life. We're already seeing children with higher blood pressure and higher lipids."

But if the results of the study are as promising in 2010 as they are now, and if Berkeley's model is replicated across the country, Crawford is optimistic. "It's just powerful to see it happen," she says. "It gives you a lot of hope that this is all possible."

Stacy Finz is an award-winning journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where she writes for the food and wine sections. Her article "[Slow Food wrap](#)" appeared in the [September/October 2008 issue](#) of [California](#).

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August 19, 2009

Stars Aligning on School Lunches



EZ Event Photography

ATTENTION IS PAID A scene from the School Nutrition Association's convention in Las Vegas.

By KIM SEVERSON

ANN COOPER has made a career out of hammering on the poor quality of public school food. The School Nutrition Association, with 55,000 members, represents the people who prepare it.

Imagine Ms. Cooper's surprise when she was invited to the association's upcoming conference to discuss the Lunch Box, a system she developed to help school districts wean themselves from packaged, heavily processed food and begin cooking mostly local food from scratch.

"All of a sudden I am not the fringe idiot trying to get everyone to serve peas and carrots that don't come out of a can, like that's the most radical idea they have ever heard of," she said.

The invitation is a small sign of larger changes happening in public school cafeterias. For the first time since a new wave of school food reform efforts began a decade ago, once-warring camps are sharing strategies to improve what kids eat. The Department of Agriculture is welcoming ideas from community groups and more money than ever is about to flow into school cafeterias, from Washington and from private providers.

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“The window’s open,” said Kathleen Merrigan, the deputy secretary of agriculture. “We are in the zone when a whole lot of exciting ideas are being put on the table. I have been working in the field of sustainable agriculture and nutrition all my professional life, and I really have never seen such opportunity before.”

Congress, which will take up the Child Nutrition Act as soon as October, has much to do with this year’s focus on school food. The act, which is reauthorized every five years, provides \$12 billion to pay for lunch and breakfast for 31 million schoolchildren.

That the nutritional state of America’s children is a priority for President Obama doesn’t hurt, either. Mr. Obama put an extra \$1 billion for child nutrition programs, including school food, in his 2010 budget proposal.

Michelle Obama has made better nutrition for schoolchildren part of her agenda, too, using the White House garden to promote healthier eating and often speaking about the importance of good diets for children, her own included.

Rochelle Davis, who founded the Healthy Schools Campaign in Chicago almost eight years ago, said having support from the White House has made her work easier.

“This is not a nice little niche issue anymore,” she said. “When I talk to people at U.S.D.A., they talk about what the president and first lady want. It matters.”

The Department of Agriculture is expected to upgrade school food nutrition standards this year, many of which haven’t been changed for nearly 15 years. And because many Obama U.S.D.A. appointees are focusing on improving student health through better food, the department has started an aggressive effort to study reform efforts big and small. These include the national farm-to-school program, which is in nearly 9,000 schools, and Food Options for Children in Urban Schools, a nonprofit based in New York that helps the nation’s largest districts change how they buy and prepare food.

Congress seems likely to spend more on school food this year, but just how much is uncertain. Under newly released reimbursement rates for the coming school year, most districts receive \$2.68 for each free lunch served to a child who is poor enough to qualify. The rates vary depending on poverty level and region.

That money is the core of most school food budgets. But it does not cover the cost of the lunch, nutrition directors say, so they cannot afford to serve higher-quality food.

As a result, districts rely on processed commodity food from the Department of Agriculture and on extra income from the sale of popular foods like chips, pizza and burritos in what are commonly called à la carte programs.

The first step toward healthier school food is to increase that free-lunch subsidy by at least 70 cents, said Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York. Others want more and say it

should be spent largely on fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains. But some observers argue that even 70 cents is unrealistically high, given other pressures on the federal budget.

“After bank bailouts and health reform, I worry about there being money left over for child nutrition,” said Margo Wootan, director of nutrition policy at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, who has helped write some of the legislation Congress will be considering. Still, the burdens of obesity and diabetes on the health care system make it easier to argue that schools should serve less processed food, advocates argue.

“If you feed a kid chicken nuggets and canned peas and Doritos and canned fruit as a school lunch or you feed him grilled chicken, steamed broccoli and fresh fruits and a whole grain roll, the difference is night and day,” Senator Gillibrand said.

As part of this year’s work on the Child Nutrition Act, Senator Gillibrand is co-sponsoring legislation that would ban trans fat in cafeteria kitchens and give the Department of Agriculture more power to set tougher federal nutrition requirements for the lightly regulated à la carte program in schools.

If Congress approves the changes, the agency would be empowered to change rules it set in the 1970s, when nutritionists worried more about dental decay and nutrient deficiencies than obesity. Cavity-causing jelly beans and Popsicles were banned, but not calorie-rich food like Snickers and ice cream bars.

But the federal government needs to address other issues, said Katie Wilson, the recent president of the School Nutrition Association and a Wisconsin food service director with 30 years of experience.

School nutrition directors should have to meet national standards to qualify for the job, she said. Complex nutritional regulations need to be streamlined. And kitchens need to be re-equipped so workers can actually cook healthier food. A recent School Nutrition Association study showed that over 80 percent of schools cook fewer than half of their entrees from scratch.

“If they don’t give me a steamer, I can’t steam a vegetable,” she said. “I have to deep fry it.”

Others say reform will require deeper surgery, arguing that the U.S.D.A. has a conflict of interest it must resolve: One part of the agency is charged with feeding children nutritious food and another helps large agricultural companies sell surplus food like beef and chicken that is usually processed into packaged products like taco meat or nuggets.

Ms. Merrigan said the federal government was adding more fruits and vegetables to the commodity foods list, but said that districts and parents needed to keep pushing to make meals healthier.

To that end, raising money for school food projects is in vogue this fall. Slow Food USA introduced Time for Lunch to lobby Congress for more school food funding, a new priority for

an organization once focused solely on artisanal, not institutional, food. The effort will culminate in hundreds of Labor Day fund-raisers called “eat ins.”

This month, Whole Foods began a national “school food revolution” campaign starring Ms. Cooper, who will offer tips for better school lunches in store publications, on-line videos and a series of public appearances. The company is also asking shoppers to donate at the register to pay for Ms. Cooper’s work.

And the W. K. Kellogg Foundation recently narrowed its mission to pay for programs that help children eat better and exercise more. Over the next three years, the foundation will give out \$32 million, about a third of which will go to school food programs. Ricardo Salvador, the program director, thinks that at last, momentum is building toward a better school lunch.

“If you can’t get this transformation going with all that lined up, then you’re never going to get it going,” he said.

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Schools must lead healthy foods effort

Ann Cooper, Beth Collins

Sunday, August 30, 2009

The Obama administration has declared the dire state of our health care system one of our country's most pressing challenges.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have stated that of the children born in the year 2000, 1 out of 3 Caucasians and 2 out of 3 African Americans and Hispanics will contract diabetes in their lifetimes. As a result, that generation will be the first in our country's history to die at a younger age than their parents.

Time magazine reported recently that as a nation we are spending more than \$147 billion a year on diet-related illness, much of it attributable to diabetes and much of that preventable.

Together these facts are the health care crisis of our lifetime.

The impending implosion of the health care system could be alleviated through policies that would make the National School Lunch Program a health program. The government is expected to reauthorize the program by early next year. If as a country we could link what we feed our children in school and what we teach them about sustainable food to their lifelong wellness, we might be able to avert this impending disaster.

Schools have five major challenges to overcome if we're going to change the relationship of children (and their families) to food:

Food: We need policies weighted toward fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and clean protein with a priority on regional procurement and funding for the national Farm to School programs to help make these policies come alive. Our policies have to include both breakfast and lunch and to assure that literally "no child is left behind" - meaning no child is left hungry or undernourished.

We need to ban added trans fats, high-fructose corn syrup, additives, colorings, hormones, antibiotics and other chemicals in school food - they are making our children sick. One way to help kids eat "real food" is to give them good choices - let's put salad bars in every school and ban all "a la carte" offerings.

Finance: We need to make school lunch a priority by allocating at least an additional dollar toward food. Schools now spend about \$1 for food for each pupil each day. But the extra money must go for healthy food. We realize that this will mean the cost of the lunches in the National

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School Lunch program will rise from approximately \$8 billion to \$13 billion a year; but we're going to either pay now to fix the system or pay later with higher health care costs.

Another issue: We should be feeding every child a healthy and delicious meal at school every day. Not only will a policy of universal meals alleviate all of the paperwork that overwhelms most school food staffs, but it will mean that every child will have the same "fuel" with which to learn and play.

Facilities: If we're going to move from highly processed, unhealthy food to menus made up in large part by fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, whole grains and clean protein, then we need to cook. For decades school fare has been based around reheating the likes of chicken nuggets, Tater Tots, corn dogs and pizza pockets in warming boxes. A system based on "real food" would require cooking as opposed to reheating equipment, which would entail allocating funding to rebuild kitchens in schools across the country.

Human resources: As a nation we have in large part stopped cooking in our homes, and this is no different in our schools. Over the decades that we've been reheating as opposed to cooking, we've lost much of our culinary skills, which means that we need to teach our school food-service workers to cook again. Switching from chicken nuggets and Tater Tots to roast chicken and roast potatoes means that we need culinary "boot camps" to train our cooks and perhaps a National Culinary Corps, based on AmeriCorps, where culinary students can work off their student loans by cooking in schools.

Marketing: The average child watches 10,000 commercials a year for foods of little or no nutrient value. We've raised a generation of children who think chicken nuggets are a food group and that Gatorade is the new water. Our kids are marketed to on a constant basis to eat more and more and more of items like "hot Cheetos," soda, candy and fast food. The result is that we've made our children addicted to a diet high in fat, sugar and sodium; this needs to change.

Research has shown that what children learn in school is taken home and becomes part of the family. This leads us to demand a national marketing campaign that makes school food cool food, that elevates fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains to the status of Coke and Pepsi and that helps our kids make healthier choices in the same way as we've gotten Americans to stop smoking and wear seat belts. Additionally, we need funding for hands-on experiential learning in cooking and gardening classes to help educate our kids in these subjects.

We believe that this is the social-justice issue of our time and that we as a nation have a moral imperative to enact policies that assure that no child is hungry in school and that the food that they're fed is delicious and nutritious. We know that children can't think or excel when they're malnourished, and we know that both the achievement gap and the life-expectancy gap between rich and poor kids has grown significantly in the past few decades. We know that a disproportionate amount of our country's health care costs are allocated to our most at-risk citizens, and we know that those very same children are the ones who are most in need of healthy food in schools. It truly should be a birthright in our country to be served healthy, delicious food in every school, every day.

In an effort to help make this happen, we are in the process of developing the Lunch Box Project: Tools to Help All Schools. We hope that this Web-based tool kit will be a resource to support policies we're advocating and that with the project's help, all schools will begin to improve the health of an entire generation.

High school/Middle school entree	Elementary school entree	Second entree	Sides	Sides
Traditional pizza - meat or veggie	Traditional pizza - meat or veggie	Beef or veggie hot dog on whole-grain roll	Baked beans	Salad bar, 1% milk, Fresh fruit
Roast chicken or veggie pattie with mashed potatoes	n/a	Mac and cheese	Whole-grain roll	Salad bar, 1% milk, Fresh fruit
Chicken or veggie lo mein	Chicken or veggie lo mein	Beef or veggie chili with bread		Salad bar, 1% milk, Fresh fruit
Pasta Bolognese or marinara	Pasta Bolognese or marinara	BBQ chicken sandwich		Salad bar, 1% milk, Fresh fruit
Beef or veggie nachos	Beef or veggie nachos	Traditional pizza - meat or veggie	Beans and rice	Salad bar, 1% milk, Fresh fruit

Ann Cooper and Beth Collins are partners in the Food Family Farming Foundation and creators of the Lunch Box Project. Contact them at www.foodfamilyfarming.org and www.thelunchbox.org. Contact us at forum@sfchronicle.com.

Crops, ponds destroyed in quest for food safety

Carolyn Lochhead, Chronicle Washington Bureau

Monday, July 13, 2009



(07-13) 04:00 PDT Washington -- Dick Peixoto planted hedges of fennel and flowering cilantro around his organic vegetable fields in the Pajaro Valley near Watsonville to harbor beneficial insects, an alternative to pesticides.

He has since ripped out such plants in the name of food safety, because his big customers demand sterile buffers around his crops. No vegetation. No water. No wildlife of any kind.

"I was driving by a field where a squirrel fed off the end of the field, and so 30 feet in we had to destroy the crop," he said. "On one field where a deer walked through, didn't eat anything, just walked through and you could see the tracks, we had to take out 30 feet on each side of the tracks and annihilate the crop."

In the verdant farmland surrounding Monterey Bay, a national marine sanctuary and one of the world's biological jewels, scorched-earth strategies are being imposed on hundreds of thousands of acres in the quest for an antiseptic field of greens. And the scheme is about to go national.

Invisible to a public that sees only the headlines of the latest food-safety scare - spinach, peppers and now cookie dough - ponds are being poisoned and bulldozed. Vegetation harboring pollinators and filtering storm runoff is being cleared. Fences and poison baits line wildlife corridors. Birds, frogs, mice and deer - and anything that shelters them - are caught in a raging battle in the Salinas Valley against *E. coli* O157:H7, a lethal, food-borne bacteria.

In pending legislation and in proposed federal regulations, the push for food safety butts up against the movement toward biologically diverse farming methods, while evidence suggests that industrial agriculture may be the bigger culprit.

'Foolhardy' approach

"Sanitizing American agriculture, aside from being impossible, is foolhardy," said UC Berkeley food guru Michael Pollan, who most recently made his case for smaller-scale farming in the documentary film "Food, Inc." "You have to think about what's the logical end point of looking at food this way. It's food grown indoors hydroponically."

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Scientists do not know how the killer E. coli pathogen, which dwells mainly in the guts of cattle, made its way to a spinach field near San Juan Bautista (San Benito County) in 2006, leaving four people dead, 35 with acute kidney failure and 103 hospitalized.

The deadly bug first appeared in hamburger meat in the early 1980s and migrated to certain kinds of produce, mainly lettuce and other leafy greens that are cut, mixed and bagged for the convenience of supermarket shoppers. Hundreds of thousands of the bug can fit on the head of a pin; as few as 10 can lodge in a salad and end in lifelong disability, including organ failure.

Going national

For many giant food retailers, the choice between a dead pond and a dead child is no choice at all. Industry has paid more than \$100 million in court settlements and verdicts in spinach and lettuce lawsuits, a fraction of the lost sales involved.

Galvanized by the spinach disaster, large growers instituted a quasi-governmental program of new protocols for growing greens safely, called the "leafy greens marketing agreement." A proposal was submitted last month in Washington to take these rules nationwide.

A food safety bill sponsored by Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Los Angeles, passed this month in the House Energy and Commerce Committee. It would give new powers to the Food and Drug Administration to regulate all farms and produce in an attempt to fix the problem. The bill would require consideration of farm diversity and environmental rules, but would leave much to the FDA.

An Amish farmer in Ohio who uses horses to plow his fields could find himself caught in a net aimed 2,000 miles away at a feral pig in San Benito County. While he may pick, pack and sell his greens in one day because he does not refrigerate, the bagged lettuce trucked from Salinas with a 17-day shelf life may be considered safer.

The leafy-green agreement is based on available science, but it is just a jumping-off point.

Large produce buyers have compiled secret "super metrics" that go much further. Farmers must follow them if they expect to sell their crops. These can include vast bare-dirt buffers, elimination of wildlife, and strict rules on water sources. To enforce these rules, retail buyers have sent forth armies of food-safety auditors, many of them trained in indoor processing plants, to inspect fields.

Keeping children out

"They're used to working inside the factory walls," said Ken Kimes, owner of New Natives farms in Aptos (Santa Cruz County) and a board member of the Community Alliance With Family Farmers, a California group. "If they're not prepared for the farm landscape, it can come as quite a shock to them. Some of this stuff that they want, you just can't actually do."

Auditors have told Kimes that no children younger than 5 can be allowed on his farm for fear of diapers. He has been asked to issue identification badges to all visitors.

Not only do the rules conflict with organic and environmental standards; many are simply unscientific. Surprisingly little is known about how E. coli is transmitted from cow to table.

Reducing E. coli

Scientists have created a vaccine to reduce E. coli in livestock, and a White House working group announced plans Tuesday to boost safety standards for eggs and meat. This month, the group is expected to issue draft guidelines for reducing E. coli contamination in leafy greens, tomatoes and melons.

Some science suggests that removing vegetation near field crops could make food less safe. Vegetation and wetlands are a landscape's lungs and kidneys, filtering out not just fertilizers, sediments and pesticides, but also pathogens. UC Davis scientists found that vegetation buffers can remove as much as 98 percent of E. coli from surface water. UC Davis advisers warn that some rodents prefer cleared areas.

Produce buyers compete to demand the most draconian standards, said Jo Ann Baumgartner, head of the Wild Farm Alliance in Watsonville, so that they can sell their products as the "safest."

State agencies responsible for California's water, air and wildlife have been unable to find out from buyers what they are demanding.

They do know that trees have been bulldozed along the riparian corridors of the Salinas Valley, while poison-filled tubes targeting rodents dot lettuce fields. Dying rodents have led to deaths of owls and hawks that naturally control rodents.

Unscientific approach

"It's all based on panic and fear, and the science is not there," said Dr. Andy Gordus, an environmental scientist with the California Department of Fish and Game.

Preliminary results released in April from a two-year study by the state wildlife agency, UC Davis and the U.S. Department of Agriculture found that less than one-half of 1 percent of 866 wild animals tested positive for E. coli O157:H7 in Central California.

Frogs are unrelated to E. coli, but their remains in bags of mechanically harvested greens are unsightly, Gordus said, so "the industry has been using food safety as a premise to eliminate frogs."

Farmers are told that ponds used to recycle irrigation water are unsafe. So they bulldoze the ponds and pump more groundwater, opening more of the aquifer to saltwater intrusion, said Jill

Wilson, an environmental scientist at the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in San Luis Obispo.

Wilson said demands for 450-foot dirt buffers remove the agency's chief means of preventing pollution from entering streams and rivers. Jovita Pajarillo, associate director of the water division in the San Francisco office of the Environmental Protection Agency, said removal of vegetative buffers threatens Arroyo Seco, one of the last remaining stretches of habitat for steelhead trout.

Turning down clients

"It's been a problem for us trying to balance the organic growing methods with the food safety requirements," Peixoto said. "At some point, we can't really meet their criteria. We just tell them that's all we can do, and we have to turn down that customer."

Large retailers did not respond to requests for comment. Food trade groups in Washington suggested calling other trade groups, which didn't comment.

Chiquita/Fresh Express, a large Salinas produce handler, told the advocacy group Food and Water Watch that the company has "developed extensive additional guidelines for the procurement of leafy greens and other produce, but we consider such guidelines to be our confidential and proprietary information."

Seattle trial lawyer Bill Marler, who represented many of the plaintiffs in the 2006 E. coli outbreak in spinach, said, "If we want to have bagged spinach and lettuce available 24/7, 12 months of the year, it comes with costs."

Still, he said, the industry rules won't stop lawsuits or eliminate the risk of processed greens cut in fields, mingled in large baths, put in bags that must be chilled from packing plant to kitchen, and shipped thousands of miles away.

"In 16 years of handling nearly every major food-borne illness outbreak in America, I can tell you I've never had a case where it's been linked to a farmers' market," Marler said.

"Could it happen? Absolutely. But the big problem has been the mass-produced product. What you're seeing is this rub between trying to make it as clean as possible so they don't poison anybody, but still not wanting to come to the reality that it may be the industrialized process that's making it all so risky."

Some major recent outbreaks of food-borne illness

The Food and Drug Administration lists 40 food-borne pathogens. Among the more common: E. coli O157:H7, salmonella, listeria, campylobacter, botulism and hepatitis A.

June 2009: E. coli O157:H7 found in Nestle Toll House refrigerated cookie dough manufactured in Danville, Va., resulted in the recall of 3.6 million packages. Seventy-two people in 30 states

were sickened. No traces found on equipment or workers; investigators are looking at flour and other ingredients.

October 2008: Salmonella found in peanut butter from a Peanut Corp. of America plant in Georgia. Nine people died, and an estimated 22,500 were sickened. Criminal negligence was alleged after the product tested positive and was shipped.

June 2008: Salmonella Saintpaul traced to serrano peppers grown in Mexico. More than 1,000 people were sickened in 41 states, with 203 reported hospitalizations and at least one death. Tomatoes were suspected, devastating growers.

April 2007: E. coli O157:H7 found in beef, sickening 14 people. United Food Group recalled 5.7 million pounds of meat.

December 2006: E. coli O157:H7 traced to Taco Bell restaurants in New Jersey and Long Island, N.Y. Green onions suspected, then lettuce. Thirty-nine people were sickened, some with acute kidney failure.

September 2006: E. coli O157:H7 found in Dole bagged spinach processed at Earthbound Farms in San Juan Bautista (San Benito County). The outbreak killed four people, sent 103 to hospitals, and devastated the spinach industry.



Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Farmworkers harvest organically grown lettuce at Lakeside Organic Gardens Farm in Watsonville.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Organic farmer Dick Peixoto walks through an unharvested section of a lettuce field at Lakeside Organic Gardens Farm in the Pajaro Valley near Watsonville.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Farmworkers harvest romaine lettuce to be shipped directly to market at Lakeside Organic Gardens Farm in Watsonville.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Carolyn Hernandez-Ruiz pulls weeds from a row of organic leafy green lettuce growing at Lakeside Organic Gardens Farm in Watsonville, Calif., on Wednesday, July 1, 2009.

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August 17th, 2009

Grant boosts Marin 'sustainable food' program

By Jenna V. Loceff, Business Journal Staff Reporter

Chancellor's support added to 'overwhelming' business, community help

MARIN - College of Marin is able to move ahead with its Sustainable Food Systems program due to a new two-year chancellor's grant of \$374,254.



College of Marin Indian Valley Campus Organic Farm student Coleman Cosby harvests chard and lettuce.

"This is a welcome ray of light in an otherwise gloomy and dark economic climate," said College of Marin Superintendent and President Dr. Frances White. "These funds couldn't have arrived at a better time and will ensure that our organic garden educational program continues to thrive."

The project is a collaboration between the Conservation Corps North Bay and University of California Cooperative Extension. It is designed to provide the education and training resources for a skilled, entrepreneurial work force in the fields of organic agriculture and sustainable local food systems.

"The support from the industry, from the business and community leaders is overwhelming," said Nanda Schorske, dean of Workforce Development, College and Community Partnerships at the school. "We knew we had the support, but when it came time to get letters of commitment, it was about triple what was expected in matching funds. It ensures the success of the Bay Area

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Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems Education, Workforce and Economic Development project for the next two years and beyond.”



College of Marin Indian Valley Campus Organic Farm student Sophia Setrakian helps tend crops.

The project is a venture that includes funds and financial commitments from more than 26 industry partners. It is the first industry-driven work force development program of its kind within the California Community College system, and it is hoped that it becomes and will be a model for other colleges and communities throughout the state.

Ohlone and Mission community colleges are also involved with the project.

The funds provide management needed for a venture of this kind, Ms. Schorske said. In addition to hiring a farm manager for a new two-acre organic farm, buying farm equipment and adding an irrigation system, college faculty will meet this summer with partners to develop new curriculum for the fall.

Four sustainable farm-related classes will be taught in the fall: Principles and Practices of Organic Farm and Gardening, Integrated Pest Management, Environmental Landscape Design and Intro to Sustainable Horticulture. Classes start week of Aug. 17.

This two-year initiative is funded by a community college Chancellor’s Office grant of \$374,254 and matching resources by partners of \$1,114,210.

For more information, visit www.marin.cc.ca.us.

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Toxic blue-green algae fouling Klamath River

by The Oregonian

Friday August 21, 2009

Toxic algae stagnating behind Klamath River dams has spread downriver, a potential health threat to recreationalists in a 90-mile segment of the northern California waterway.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Klamath Blue Green Algae Working Group this week posted warning signs about skin rash and other hazards associated with the algae species *microcystis aeruginosa*. The risk extends to people along the river where algae levels have exceeded public safety limits.

Iron Gate and Copco Reservoirs were posted hazardous due to toxic algae earlier this summer, according to the watchdog group Klamath Riverkeeper. Warnings are now posted at river access points from Iron Gate Reservoir to Happy Camp, Riverkeeper said.

Since 2005, portions of the Klamath River watershed have shown prolonged blue-green algae blooms during the summer seasons, according to the EPA. These blooms have occurred in Copco and Iron Gate Reservoirs, the two lowermost reservoirs of PacifiCorp's Klamath Hydropower Project, along the Klamath River.

EPA joined other local, tribal, state and federal agencies in warning residents and recreational users of the reservoirs to use caution when near such blooms.

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The river runneth out: Conservation groups raise worries about Klamath River tributaries

John Driscoll/The Times-Standard
08/22/2009



Three years of drought has drawn Klamath River tributaries like the Scott and Shasta rivers to precariously low levels for salmon, sparking concern from conservation groups over continued irrigation withdrawals.

Areas of the important tributaries are bone dry, which would be a concern for chinook salmon returning to spawn if conditions don't improve. It's not an infrequent phenomenon, and groups like Klamath Riverkeeper say that recovery of salmon runs on the river depends on increasing the amount and quality of water in them quickly.

"We're really at the point where we can't wait," said Erica Terence with Klamath Riverkeeper.

Terence said state and federal agencies aren't asserting their authority to keep irrigators from pumping the rivers dry. Chinook salmon now entering the Klamath River from the ocean will in a few weeks arrive at the Scott and Shasta rivers, the two big tributaries between the Salmon River and Iron Gate Dam.

The flow in the Scott River at Fort Jones is the lowest on record at around 5 cfs. The Shasta River is especially low, also, with flows at Yreka around 10 to 20 cubic feet per second.

The recently formed Scott River Water Trust began in 2007 leasing water from farmers with the aim of releasing what was purchased into the river -- some during summer to help young salmon and some in the fall to assist in adult salmon migration.

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Manager Sari Sommarstrom said the leases are meant to relieve stress on the salmon. But she said that precipitation in the Scott River basin was between 40 to 50 percent this year, and that follows dry conditions in 2007 and 2008.

”We've got the worst case on top of two dry years,” Sommarstrom said.

Sommarstrom said that many water diversions on the 30,000 acres of irrigated land in the basin are already dry, and that key crops like alfalfa and grain aren't being pushed for production by irrigating.

The water trust this year has leased 203 to 290 acre feet of water, which can be used to improve conditions in tributaries to help salmon and steelhead.

Terence said that programs like the water trust are welcome -- but so far not enough. She said that the basin, whose water is parceled out through state water rights, may need an overhaul of inefficient water systems, but in the meantime state and federal agencies need to act to protect fish.

The Klamath National Forest has existing water rights on the Scott River, and spokeswoman Pam Bierce said its hydrologist is looking into just what those rights entitle the forest to.

”We do share the concerns about the low flows,” Bierce said. “We know that is an issue.”

Dan Torquemada with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's enforcement division said that the problem has existed for some time.

”As long as water quality remains an issue, there will always be a risk of harm to salmon, especially when flows are down or habitat is dewatered,” Torquemada said.

He said NOAA law enforcement has been understaffed in the area, but said the agency takes the matter seriously and is trying to dedicate more time to it.

About 130,000 chinook salmon are expected to run up the Klamath River this fall, a portion of those running into the Scott and the Shasta. Troy Fletcher, a Yurok Tribe policy analyst working on negotiations to remove four hydropower dams on the Klamath, said there should be enough water in the Klamath for those fish.

But he said that the tribe has raised concerns for more than a decade about conditions on the Scott and Shasta during the summer and fall. Fletcher said he hopes the California Department of Water Resources and the Department of Fish and Game take a hard look at water issues in the basins.

”We're always concerned when river systems are on the verge of, or are, drying up,” Fletcher said.

\$50 million in EQIP for farmers going organic: USDA

Tue May 5, 2009

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Farmers will have three weeks to apply for \$50 million in land stewardship funding to help pay the cost of converting to organic production, said the U.S. Agriculture Department on Tuesday.

USDA said the special sign-up would run May 11-29 under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. It will be open to growers switching to organic production or expanding their organic operations and certified organic farmers who want to expand stewardship work.

Six practices will be eligible for support -- conservation crop rotation, cover crops, integrated pest management, nutrient management, rotational grazing and forage harvest management.

A small-farm and an organic-farm group said the sign-up showed USDA was making a good-faith effort to help organic agriculture. Farmers can receive a maximum of \$20,000 a year per farm in organic transition funding and up to \$80,000 per farm in six years.

"The EQIP transition contracts are geared for small- and medium-scale family farms and ranches and will speed the move toward more organic acreage," said Mark Lipson of the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

(Reporting by Charles Abbott; Editing by Christian Wiessner)

He's off to D.C. to push organic farming

July 8, 2009

By Laura Brown
Staff Writer

Nevada City farmer Alan Haight is visiting Washington, D.C., with a group of other growers from across the country this week to boost federal support for small organic farms.

The group of nine are part of a growing movement of food connoisseurs and farmers who say small organic farms have the potential to play a major role in feeding the United States.

With a vegetable garden now growing at the White House, the Child Nutrition Act coming up for reauthorization and the U.S. Department of Agriculture pledging to pay more attention to organic farmers, the time is ripe for action, organic advocates say.

“It's absolutely essential that small family farms get their voice into that mix,” said Ted Quaday, of Organic Farming Research Foundation, host of the trip to the nation's capitol.

Haight is one of two farmers from California who will meet with staff from the offices of Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., this week.

Haight and his wife Jo McProud own River Hill Farm on Cement Hill Road, just north of Nevada City. They feed 500 to 600 people each week from a six-acre plot of organically grown fruits and vegetables.

Small farms like River Hill show promise for feeding a growing population while using less land and water and avoiding petroleum-based fuel and sprays, advocates say.

It's the first time Haight has become active politically.

“We desperately need as a society to arrive at an environmentally sensitive method for meeting the needs of food,” Haight said. “We need hard science to support ways of pest control so we can continue to enjoy high-yielding crops.”

The 2007 Census of Agriculture showed more than 20,000 farms engaged in organic production in the United States, compared to a total of 2.2 million farms nationwide.

Since 2002, the number of farms in the United States has grown 4 percent, with most of that growth coming from small operations, the census reported.

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Despite being outnumbered, very large farms continue to produce 63 percent of agricultural products sold in the country.

With more federal funding for research, organic farmers can prove the benefits of this form of agriculture, they say. But often, funding for organic farming research gets the short end of the stick.

“To have good science, we need good funding,” Haight said.

This year, River Hill Farm partnered with the federal nutrition program Women Infants and Children, supplying a discounted box of fresh produce to low-income mothers and their children each week.

Mountain Bounty Farm on the San Juan Ridge has worked with local schools to link children to the land where their food grows.

The two farms are among nine locally that offer CSA (community supported agriculture) programs, an arrangement in which consumers invest in the farm early in the season by paying for a summer subscription of weekly vegetable boxes — just when the farmer most needs cash for seeds and other start-up supplies.

In addition, six area restaurants and four grocery stores offer local produce.

Farms in Nevada County grew from 599 in 2002 to 690 in 2007, according to the national census.

More than 30 local farms sell produce locally, with 14 inviting the public to farm stands and another six allowing the public to pick their own. Wineries, flower farms and tree farms also dot the county.

To view the entire list of local farms online, visit www.NevadaCountyGrown.org.



EcoChef: Drought prompts water efficiency

Apr 22, 2009 by Aaron French

I WAS RECENTLY up in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, walking along the bank of the Cosumnes River. In past years, the trail I was on would have been at least six feet under water, as the river swelled with spring precipitation and snowmelt. But this year the water level was several feet down the bank.

While I was happy to be able to take my beautiful hike along a dry path, it was a disturbing indicator of California's water supply status.

As summer approaches, the question of water is on everyone's mind. We are experiencing the third year in a row of lower than normal precipitation, and a variety of state agencies and nongovernmental groups are studying the problem and releasing recommendations on how best to move forward.

"California has a history of droughts, but there are some significant differences between the current drought and those of the past," notes a joint "Report to the Governor" from the California Departments of Water Resources and Food and Agriculture. Recent regulatory restrictions to protect endangered species, an increase in the number of California residents (by 9 million since 1990), and a change in agricultural crops toward orchards and vineyards have put increased strain on our water supply, the report continues.

Feeling the shortage

Access to a steady supply of clean water is something that affects everyone, no matter where they live or what they do for a living. Some, however, will feel the effects of the water shortage more sharply than others. This is because different parts of the state have widely different water rights. While the overall water demand far outstrips the available supply (even in a "normal" year), some regions and agricultural districts have historical rights to unlimited water, while others have none.

Last year, California's farmers and food producers lost more than \$300 million because of water shortages, and more than 100,000 acres of farmland remained unplanted or was abandoned. This year looks much more dire, as water shortfalls are expected to cause a loss of more than 20,000 jobs and billions in farm and producer income.

These projections make the recent headline in Economist magazine seem odd: "Dust to dust, good things can come from a drought." But as it turns out, a few good things may indeed come out of the dust.

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Among them, a more efficient market mechanism to distribute water rights where they are most needed -- and recommended in a report to the governor. The drought is also likely to prompt more efficient use of water in both urban and agricultural areas.

Making sure that water allocated for agricultural uses is used efficiently is not simple, says Katy Mamen, Coordinator of the California Agricultural Water Stewardship Initiative.

How much is too much?

"It's really hard to quantify how much water is actually used on a farm," Mamen says. "It also gets very complicated when you start to see how some of the water applied to farmland benefits the ecosystem. It's not a simple matter of water for farms versus water for the environment."

Mamen co-authored a report with Lisa Kresge of the California Institute for Rural Studies about innovative water management practices being implemented by farmers around California. Selecting a range of farm sizes and types, the report highlights the broad array of methods farmers are adopting.

Some methods might seem counterintuitive at first. For example, permanent "cover crop" plants beneath trees in fruit and nut orchards might be thought to use more water than bare dirt. In fact, they "help retain water, reduce surface evaporation, and reduce or eliminate runoff and erosion," the report notes.

Other cutting-edge practices include reducing or even eliminating the plowing of fields, computerizing irrigation systems that respond to soil moisture levels, and creating on-farm drainage management systems.

While some of these systems may have high upfront costs, there can be significant long term savings with some unexpected secondary benefits. For example, if you reduce the amount of water used to irrigate your farm, you also reduce the amount of nutrients leached out of the soil. The result is healthier plants and better crops to sell at harvest.

Mamen sums it up this way: "This drought presents an opportunity to advance both practices and policy that encourage sustainable water management."

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Grasses improve water, wildlife

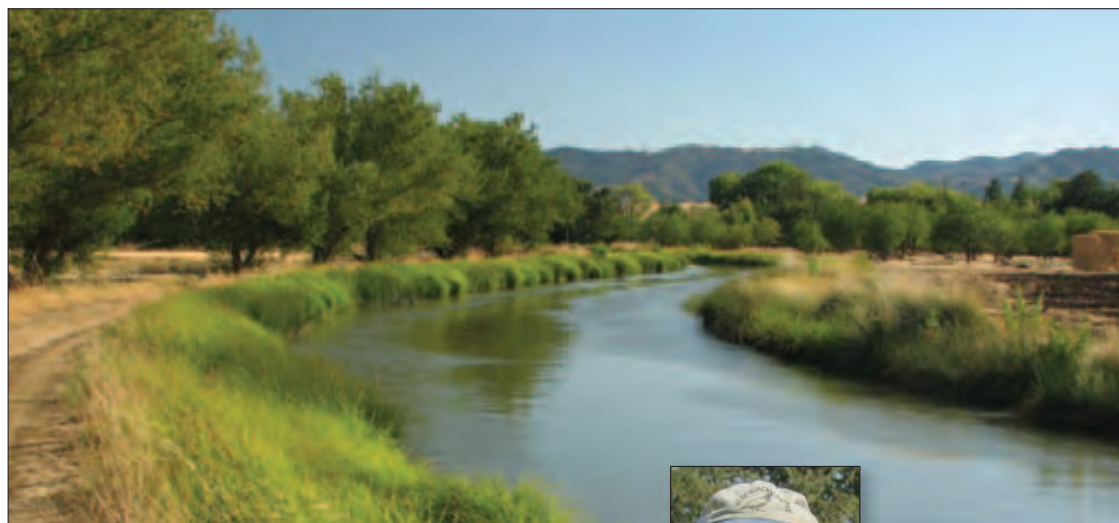
By LISA KRESGE

JOHN Anderson's love of wildlife and concern about disappearing wildlife habitats are what drove him to become a farmer. He and his wife, Marsha, bought their Yolo County property in Winters in 1974 and started doing habitat work on the edges of the fields they leased to their neighbor.

Over the years, Anderson became increasingly interested in native grasses, and by the late 1990s — after an early retirement from his career as a veterinarian — he started Hedgerow Farms.

"I became interested in grassland and grasses, recognizing that our native grasslands were one of our most imperiled ecosystems," he explains. He says hedgerows conserve water and do not threaten food safety, as alleged by some.

Today, Hedgerow Farms grows more than 60 species of native grassland seed and transplants for various bioregional ecotypes. Anderson leases land from his neighbor and has more than



HEDGEROW FARM PHOTOS

CLEAN WATER: John Anderson says vegetation enhances groundwater recharge, and native species provide a biodiverse system that actually cleans the water. Vegetation enhances infiltration, while a compacted roadside allows irrigation water to run off rather than into the ground.

Key Points

- Hedgerow Farms grows 60 species of native grassland seed and transplants.
- Hedgerows don't cut water use, but they improve water quality.
- Providing habitat boosts native bee populations, increasing crop yields.

400 acres in production.

Hedgerow Farms is one of just a few native-seed growers in the state. It is one of California's leading advocates for

native grassland habitat restoration.

While hedgerows do not necessarily reduce water use, they improve water quality significantly and provide important benefits for wildlife, according to Anderson. "Some people would argue that hedgerows are using more water, especially when you start putting in trees. Our feeling is that the amount of water being used on these small-scale riparian corridors is insignificant when you start talking about the big picture and how much riparian ground has been lost."

Field-border hedgerow system

Anderson explains the advantages of hedgerow systems:

- Plant roots help build soil structure, enhancing water infiltration and groundwater recharge. "Vegetation enhances groundwater recharge," he says.
- Native species provide a biodiverse system that is actually cleaning the water. Vegetation enhances infiltration, compared to a compacted roadside where irrigation water runs off rather than into the ground."

- Hedgerows provide habitat for animals and beneficial insects such as predators and pollinators. "Hedgerows are incredibly important because you need a continuous supply of pollen and nectar to maintain healthy populations of beneficial insects such as lacewings, ladybugs, wasps, native bees and butterflies," Anderson says. By providing them habitat, native bee populations can be bolstered, in turn increasing crop yields.

- Well-established perennial sedges, grasses and rushes provide stabilization, making ditch banks less prone to erosion and lowering the labor costs associated with ditch bank maintenance.

- Vegetated systems such as hedgerows provide biodiversity to the farm ecosystem and help maintain soil quality.

- Hedgerows function as windbreaks, redirecting the wind and reducing crop damage from wind, dust and pesticide drift.

- Once established, native species plants suppress weed growth, mini-



HABITAT STEWARD:

John Anderson's concern about disappearing wildlife habitats is what drove him to buy the property that would become Hedgerow Farms in Winters. He started doing habitat work on field edges in 1974.

mizing dependency on herbicide.

"Nobody has done a good cost-benefit analysis, but it absolutely needs to be done," Anderson says. "My feeling is that it is going to cost the same, but the vegetated system is going to have so many more benefits: biodiversity, aesthetics and wildlife watching."

He notes these possible costs:

- Vegetated systems have a three-year establishment period with setup costs including plants, labor and possibly irrigation for two to three years.

- With established plants, maintenance costs may include labor and fuel for mowing, and in some cases spot herbicide application.

Lessons learned

Here is how Anderson describes the lessons he has learned about hedgerows from developing his farm:

- Know your soil and drainage conditions. Choose the proper plants for the site.

- Soil preparation is extremely important. "Do it right the first time so you are not fighting the weeds. Do your ground prep and initial herbicide spray to reduce weedy competition."

- Do it all at once. "Don't plant your shrubs and expect to come back and plant your understory later — do it all at once and do it right."

- Use local technical expertise. Many programs are available to help plan and establish a hedgerow or vegetated system.

- Look at other projects. Anderson recommends investigating projects that have been in the ground for a while to get an idea of what a mature system looks like. For example, Hedgerow Farms planted hedgerows, grassland roadsides, vegetated canals, vegetated tailwater ponds and riparian habitats more than 15 years ago.

Kresge is with the California Institute for Rural Studies, *UCR*, and has prepared a report on water stewards at www.cirsinc.org/Documents/Pub0109.1.pdf.

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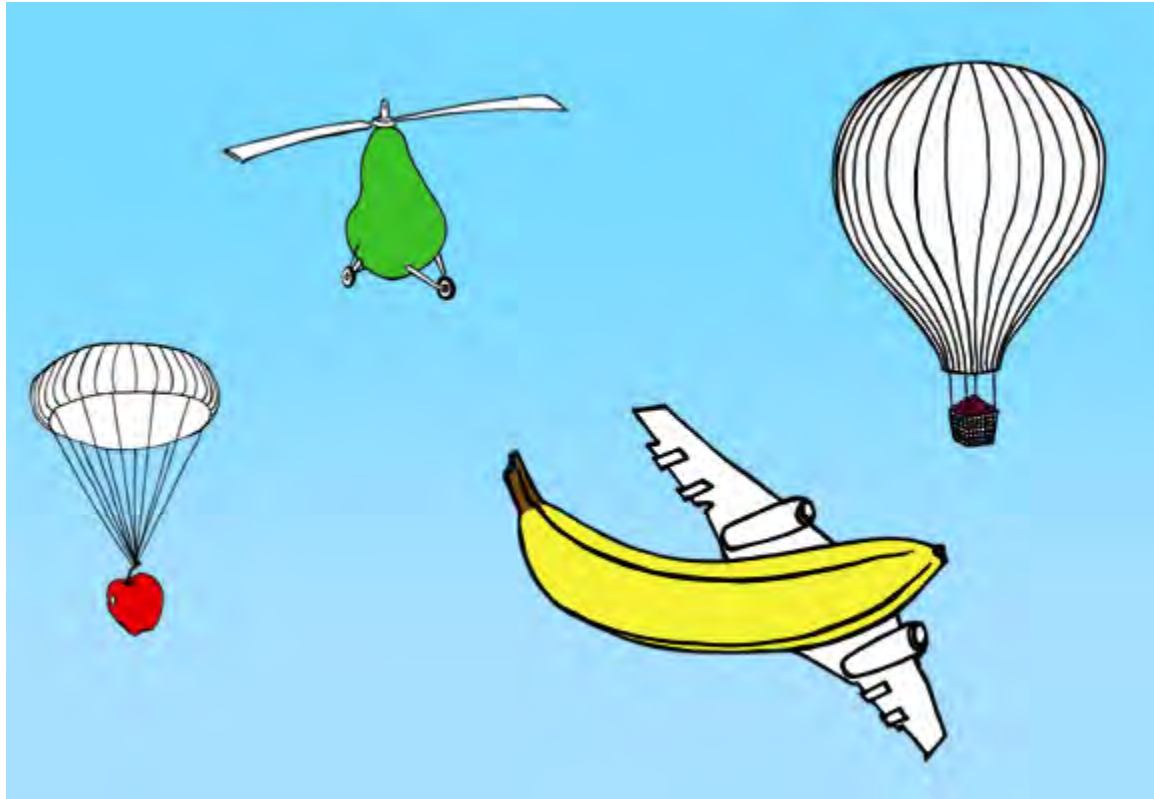
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April 2009

Making California America's Organic Farm

Adam Starr



Alice Waters isn't the only one pushing the effort to convert California to wholly sustainable agriculture. If even the government agrees it's possible by 2030, what's the holdup?

It's late February at Whole Foods in Berkeley, California, and a half pint of organic blueberries is selling for \$5. I admire nature's bounty; the access to fresh fruit is one reason I call California home. The blueberries don't, though. They hail from Chile. So do the nectarines. The blackberries, meanwhile, are from Mexico, and the bananas voyaged from Ecuador and Costa Rica.

California produces more food than any other state. In fact, it's the fifth largest food producer in the entire world. But for all its agricultural prowess, California imports huge volumes of food.

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The state is the biggest importer of FDA-regulated commodities in the United States. Much of this is produce, sold in foodie Meccas such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's.

But this produce is laden with plenty of baggage. The blueberries didn't just wash up on our shores 6,000 miles from their South American home in a polystyrene box; it took oil to transport them here. Fossil fuels are involved in every stage of industrialized agriculture, from petrochemical fertilizers to machinery operations to sprawling food distribution and shipping networks. And for many years, this oil-drenched food seemed palatable: Oil was cheap and we became dependent on it to bring us cheap food. As global oil resources dry-up, the costs of imported food will rise.

How California gets its food may soon change, though. With the growing awareness that the current practices are unsustainable, people are beginning to rally around the idea of creating a wholly sustainable agriculture in California by the year 2030. What this agricultural system will look like is outlined in a 12-point manifesto—created by a nonprofit called Roots of Change—that emphasizes local food, humane animal raising, and environmental protection. But accomplishing this goal requires that the public understand the hidden costs of industrialized food. The looming question is, how do they get the entire state up to speed?

Roots of Change has been on the case for almost a decade. Founded in 1999 to oppose the growing industrialization of food, ROC is uniting various leaders and institutions who share the 2030 goal. They've partnered with San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom on a project that has the potential to sustain that city, and, on the national level, are collecting signatures for a petition to ask that Congress add aggressive sustainability measures to the next farm bill.

But according to ROC, the effects of a switch to sustainable agriculture would have impacts far beyond what Californians consume at the dinner table. Michael Dimock, ROC's president, explains that "in essence, sustainable farming is producing crops and livestock using methods that neither exploit the working people on the farms nor degrade resources like soil and water to a degree that prevents continuous food production."

Indeed, true sustainability isn't just about food and soil. As Gail Feenstra, a food systems analyst for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program at the University of California, Davis, says: "A sustainable food system must be economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially just."

Particularly when it comes to the human factor, Feenstra cautions against the marginalization of the working class—whether the "working class" refers to the laborers toiling in unsafe fields and slaughterhouses, or the inner-city families struggling to gain access to the same nutritional food enjoyed by the patrons of the typical farmers market.

Bringing about this revolution in California's food system by 2030 is an audacious goal, but recently, the California Department of Food and Agriculture chose to adopt the same target to coordinate its AG Vision programs, which include progressive stewardship, water conservation, and renewable energy projects.

“You change the production of food overnight. It’s about paying the real cost of food, it’s about putting the money up front instead of having to pay for people’s health care out back.” —Alice Waters

Of course, these ideas aren’t altogether new. The Berkeley restaurant Chez Panisse—a temple to the locavore ethos—introduced sustainable eating to California (and the nation) in 1971, and the movement has reached something of a fever pitch in recent years. Alice Waters, chef of Chez Panisse—and, in many ways, the voice of the sustainable food movement as a whole—believes that creating a sustainable food system by 2030 is possible. For Waters, the key to realizing that goal would be a greater investment in food education. Creating a new generation of educated eaters could create a huge market for local foods.

“We need to educate the children from kindergarten,” Waters says. “Twenty percent of the population is in school—we’re talking about buying power.

Waters also suggests bringing not only food education, but sustainable food itself, into schools. “Chez Panisse only feeds five hundred [people per day] and think of what we’ve done. The Berkeley school system alone feeds ten thousand [people per day]. You change farming overnight, the production of food overnight. It’s about paying the real cost of food, it’s about putting the money up front instead of having to pay for people’s health care out back.”

Dimock concurs. “In the last fifty years we have created an expectation that food should be cheap. Our expectation of cheap food has harmed us because it has forced us to externalize the costs on labor, on the environment, and on our health. We have to realize that internalizing the true costs of food production are going to make for a healthier planet.”

The key, then, according to Dimock, Waters, and others, is education. “What the city has is money, markets, and policy power,” says Dimock. “What the countryside has is stewardship over all the resources that the city needs to survive: water, food, land, and renewable energy production. The city and the country are totally interlinked, and the more each becomes conscious of the other, the more stability the entire civilization has.”

Steve Lyle, of the CDFA, also stresses the importance of educating the public about the system, “by connecting individuals to agriculture, [the food we eat] through school gardens, farmers markets, farm tours and county agricultural fairs.” Through such a process, Lyle predicts a strong and viable future for California’s agricultural model.

In the 150 years since the advances of the industrial revolution were brought to America’s farms, agriculture has become an enormous and enormously powerful business, contributing \$130 billion to the economy in 2008. Thus far, this engine has maximized profits and cheap calories at the expense of health, food security, and our natural resources. Now, the time for cultivating our nation’s health through sustainable farming seems to be gaining currency, even at the highest levels. The White House has now announced plans for its own vegetable garden.

Waters finds this encouraging. For some time, she has been focused on the White House for its symbolic and legislative power to influence food. “I think what Barack and Michelle Obama say

and do will be understood by everybody in this country,” she says, “and they are beginning to say it, and they are beginning to do it, and it’s a beautiful thing.”

So will California be sustainably farmed in 2030? Maybe. The single biggest hurdle to making California a sustainable agricultural system is a general lack of understanding of our food system. But that understanding is growing. Ultimately, such an emerging food system hinges upon a growing market of consumers that actually put their money where their mouths are. This doesn’t have to be a painful process, but can provide a national reawakening to our Jeffersonian roots—after all, it was our third president who first and foremost saw us as a nation of farmers.

Dimock thinks that now is the time for national investment in our collective food future. “Our culture decided a long time ago that there is room for public investment: We did it for watersheds, we did it for trains and highways, we’ve done it for education, and we need to do it in a better way for the food system. ... We’ve already invested in cheap food, in cheap calorie production, now we just need to make an investment in healthy food and agriculture instead.” It’s an evolving process, but one that we can influence by eating seasonally; by thinking more about provenance before we consider the call of those winter blueberries.

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Mayor Newsom Announces Regional Food Policy for San Francisco and Several New Food Initiatives

COPY OF MAYORS PRESS RELEASE: 07/08/09 - San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom today issued the first ever comprehensive food policy for San Francisco, and a sweeping action plan to make improvements to food that is available in the region. The plan, which Mayor Newsom issued through Executive Directive, aims to ensure that all regional residents have access to healthy food, and will have far reaching impact throughout Northern California by increasing support for area farms.

"The stark reality is that hunger, food insecurity, and poor nutrition are pressing health issues, even in a city as rich and vibrant as San Francisco," said Mayor Newsom. "From the alleviation of hunger, to

the need to support local and sustainable agricultural practices, these recommendations form a comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing pressing needs in all sectors of the food system."

Mayor Newsom, joined at the announcement by California Food and Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura and representatives of the United State Department of Agriculture, explained that the food policy calls for a range of actions to be completed in 180 days. These actions include a requirement that all departments conduct an audit of land under their jurisdiction to create an inventory of land suitable for gardening, the introduction of new health and sustainability requirements for food sold by vendors under city permits, a "healthy meetings policy" requiring the purchase of healthy, locally produced foods for city meetings, and within two months, the introduction of a new law requiring that food purchased by the city has been grown regionally and through sustainable methods.

Mayor Newsom also released the recommendations of a group of key urban and rural stakeholders called the San Francisco Urban-Rural Roundtable. In September of 2008, Mayor Newsom partnered with a food advocacy group called Roots of Change to invite a broad range of urban and rural representatives, including California Secretary of Agriculture AG Kawamura, to come together in an unprecedented urban and rural collaboration to advance a sustainable "food shed" plan for the city and region. The Roundtable participants were charged to develop a set of recommendations for programs, strategies and practical actions that San Francisco can implement to support regional agriculture and increase access to high quality food for all San Franciscans. Many of the Roundtable's recommendations are integrated into the Mayor's food policy.

Additional actions coming out of the Roundtable recommendations include a trade mission that connects regional food growers to local San Francisco restaurants and food purchasers to increase purchasing of regional food, and using philanthropic funds to augment the spending power of residents who use food stamps at local farmers markets.

Mayor Newsom made his announcement at the West Oakland Woods Urban Garden, run by City Slicker Farms. The mission of City Slicker Farms is to advance food security through the creation of organic, sustainable, high-yield urban farms and backyard gardens. Its flagship programs include transforming empty lots into productive market farms, educating the general public about how to grow food in their own yards, and providing accessible garden training opportunities. For more information on this organization, visit their website at www.cityslickerfarms.org.

Newsom's fresh idea: mandates on healthier food

Heather Knight, Chronicle Staff Writer

Thursday, July 9, 2009



(07-08) 20:10 PDT -- He's already banned spending city money to buy bottled water and mandated composting citywide. Now, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is taking on something as basic as water and trash: food.

Newsom on Wednesday issued an executive directive he hopes will dramatically change how San Franciscans eat.

All city departments have six months to conduct an audit of unused land - including empty lots, rooftops, windowsills and median strips - that could be turned into community gardens or farms that could benefit residents, either by working at them or purchasing the fresh produce. Food vendors that contract with the city must offer healthy and sustainable food. All vending machines on city property must also offer healthy options, and farmers' markets must begin accepting food stamps, although some already do.

The mayor will send an ordinance to the Board of Supervisors within two months mandating that all food served in city jails, hospitals, homeless shelters and community centers be healthy.

And effective immediately, no more runs to the doughnut shop before meetings and conferences held by city workers. Instead, city employees must use guidelines created by the Health Department when ordering food for meetings.

Examples include cutting bagels into halves or quarters so people can take smaller portions and serving vegetables instead of potato chips.

"We have an eating and drinking problem in the United States of America," Newsom said Wednesday. "It's impacting our health, and it's impacting our economy."

The directives are the product of an "urban-rural roundtable" of food experts from around California convened by Newsom last year. The group was charged with finding ways to get more of the food grown on farms within 200 miles of San Francisco onto the plates of city residents, especially those who depend on government meals.

The idea is to decrease the need to import food, reconnect people to homegrown food rather than processed food, and to provide more options in neighborhoods like Bayview-Hunters Point that lack easy access to grocery stores.

Plan still lacks details

Many of the details have yet to be worked out, including how much it will cost. Newsom bristled when asked how it would be funded because there's no money to implement the food policy in the budget agreed to by the mayor and the board's budget committee just last week.

"We have plenty of resources," he said. "This is not a budget buster."

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, a member of the budget committee, said he likes the idea - and in fact, supervisors have been calling for the creation of an urban farm in San Francisco for years. He said that he wanted one included in the redevelopment of the former UC Berkeley Extension site on Laguna Street, but that the idea was never embraced by the mayor's administration.

"Even if it's a good idea, the timing's a little odd," Mirkarimi said of the unfunded proposal coming just days after the budget compromise. "I like the notion if we're able to get this at a very low cost."

It's also unclear how much land could be converted into community farms. The Public Utilities Commission has thousands of acres outside San Francisco that could be used, and the Real Estate Division and the Recreation and Park Department own some unused parcels in the city.

Model farm in Oakland

Newsom made the announcement Wednesday at a junkyard-turned-farm in West Oakland that could serve as a model for how land could be converted in San Francisco. A stone's throw from BART, it used to be home to old cars and one angry dog, but now is run by the nonprofit City Slicker Farms.

With a handful of staff members and scores of volunteers from the neighborhood, the nonprofit operates six small farms in West Oakland and sells the produce, along with honey and eggs, on a sliding scale to local residents at a Saturday farm stand.

The 2,000-square-foot former junkyard now produces 2,000 pounds of food every year, including lettuce, squash, tomatoes, parsley, sage, collard greens, grapes, cherries and plums.

"This speaks to people's soul," said Barbara Finnin, director of City Slicker Farms. "It's a place people can relax, be outside, and nourish themselves and their families."

Newsom toured the farm, biting off a piece of kale to taste, munching on an apricot and admiring sunflowers taller than him.

Back in San Francisco, it was apparent Newsom's idea may take some getting used to. Michael Summers, who operates a hot dog stand in Civic Center Plaza that contracts with the city, said the dogs made of tofu don't sell nearly as well as the old-fashioned meat kind. That was evidenced by the line of people ordering hot dogs just after noon - and not a tofu order among them.

New food rules

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is calling for city-funded food to be healthy and sustainable. His administration provided the following directives for what this means:

Safe and healthy: Avoids excessive pesticide use and has high nutritional value.

Culturally acceptable: Acceptable culturally and religiously to San Francisco's diverse population. An example would be providing Chinese seniors with bok choy and other vegetables they're familiar with at local farmers' markets.

Sustainable: Grown in a way that maintains the health of agricultural lands and advances self-sufficiency among farmers and farmworkers. An example would be using manure as a fertilizer rather than chemicals.



Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

Adelle Martin, an intern at the West Oakland Woods Farm, works in the vegetable beds.

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Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

Abeni Ramsey hands Mayor Gavin Newsom an apricot during his tour of the West Oakland Woods Farm.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

U.N. Plaza shoppers can already use food stamps at Heart of the City farmers' market.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Vendor Tony Mellow holds tokens used by food stamp recipients at the Heart of the City farmers' market.

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Paul Chinn / The Chronicle

Radishes are on display by a vendor at the Heart of the City farmers market at UN Plaza in San Francisco, Calif., on Wednesday, July 8, 2009. Vendors at the civic center market have long been accepting food stamp tokens from customers. A plan proposed by Mayor Newsom will require all farmers markets to do the same citywide.

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Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

On the heels of banning bottled water in city government, Mayor Gavin Newsom issues an executive order related to healthy food. City departments can now only serve healthy and sustainable food at their meetings and conferences - no more doughnuts! An ordinance will go to the Board of Supervisors in 60 days requiring that city institutions such as jails and hospitals do the same. Any city departments with unused land, like the PUC and real estate division, must look at converting it into community gardens or other food producers. Food stamps must be accepted at farmers' markets, even at the swanky Ferry Building. Wednesday July 8, 2009

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Lance Iversen / The Chronicle

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Roots of Change Breaks Ground with Sustainable Food Summit

July 10th, 2009 By Vanessa Barrington

The West Coast Direct Marketing Summit was held this week in Oakland, CA. Organized by Roots of Change with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, the purpose of the summit was to share information and best practices among organizations working to develop sustainable foodsheds that serve the needs of all.

Roots of Change deserves serious kudos for planning and executing a truly ground breaking event. The USDA, until now, has not focused efforts on supporting those small-scale, organic, sustainable operations of which we'd like to see more. In the area of hunger and food access, USDA has previously been content to provide food banks, food stamp and WIC program recipients, and childhood nutrition and school lunch programs with surplus industrial food. The idea that USDA, food justice and sustainability activists, and farmers, along with regional government officials would sit in the same room working together toward solutions to fix our broken food system would have been unthinkable just a year ago.

The main focus of the two-day summit was on enhancing opportunities for farmers and increasing community access to nutritious foods, with special emphasis on ways to replicate and scale up the efforts happening now. San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom made an important announcement at the conference about his plan for a regional sustainable food initiative in San Francisco. And Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums discussed the upcoming work of Oakland's Food Policy Council.

The first day of the conference was organized around a series of presentations, or case studies, that attendees could participate in to learn about the work going on in communities along the west coast. Public and private funders were also invited to help gain an understanding of needs in various organizations and communities. The second day focused more on the nuts and bolts of getting things done with food policy council updates, funder reflections, working groups to plan prototypes and general overall sharing of what was learned.

The case studies spotlighted a number of diverse topics including, developing technologies for government food assistance recipients to help them access fresh food from farmers' markets; sustainable food logistic web platforms; and both web-based and farmers' market-based food distribution hubs. There were also urban and suburban farm education projects; business incubators; regional government food initiatives; mobile farmers' market and slaughtering facility models, and more.

The case studies and activities I attended were fascinating. I attended the Soil Born Farms case study on Urban Agriculture, the study on Seattle's Food Action Initiative, and an open space working session on providing support for value added food businesses and young farmers. A few reoccurring themes came up as areas to focus on in future work:

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- The need for a central clearinghouse for government grants and stimulus monies. In every session, people were hungry for information on how to find and apply for the money that is available.
- The need for government to learn from the groups doing the work and then provide a framework and support for those grassroots efforts. This was illustrated extremely well in the session on The Seattle Local Food Action Initiative.
- The need to tie the sustainable, fair food movement to the green job movement. (At one point, somebody said, “Where’s Van Jones?”)

It was truly thrilling to witness so many smart, committed individuals sharing information and resources. I look forward to seeing the good work that is sure to come out of this summit.

CIVIL EATS

San Francisco's New Sustainable Food Mandate

July 10th, 2009 By Nevin Cohen



San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom issued an Executive Directive this week at a City Slicker Farm in Oakland during the Direct Farm Marketing Summit organized by Roots of Change, making food system planning the unambiguous responsibility of city government. Under the directive, it is the official city policy to increase the amount of healthy and sustainable food available to San Francisco residents, charging mayoral agencies with specific steps to accomplish this goal. By using his executive powers, Newsom was able to move swiftly, though some agency initiatives will eventually require legislation enacted by the Board of Supervisors.

The Directive is ambitious in articulating a vision of a food system with nutritious food for all San Franciscans, shorter distances between consumers and producers, protections for worker health and welfare, reduced environmental impacts, and strengthened connections between urban and rural communities. Such progressive goals are nothing new for San Francisco. A number of existing plans, resolutions, ordinances and executive directives address elements of sustainability within the food system. San Francisco's 1997 sustainability plan, which was adopted as a non-binding city policy, has a chapter on food. Resolutions adopted in 2005 commit city agencies to maximize their purchases of fair trade and organic food. A 2006 "shape up at work" directive requires agencies to support a healthier living and eating environment in the workplace. Ordinances requiring farmers markets to take EBT cards, banning agencies from buying bottled water, and resolutions supporting cage-free chickens and opposing foie gras have been passed in recent years.

But several things distinguish the new Directive from these previous efforts. First, it is notably comprehensive in scope, recognizing the need "to consider the food production, distribution, consumption and recycling system holistically." The principles outlined in the Directive include: allocating city funds to ensure that hunger is eliminated; planning neighborhoods to ensure

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healthy food options; spending municipal food dollars on regionally produced and sustainable food; encouraging food production on City owned land; promoting local food businesses; supporting policies to conserve peri-urban prime farmland; helping to market regionally grown food in San Francisco; recycling all organic residuals and eliminating chemical use in municipal agriculture and landscaping; educating residents about healthy food and sustainable food systems; and advocating for consistent state and federal policies.

Second, it was developed with the involvement of a broad range of municipal officials, advocates, and business representatives, and empowers these stakeholders to monitor and advance the Directive's initiatives through a new Food Policy Council that will meet bi-monthly. The Council is explicitly charged with reviewing the City Code, General Plan, and other policies to identify amendments that can achieve the goals of food system sustainability.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the Directive contains a series of sixteen mandatory actions that various agencies must take, within relatively short order, to plan and implement its goals. The specificity of these requirements separates this effort from other municipal resolutions, non-binding plans and charters, and other mainly hortatory exercises. Among these various mandates, several stand out as particularly significant:

- Within six months, every department with jurisdiction over property is required to audit the land under their control to identify sites suitable for food production.
- To increase access to federal food and nutrition programs, the City's Human Service Agency is required to offer online eligibility screening and enrollment in addition to new neighborhood based registration programs.
- Within six months, city departments that lease property to food establishments or permit mobile food vendors must either require the sale of healthy and sustainably produced food or give preferences to those who do so.
- All city agencies that purchase food for events or meetings must buy healthy, locally produced or sustainably certified foods to the maximum extent possible. Within two months, the Department of the Environment will draft a local and sustainable food procurement ordinance for City government food purchases.
- The City's planning department must integrate sustainable food policies into elements of the city's general plan as it is updated.
- Within six months, the Redevelopment Agency must develop a Food Business Action Plan to identify economic development strategies, such as enterprise zones, expedited permits, tax incentives, and other policies to establish new food businesses.
- The Parks Department is directed to facilitate access to gardening materials and tools to support increased production of food within the City.

Newsom's food Directive has the potential to set in motion a series of plans and initiatives that would dramatically accelerate urban food production, increase food access for low income residents, stimulate the market for sustainably produced food at the urban edge, and incorporate food into long-range city planning. And with continued public concern about the food system, this is a politically opportune time for Mayor Newsom to advance sustainable food policy. However, given California's dire fiscal condition, the implementation of the agency mandates, such as a buy-local requirement, could not have come at a more challenging moment. It will be

extremely difficult for the Mayor and Board of Supervisors to garner the political support for new food policies and programs that have short-term costs, no matter how brief the payback period and how large the long-term benefits are. San Francisco's new Food Policy Council, together with other food advocates, have a critical role to play in ensuring that the public gets behind necessary city legislation.

First-ever regional food policy

Key Points

- San Francisco Mayor Newsom is ensuring regional access to healthy food.
- Newsom's plan helps Northern California by boosting support for area farms.
- More than 8,500 Californians have joined Roots of Change, a food advocacy group.

By LEN RICHARDSON

SAN Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom has issued the first-ever comprehensive food policy for San Francisco, and a sweeping action plan to make improvements to food that is available in the region.

The plan, which Newsom issued by executive directive last month, aims to ensure that all regional residents have access to healthy food through a regional "foodshed." It will have far-reaching impact throughout Northern California by increasing support for area farms.

"The stark reality is that hunger, food insecurity and poor nutrition are pressing health issues, even in a city as rich and vibrant as San Francisco," says Newsom. "From the alleviation of hunger, to the need to support local and sustainable agricultural practices, these recommendations form a comprehensive and strategic approach to addressing pressing needs in all sectors of the food system."

Newsom spoke as part of the July 7-9 Direct Farm Marketing Summit in Oakland organized by Roots of Change, or ROC, a food advocacy group.

The requirements

Newsom, joined at the announcement by California Food and Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura and USDA representatives, explained that the food policy calls for a range of actions to be completed in 180 days. These actions include a requirement that all departments conduct an audit of land under their jurisdiction



PHOTO BY FOTOLIA

FOODSHED LEADER: California Food and Agriculture Secretary A.G. Kawamura (left foreground) helped develop the food policy as part of the California Ag Vision in Sacramento. Planners are working with 50 regional leaders from agriculture, business and government (25 based in the city, 25 in the country) on a groundbreaking project to seed formation of a regional "foodshed."



**OAKLAND
MAYOR RON
DELLUMS**

to create an inventory of land suitable for gardening; the introduction of new health and sustainability requirements for food sold by vendors under city permits; a "healthy meetings policy" requiring the purchase of healthy, locally produced

foods for city meetings; and within two months, the introduction of a new law requiring that food purchased by the city has been grown regionally and through sustainable methods.

Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, a food-

shed movement advocate, also spoke during the summit.

In the last 10 months, more than 8,500 Californians have shown their commitment to the effort by joining ROC. In addition, the Packard Foundation has joined the Columbia, Heller and Kellogg foundations as a core funder. And with this summit, government has become a financial partner and is working on several more collaborative efforts with federal and state agencies.

The vision

Michael Dimock, ROC president, described a united vision of a sustainable system:

■ People of all income levels have access to healthy food.

■ Agriculture and processing systems do not degrade the health of ecosystems, livestock or humans who produce or eat the food.

■ More wealth is produced from the system. That wealth is shared in a way that ensures that all of those working within it, from field hand to financier, feel both well respected and fairly compensated, and thus remain committed to their careers in the system.

■ A diversity of operational scales and ownership are maintained to ensure economic resilience.

The network and projects span the state, says Newsom. "We are working with Secretary Kawamura on the Ag

Vision [an agricultural goals statement by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, with input from the public] in Sacramento and with the grassroots organizers in San Diego who run the City Heights Farmers Market. We are working closely with 50 regional leaders from agriculture, business and government [25 based in the city and 25 in the country] on a groundbreaking project to seed formation of a regional foodshed."

Newsom also released the recommendations of a group of key urban and rural stakeholders called the San Francisco Urban-Rural Roundtable. In September of 2008, Newsom partnered with ROC to invite a broad range of urban and rural representatives, including Kawamura, to come together in an unprecedented urban and rural collaboration to advance a sustainable foodshed plan for the city and region. Many of the Roundtable's recommendations are integrated into Newsom's food policy.

Newsom made the announcement in Oakland at the West Oakland Woods Urban Garden, which is run by City Slicker Farms. For more information, see www.cityslickerfarms.org.



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Is Local Food Better?

Yes, probably—but not in the way many people think.

(Editor's note: The local-food movement has been gaining momentum in developed countries, and in many developing countries as well, in recent years; in the United States alone, sales of locally grown foods, worth about \$4 billion in 2002, could reach as much as \$7 billion by 2011. Local food's claimed benefits are driving health- and environment-conscious consumers to seek alternatives to the industrial agriculture system whose products dominate grocery-store shelves. It is also linked to the localization efforts of people who believe that rising transport costs and reaction to globalization will trigger a shortening of economic links and greater reliance on local and regional economies. This two-part series examines the potential impacts of greater localization of food, beginning with the environmental effects and then, in our July/August issue, the economic implications.)

by Sarah DeWeerd

In 1993, a Swedish researcher calculated that the ingredients of a typical Swedish breakfast—apple, bread, butter, cheese, coffee, cream, orange juice, sugar—traveled a distance equal to the circumference of the Earth before reaching the Scandinavian table. In 2005, a researcher in Iowa found that the milk, sugar, and strawberries that go into a carton of strawberry yogurt collectively journeyed 2,211 miles (3,558 kilometers) just to get to the processing plant. As the local-food movement has come of age, this concept of “food miles” (or “-kilometers”)—roughly, the distance food travels from farm to plate—has come to dominate the discussion, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, and parts of Western Europe.

The concept offers a kind of convenient shorthand for describing a food system that's centralized, industrialized, and complex almost to the point of absurdity. And, since our food is transported all those miles in ships, trains, trucks, and planes, attention to food miles also links up with broader

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concerns about the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from fossil fuel-based transport.

In the United States, the most frequently cited statistic is that food travels 1,500 miles on average from farm to consumer. That figure comes from work led by Rich Pirog, the associate director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University (he is also behind the strawberry-yogurt calculations referenced above). In 2001, in some of the country's first food-miles research, Pirog and a group of researchers analyzed the transport of 28 fruits and vegetables to Iowa markets via local, regional, and conventional food distribution systems. The team calculated that produce in the conventional system—a national network using semi-trailer trucks to haul food to large grocery stores—traveled an average of 1,518 miles (about 2,400 kilometers). By contrast, locally sourced food traveled an average of just 44.6 miles (72 kilometers) to Iowa markets.

In light of such contrasts, the admonition to “eat local” just seems like common sense. And indeed, at the most basic level, fewer transport miles do mean fewer emissions. Pirog's team found that the conventional food distribution system used 4 to 17 times more fuel and emitted 5 to 17 times more CO₂ than the local and regional (the latter of which roughly meant Iowa-wide) systems. Similarly, a Canadian study estimated that replacing imported food with equivalent items locally grown in the Waterloo, Ontario, region would save transport-related emissions equivalent to nearly 50,000 metric tons of CO₂, or the equivalent of taking 16,191 cars off the road.

What's “Local”?

But what exactly *is* “local food” in the first place? How local is local?

One problem with trying to determine whether local food is greener is that there's no universally accepted defini-



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Cattle feed in Brazil. It's estimated there are about 1.3 billion cows worldwide.

tion of local food. Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon, authors of *The 100-Mile Diet*, write that they chose this boundary for their experiment in eating locally because “a 100-mile radius is large enough to reach beyond a big city and small enough to feel truly local. And it rolls off the tongue more easily than the ‘160-kilometer diet.’” Sage Van Wing, who coined the term “locavore” with a friend when she was living in Marin County, California, was inspired to eat local after reading *Coming Home to Eat*, a chronicle of author Gary Paul Nabhan’s own year-long effort to eat only foods grown within 250 miles of his Northern Arizona home. She figured that if Nabhan could accomplish that in the desert, she could do even better in the year-round agricultural cornucopia that is Northern California, so she decided to limit herself to food from within 100 miles.

There’s some evidence that a popular understanding of local food is, at least in some places, coalescing around this 100-mile limit. A 2008 Leopold Institute survey of consumers throughout the United States found that two-thirds considered local food to mean food grown within 100 miles. Still, a variety of other definitions also persist. Sometimes local means food grown within a county, within a state or province, or even, in the case of some small European nations, within the country. In the United Kingdom, reports Tara Garnett of the Food Climate Research Network, “on the whole, organizations supporting local are now less likely to put numbers on things.” Meanwhile, rural sociologist Clare Hinrichs, of Pennsylvania State University, has found that in Iowa local has shifted from signifying food grown within a county or a neighboring one to food grown anywhere in the state. For some in the agricultural community, promoting and eating “local Iowa food” is almost a kind of food patriotism, aimed at counteracting the forces of globalization that have put the state’s family farmers at risk.

All of those are perfectly valid ways of thinking about local. But they don’t have all that much to do with environmental costs and benefits.

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Tradeoffs

In any case, warns Pirog, food miles/kilometers don’t tell the whole story. “Food miles are a good measure of how far food has traveled. But they’re not a very good measure of the food’s environmental impact.”

That impact depends on how the food was transported, not just how far. For example, trains are 10 times more efficient at moving freight, ton for ton, than trucks are. So you could eat potatoes trucked in from 100 miles away, or potatoes shipped by rail from 1,000 miles away, and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with their transport from farm to table would be roughly the same.

The environmental impact of food also depends on how it is grown. Swedish researcher Annika Carlsson-Kanyama led a study that found it was better, from a greenhouse-gas perspective, for Swedes to buy Spanish tomatoes than Swedish tomatoes, because the Spanish tomatoes were



USDA NRCS/Jeff Vanuga

Waste lagoon of a fully automated 900-head hog farm in Georgia.

grown in open fields while the local ones were grown in fossil-fuel-heated greenhouses.

That seems obvious, but there are subtler issues at play as well. For example, Spain has plenty of the warmth and sunshine that tomatoes crave, but its main horticultural region is relatively arid and is likely to become more drought-prone in the future as a result of global climate change. What if water shortages require Spanish growers to install energy-intensive irrigation systems? And what if greenhouses in northern Europe were heated with renewable energy?

Perhaps it's inevitable that we consumers gravitate to a focus on food miles—the concept represents the last step before food arrives on our tables, the part of the agricultural supply chain that's most visible to us. And indeed, all other things being equal, it's better to purchase something grown locally than the same thing grown far away. “It is true that if you're comparing exact systems, the same food grown in the same way, then obviously, yes, the food transported less will have a smaller carbon footprint,” Pirog says.

But a broader, more comprehensive picture of all the tradeoffs in the food system requires tracking greenhouse gas emissions through all phases of a food's production, transport, and consumption. And life-cycle analysis (LCA), a research method that provides precisely this “cradle-to-grave” perspective, reveals that food miles represent a relatively small slice of the greenhouse-gas pie.



Ron Gilling/Peter Arnold, Inc.

Emissions-free food transport: a vendor goes to market in La Paz, Bolivia.

In a paper published last year, Christopher Weber and H. Scott Matthews, of Carnegie Mellon University, wove together data from a variety of U.S. government sources into a comprehensive life-cycle analysis of the average American diet. According to their calculations, final delivery from producer or processor to the point of retail sale accounts for only 4 percent of the U.S. food system's greenhouse gas emissions. Final delivery accounts for only about a quarter of the total miles, and 40

percent of the transport-related emissions, in the food supply chain as a whole. That's because there are also “upstream” miles and emissions associated with things like transport of fertilizer, pesticides, and animal feed. Overall, transport accounts for about 11 percent of the food system's emissions.

By contrast, Weber and Matthews found, agricultural production accounts for the bulk of the food system's greenhouse gas emissions: 83 percent of emissions occur before food even leaves the farm gate. A recent life-cycle analysis of the U.K. food system, by Tara Garnett, yielded similar results. In her study, transport accounted for about a tenth of the food system's greenhouse gas emissions, and agricultural production accounted for half. Garnett says the same general patterns likely also hold for Europe as a whole.

There's Something about Dairy

The other clear result that emerges from these analyses is that what you eat matters at least as much as how far it travels, and agriculture's overwhelming “hotspots” are red meat and dairy production. In part that's due to the inefficiency of eating higher up on the food chain—it takes more energy, and generates more emissions, to grow grain, feed it to cows, and produce meat or dairy products for human consumption, than to feed grain to humans directly. But a large portion of emissions associated with meat and dairy production take the form of methane and nitrous oxide, greenhouse gases that are respectively 23 and 296 times as potent as carbon dioxide. Methane is produced by ruminant animals (cows, goats, sheep, and the like) as a byproduct of digestion, and is also released by the breakdown of all types of animal manure. Nitrous oxide also comes from the breakdown of manure (as well as the production and breakdown of fertilizers).

In Garnett's study, meat and dairy accounted for half of the U.K. food system's greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, she writes, “the major contribution made by agriculture itself reflects the GHG [greenhouse gas] intensity of livestock rearing.” Weber and Matthews come to a similar conclusion: “No matter how it is measured, on average red meat is more GHG-intensive than all other forms of food,” responsible for about 150 percent more emissions than chicken or fish. In their study the second-largest contributor to emissions was the dairy industry.

Nor are these two studies unique in their findings. A group of Swedish researchers has calculated that meat and dairy contribute 58 percent of the total food emissions from a typical Swedish diet. At a global level, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization has estimated that livestock account for 18 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions—more even than all forms of fossil fuel-based transport combined.

“Broadly speaking, eating fewer meat and dairy products and consuming more plant foods in their place is probably the single most helpful behavioral shift one can make” to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions, Garnett argues.

Weber and Matthews calculated that reducing food miles



Off the truck, onto the boat: pineapples being loaded for export from Ghana.

to zero—an all-but-impossible goal in practice—would reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the food system by only about 5 percent, equivalent to driving 1,000 miles less over the course of a year. By comparison, replacing red meat and dairy with chicken, fish, or eggs for one day per week would save the equivalent of driving 760 miles per year. Replacing red meat and dairy with vegetables one day a week would be like driving 1,160 miles less. “Thus,” they write, “we suggest that dietary shift can be a more effective means of lowering an average household’s food-related climate footprint than ‘buying local.’”

However, Weber acknowledges, “these calculations were done assuming that local foods are no different than non-local foods.” And that’s not always the case. For example, local-food advocates also emphasize eating seasonal (often meaning field-grown) and less-processed foods. Those qualities, along with shorter distances from farm to table, will also contribute to lower emissions compared to the “average” diet.

Food marketed in the local food economy—at farmers’ markets and through community-supported agriculture (CSA) schemes—is frequently also organic. Organic food often (though not always) is associated with lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventionally grown food, because organics don’t generate the emissions associated with production, transport, and application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

Organic food also has other environmental benefits: less use of toxic chemicals promotes greater farmland biodiversity, and organic fields require less irrigation under some conditions. Because local food is so frequently talked about in terms of food miles, its environmental benefits have largely been couched in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. But food’s carbon footprint “can’t be the only measuring stick of envi-

ronmental sustainability,” notes Gail Feenstra, a food systems analyst at the University of California at Davis Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

Finally, farmers who market locally are often relatively small in scale, and can more feasibly adopt environmentally beneficial practices such as growing a diversity of crops, planting cover crops, leaving weedy field borders or planting hedgerows that provide a refuge for native biodiversity, and integrating crop and livestock production. In short, Weber says, “the production practices matter a lot more than where the food was actually grown. If buying local also means buying with better production practices then that’s great, that’s going to make a huge difference.”

Of course, the relationship between local food marketing and sustainable agricultural practices is far from perfect. A small farmer can still spray pesticides and plow from road to road. Not all farmers-market vendors are organic. Clare Hinrichs, who calls herself an “ardent” farmers-market shopper, nevertheless acknowledges that “the actual consequences—both intended or unintended—[of local food systems] haven’t really been all that closely or systematically studied.”

How Green Is My Valley?

So, is local food greener? Not necessarily. But look at the question from the opposite direction: if you’re a consumer interested in greener food, the local food economy is currently a good place to find it. By the same token, a farmer who sells in the local food economy might be more likely to adopt or continue sustainable practices in order to meet this customer demand. If local food has environmental benefits, they aren’t all—or perhaps even mainly—intrinsic to local-ness. Or, as Hinrichs has written, “it is the social relation, not the spatial



Organic bounty: Nantes carrots for sale at a farmers market in Santa Monica, California.

location, per se, that accounts for this outcome.”

For local food advocates like Sage Van Wing, that interaction between producer and consumer, between farmer and eater, is precisely the point. Regarding food miles, Van Wing says, “I’m not interested in that at all.” For her, purchasing an apple isn’t just about the greenhouse gas emissions involved in producing and transporting the fruit, “it’s also about how those apples were farmed, how the farm workers were treated”—a broad array of ecological, social, and economic factors that add up to sustainability. Interacting directly with the farmer who grows her food creates a “standard of trust,” she says.

Christopher Weber, who followed a vegan diet for 10 years and calls himself “somewhat of a self-proclaimed foodie,” agrees: “That’s one thing that’s really great about local food, and one of the reasons that I buy locally, is because you can actually know your farmer and know what they’re doing.”

Van Wing says that her approach to local food has evolved over time—she started out trying to eat within a 100-mile radius, but now she simply tries to get each food item from the closest source feasible. Foods that can’t be grown nearby are

either rare treats or have disappeared from her diet altogether. “I just don’t do things that don’t make sense,” she says. Her statement echoes journalist and sustainable-agriculture guru Michael Pollan, who in his recent book *In Defense of Food* offers a common-sense guide to eating ethically and well: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” You could sum up the ecological case for eating locally by adding one more sentence: “Mostly what’s in season and grown not too far away.”

Yet there are limits to this common-sense approach. In many areas, the climate is such that eating local, seasonal, field-grown produce would be a pretty bleak proposition for much of the year. Large concentrations of people live in areas not suited to growing certain staple crops; it’s one thing to forego bananas, but quite another to give up wheat. And population density itself works against relocation of the food system. Most of the land within 100 miles of large cities such as New York is itself very built up; where will the farmland to feed us all locally come from? (By the same token, that very situation makes preservation of what farmland remains all the more important, a goal that buying from local farmers can help advance.)

In this sense, life-cycle analyses of the current food system offer a paradoxically hopeful perspective, because they suggest that, if the goal is to improve the environmental sustainability of the food system as a whole, then there are a variety of public policy levers that we can pull. To be sure, promoting more localized food production and distribution networks would reduce transport emissions. But what if a greater investment in rail infrastructure helped to reverse the trend toward transporting more food by inefficient semi-truck? What if fuel economy standards were increased for the truck fleet that moves our food? Or, to name one encompassing possibility, what if a carbon-pricing system incorporated some of the environmental costs of agriculture that are currently externalized? Local food is delicious, but the problem—and perhaps the solution—is global.

Sarah DeWeerd is a Seattle-based science writer specializing in biology and the environment.



For more information about issues raised in this story, visit www.worldwatch.org/ww/localfood.



Local Food: The Economics

by Sarah DeWeerd

One drizzly Sunday last March, I went to the weekly farmers market in my favorite Seattle neighborhood and bought a bag of potatoes. I stopped at a stall where a farmer, his hands caked with dirt, was filling mesh bags with small, just-dug potatoes and singing a silly made-up ditty as he twirled each bag shut. “That one looks good,” I said, pointing to the bag in his hands. “Can I have that one?” “Yeah,” he agreed with me, “it has a nice mix of spuds.” I held out a few crumpled dollar bills and he passed me the bag.

Eating local has economic benefits for communities, say proponents of local food, and after such a quintessential farmers market moment that conclusion seems obvious, the logic inescapable. After all, I’d handed my money directly to the farmer who grew my food—rather than passing it along a chain of faceless and distant middlemen—and what’s more, he honestly seemed to be having a good time.

That’s different from the economic logic of the mainstream food system, which de-emphasizes place and sees trade as a disembodied, win-win endeavor. Different communities can specialize in growing different foods—or in activities other than growing food altogether—thereby developing production efficiencies that enable them to offer their products at a lower price. Money flows freely among communities, and everyone gets a more varied diet for less money.

Well-drained Farms

The trouble is, that’s not all that’s going on. Over the past decade, Ken Meter, president of the Minneapolis-based Crossroads Research Center, has documented the way the current food system drains money and vitality from farming communities throughout the United States. His first investigation, focusing on the seven-county Hiawatha region of southeast Minnesota, is representative. In that 2001 study, Meter and Jon Rosales, of the Institute for Social, Economic, and Ecological Sustainability at the University of Minnesota,

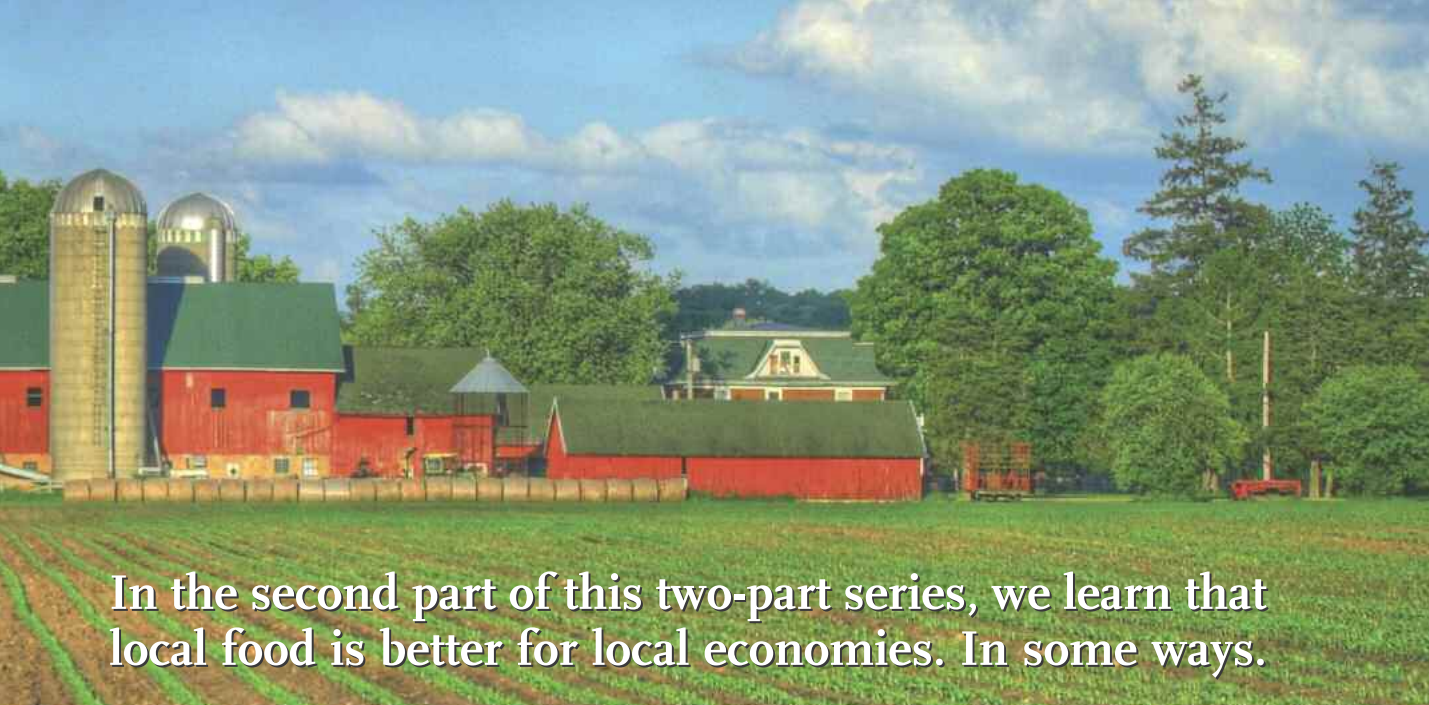
found that farmers in the region sold an average of US\$912 million worth of farm commodities every year. But they spent \$500 million on farming inputs—things like seed, animal feed, fertilizer, and (crucially) credit—sourced from outside the region. Moreover, the region’s consumers spent an additional \$500 million on food purchased from elsewhere. All of the money—and then some—that the region earned from farming was drained right back out of the community by the food system itself.

Meter has found a similar pattern in landscapes as diverse as Iowa, Arizona, and Washington State: farmers often operate at a loss, spending more to grow their crops than they earn from selling them. (In the southeast Minnesota study, farmers spent \$996 million to grow \$912 million worth of crops. Some of this difference, but in many regions not all, is made up for by farm subsidies.) Most of the inputs necessary to produce those crops come from outside the community. And most of the food that farm families eat is purchased from far away.

Even where farmers aren’t producing at a loss, the food system as a whole drains money from the local economy. In Meter’s study of the eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay, farmers collectively earned \$70 million more each year than they spent to produce their crops. Yet they sourced about \$375 million in farm inputs from outside the region annually, and consumers in the region purchased about \$400 million in food from afar. That amounts to a net loss of \$700 million from the region each year—about the same as the value of all agricultural products produced there. “Basically every region that I’ve studied is losing hundreds of millions of dollars a year” as dollars flow out of the community, Meter says. He adds, “It’s building wealth for some people, but not for the farmers.” Instead, most of the profits in this system flow “to the supply industries, the service industries, to agriculture, and the financial sector—not to the farm and certainly not to the rural community.”

Local food has been promoted as one solution to this economic imbalance. “More local or regional food commerce is

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Brian Lary

In the second part of this two-part series, we learn that local food is better for local economies. In some ways.

Spring corn crop sprouts on this family farm in Wisconsin.

going to benefit local and state economies,” says Rich Pirog, associate director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. A variety of studies, from the Leopold Center and elsewhere, have calculated the economic rewards communities could reap by buying more food produced nearby.

In their southeastern Minnesota study, for example, Meter and Rosales found that if people in the region bought just 15 percent of their food from local sources it would generate two-thirds as much income as the region’s farmers receive from federal farm subsidies. In a study by economist Dave Swensen of Iowa State University, if Iowans purchased a quarter of their produce from Iowa farmers, it would create \$139.9 million in new economic output and more than 2,000 jobs for the state. If people in the Central Puget Sound region (Seattle and nearby cities, including Tacoma, Bellevue, and Everett) spent 20 percent of their food dollars at local food businesses such as farmers markets and locally owned restaurants, it would inject an extra billion dollars every year into the region’s economy.

Even a small shift in spending can have a big impact because of what economists term the local multiplier effect. Every time money changes hands within a community, it boosts the community’s overall income and level of economic activity, and fuels the creation of jobs. The more times money changes hands within the community before heading elsewhere, the better off the community is. And spending money at a locally based business has a greater multiplier effect, the theory goes, because locally owned businesses are more likely to re-spend their dollars locally.

This thinking isn’t unique to the food system. In the United Kingdom, the New Economics Foundation has documented how directing a small portion of public sector spending to locally owned businesses in disadvantaged areas would multiply through, and help revitalize, these struggling economies. In the United States, many local multiplier studies have focused on the economic impacts of spending at mom-and-pop stores versus big-box chain retailers.

In the case of food, some impressive numbers are found in *Why Local Linkages Matter*, the study of the Central Puget Sound region referenced above. In that study, independent economist Viki Sonntag calculates that spending \$100 at a local restaurant results in \$79 in additional income to local businesses, while spending the same \$100 at a chain restaurant results in just \$31 being re-spent locally. When farmers in the region grow food for export, each dollar of sales generates \$1.70 of community income, but every dollar spent at a farmers market generates a whopping \$2.80 for the region’s economy. Similarly, a 2005 study from the Iowa Farmers Market Association found that every two jobs at an Iowa farmers market gives rise to three jobs elsewhere in the economy.

On the Other Hand...

The local multiplier effect is the foundation of the claim that local food benefits local economies. But studies of the potential benefits of shifting food dollars to the local food system are just that: potential. They rely on economic models to predict how a hypothetical change in consumer behavior would ripple through the economy at large. To date, according to Pirog, there’s been no instance of a community actually undertaking such a shift and seeing the predicted economic benefits materialize. The local food movement is still too new, and too small, for that to have happened. (Even in the Seattle region, a hotbed of enthusiasm for local food, the stuff accounts for only about 1–2 percent of food purchases, according to Sonntag’s study.)

But Pirog points to some encouraging developments in northeastern Iowa, where a recent focus on strengthening the local food system as a means of economic revitalization is starting to have a marked effect. “When you get enough people doing it, then the input suppliers start to move back,” Pirog says. An area equipment dealer has begun to carry and repair farm implements needed by small farmers that sell to local and regional markets, he reports. A new food edu-

Farm workers sort spring onions grown on Mike Fox's farm near Mexicali, in Mexico. Fox is one of a group of American farmers farming over 20,000 hectares in the area, where workers' wages are about a tenth of those north of the border in California.



Springer/Reuters © 2008

cation non-profit has formed to help with school and community gardens.

That's good news for northeastern Iowa, but Pirog's comment points to another important caveat regarding food system localization studies. Crucially, these studies depend on an approach that mainstream economists call import substitution. They look at products that local residents are already buying from far away, and ask what would happen if people bought these same products from closer to home. They carefully account for the economic pluses and minuses of such a switch for the community in question. For example, if Iowa farmers grew more produce, they would have to grow less corn and soybeans. So Swensen's study considers the loss of income from corn and soybeans that would occur as some acreage was switched from commodity crops to melons, tomatoes, and the like.

However, import substitution studies don't take into account the impacts of such a switch on *other* communities—if Iowa grows more of its own vegetables, for example, the California farmers currently supplying those vegetables will lose out. So if some communities localize and not others, there will be winners and losers. And if all communities localize, it's a bit of a wash.

"It's not like you're creating additional new jobs in the economy, you're shifting those jobs around," Pirog acknowledges. But, he argues, "that's why it's important to broaden this debate beyond economics"—when local economies are healthier, "crime problems go down, health problems decrease, people have more of a sense of connectedness." Indeed, it's almost

impossible to talk about local food without ending up talking about values rather than just money. But that, Viki Sonntag argues, could be considered a failing of economics itself. "We don't really have very good formal economics models to represent social capital and the importance of social capital to the development of financial or economic stability," she says.

Means, Not Ends

Still, the meaning of localization studies depends on the scale at which you're considering them. Looking at a single community or region in isolation—particularly an agricultural area that's been economically hollowed out by the current food system—these studies have a powerful, up-by-the-bootstraps appeal. Viewed from a broader perspective, they can seem parochial, or even, at the national level, protectionist.

That is, localizing food systems in the United States would produce a net increase in agricultural jobs for the country. That's because the United States, like other wealthy countries, imports a significant and growing proportion of its food from developing nations (in the case of the United States, primarily Mexico). So some of the jobs gained in the United States would simply be shifted—or more precisely, shifted back—from Mexico. It's not clear that food system localization at a grand scale would increase the number of jobs globally.

In the United Kingdom, which imports significant quantities of fresh produce from Africa, this line of reasoning has led some to suggest that in fact people *shouldn't* buy local food, precisely because the livelihoods of impoverished farmers in the developing world depend on food exports to wealth-



Açaí berries being loaded on a truck in Abaeteuba, Brazil. Touted as one of the newest “super foods,” full of anti-oxidants and vitamins, they will be exported for use in energy drinks, cosmetics, and health bars.

ier nations. Benito Müller, director of energy and environment at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, points out that Kenya earns UK£100 million per year from produce sold to the United Kingdom alone, and argues that Europeans have “a moral duty to eat African strawberries at Christmas.”

On the other hand, purchasing food imported from developing nations doesn’t necessarily improve economic wellbeing for the farmers who grow it. In fact, switching to export-oriented agriculture often *increases* food insecurity in the developing world, pushes small farmers off the land, and traps those that remain in a cycle of debt. There’s some intriguing, if limited, evidence that local food systems could have economic benefits in developing countries as well. Jules Pretty, a sustainable agriculture researcher based at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom, has worked with farmers in the Santa Catarina state in southern Brazil, where diversified small farmers (on one farm, more than 50 crops, plus pigs and chickens, on just 10 hectares) are building small-scale, on-farm processing facilities, forming associations with like-minded neighbors, and marketing directly to consumers in nearby cities—and seeing better economic returns than they’d get from contract farming for agricultural conglomerates.

Or, alternatively, there are fair-trade arrangements, which attempt to ensure that developing-country farmers get a fair price and a living wage when they grow foods for export. Taking these complexities into account, Pretty suggests “what you might call a ‘near and far policy,’ that you should localize food as much as you possibly can wherever you are...and grow whatever you can locally, but then source the stuff that

needs to come from the tropics or from elsewhere in the most fair-trade, just, appropriate way that you can.”

Other analysts question whether buying local ought to be the default policy in the first place. Depending on the structure of the business, buying local might not, in fact, do much for the local economy. (After all, every global mega-corporation is “local” somewhere.) In an influential 2006 paper, Branden Born and Mark Purcell, two urban planning professors at the University of Washington, call the assumption that local food is automatically better—not only better economically, but better for the environment, fresher, more nutritious, and so on—the “local trap.” Instead, they argue that there’s nothing inherently better or worse about any particular scale—local food might be just or unjust, and non-local food might be better for the environment in some instances or much worse in others. Instead, they argue that localization should be a means to an end, and not an end in itself.

“Local”...or “Sustainable”?

In the first article in this series [May/June 2009 *World Watch*], we concluded that the environmental benefits of local food aren’t always intrinsic to its local-ness, and the same is true in the economic realm. That’s clear from a closer look at several of the studies concerning the economics of local food. For example, Swensen’s study of the potential benefits of increased local fruit and vegetable consumption for Iowa assumes that half of the increased local production would be sold through farmers markets and other direct-marketing schemes—in effect, shortening the food supply chain. Shorter food supply

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Liquid manure from a hog farm being spread on cropland in Iowa.

chains are a common strategy for increasing the portion of the purchase price that goes to the farmer. But while shorter supply chains are often associated with local food, the two aren't intrinsically linked (the same approach underlies many fair-trade schemes that connect producers with very distant consumers, after all).

Then there's the question of what we eat, not just how far it travels. Many farmers don't grow food, they grow raw materials for industry. And a number of recent efforts to rebuild rural economies have focused on reintroducing fruit and vegetable production into areas currently dominated by commodity farming. That strategy leads to economic gains in part because the value per hectare is so much higher for produce compared to commodity crops. In Swensen's study of increased local produce consumption in Iowa, the greatest economic benefits were seen in scenarios that assumed Iowans would also increase their total fruit and vegetable consumption to the recommended five servings a day (a goal that only about 20 percent of the state's population currently reaches). Of course, Pirog points out, more fruit and vegetable consumption would lead to a healthier population, which would have economic benefits of its own—fewer sick days, lower health care costs. But there are several issues at play here, and not all are strictly about local-ness.

"What we need to do is shift from talking about local food to talking about sustainable food," says Jim Sumberg, an expert on agriculture and food systems who is currently the director of research and programs at the New Economics Foundation. For Sumberg, sustainable food means "food that's associated with high levels of wellbeing, of social justice, of stewardship,

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and of system resilience." While it would take some discussion to agree on a definition of each of those aspects of sustainability, this approach at least moves us beyond a narrow focus on food miles/kilometers or local economic self-interest.

To be sure, some of the solutions to increase wellbeing and social justice in the food system would be local ones. For example, Ken Meter suggests that farmers could reduce their spending on inputs sourced from far away by re-adopting old systems that combine crops and livestock, grazing livestock on renewable pasture and using the manure to fertilize their

fields. That kind of arrangement really only makes sense on a local scale. (It's worth noting that it would have environmental benefits as well.) Restoring local and regional processing networks might shorten supply chains and put growers on a more equal footing with processors. Other possible solutions, like shifting transportation funds away from major highways and toward secondary roads to help rebuild regional distribution networks, would require action at an even higher level. Decentralization of the food system is a common theme of these solutions, but the details matter. Who will own the regional processing plants? Who will work there? How can farmers be assured of a fair price for their commodities? That's different from a reflexive insistence that local is a goal in itself.

When I got my farmers market potatoes home, I cut them in half, roasted them in a hot oven, and then tossed them in a dressing made with smoked paprika (about the furthest thing possible from a local ingredient). The potatoes were astonishingly sweet, in a rounded way that tasted of healthy earth, and as I ate them I thought again of the farmer I'd bought them from. I could hardly imagine a more perfect dish of potatoes. Was that dish also better for the place I call home than the one I could have made with potatoes bought at the supermarket? Probably so—but there's a lot more to the story.

Sarah DeWeerd is a Seattle-based science writer specializing in biology and the environment.



For more information about issues raised in this story, visit www.worldwatch.org/ww/localfood.

New sustainable ag classes set, major on the way

By Lyra Halprin, ASI/SAREP



Limor Geisler drives a cultivator in sweet corn at UC Davis Student Farm. (photo by Pat Vellines)

A growing student interest in sustainable food and farming systems that are good for people and the environment has led to new classes and development of a new major at UC Davis.

Sustainable food and agricultural systems that integrate environmental health, economic profitability, and social and economic fairness are becoming universally recognized as the direction society must go, according to UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute (ASI) affiliated faculty, staff and students implementing the new major.

Starting in the fall of 2008, new freshman-level courses in food systems and sustainable agriculture and an upper division course in agroecology, the study of the ecology of the entire food system, are being offered.

The new major is expected to be approved by the end of 2009. It is a collaborative effort, and will provide students with a broad background in sustainable agricultural and food systems, according to institute director **Tom Tomich**.

"The skills and knowledge gained through this broad, interdisciplinary curriculum will prepare graduating students to become leaders in sustainable agriculture in California and throughout the nation," said Tomich.

The new undergraduate course, "Food Systems," is being offered fall quarter 2008 through the Department of Human and Community Development. It focuses on contemporary food and farming systems, agricultural sustainability and economic equity, according to course instructor **Ryan Galt**, assistant professor in the department.

"Students are seeing how production, processing, distribution and consumption affect food price, nutritional content and access," said Galt. "We are also examining the social context of food systems and the often contradictory goals of nourishment, profit, power and impact on the environment, producers' livelihoods, citizens and communities."

Field trips to meet with stakeholders are part of the course, designed to complement "Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture," which will be offered for the first time in spring 2009 through the plant sciences department. That course will be taught by **Mark Van Horn**, director of the UC Davis Student Farm.

"Students will examine production practices and systems, including resource use and unintended consequences," said Van Horn. "Field work will help students understand the connection between agricultural and environmental sciences and farming."

Internships will be a required part of the curriculum. Students will be encouraged to work on farms and ranches, at farmers markets, with agricultural processors and handlers, with policy makers at the state capital, with non-profit organizations like Valley Vision, Community Alliance with Family Farmers or with government agencies including the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

An upper division course in agroecology will be offered spring quarter 2009 by **Johan Six**, assistant professor in the Department of Plant Sciences.

Will Horwath, professor of soil science, is chair of the sustainable agriculture major implementation committee.

"The major will draw from both traditional and nontraditional teaching concepts and methods and place a strong emphasis on experiential learning," said Horwath. Students will choose to focus on a natural-science track or a social-science track, but all students will take courses in both areas.

"A wide range of skills will be emphasized in the new major, including critical thinking, problem solving, communication and group process management," said Horwath.

While a formal major in sustainable agriculture and food systems is a new initiative for UC Davis, both field-based and classroom-based interdisciplinary sustainable agriculture learning opportunities have been available to students at the Student Farm for more than three decades, said Van Horn.

"Student Farm staff and students have played key leadership roles in the development of the new major," he said.

The Columbia Foundation made a grant of \$100,000 for the development of the major, while the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation contributed \$100,000 to support the experiential learning activities within the new major. The UC Davis Undergraduate Instructional Improvement Program contributed \$14,000 for course development and training.

For more information on the major and the classes, please see the Student Farm Web site at <http://studentfarm.ucdavis.edu/>, or the ASI Web site at asi.ucdavis.edu.

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Green Revolution

April 23, 2009



Growth in sustainable agriculture education is akin to growth in the organic food market, says Damian Parr, a doctoral candidate in agricultural and environmental education at the University of California at Davis. In other words, organic's been growing at about 20 percent a year, but still makes up only 2.8 percent of total sales (according to the Organic Trade Association).

Likewise, "It is rapid growth," Parr says of academic programs in sustainable agriculture. "Is it taking over land-grants? Definitely not yet."

In recent years, a number of majors, minors and concentrations with names like sustainable food systems, organic agriculture, and agroecology have cropped up in colleges of agriculture nationwide. Not simply synonymous with "organic," but incorporating that aspect under its umbrella, sustainable agriculture programs are often interdisciplinary in nature.

Developed to varying degrees in response to rising student interest in all things green, a changing food industry (see *growth in organics*, above), and diminishing enrollments in more traditional agricultural programs, "these programs are one of the latter indicators of things changing because they require acceptance by faculty and administrators," says Parr.

"Formal programs take years to get through logistically. And they're long-term commitments." Parr has worked with faculty at his own institution, UC Davis, for five years in developing an undergraduate major, pending final approval, in sustainable agriculture and food systems.

“I think there are a couple of things happening very quickly,” says Michelle Schroeder-Moreno, assistant professor and coordinator of North Carolina State University’s agroecology program, offered as a minor since 2005. “One, quite frankly, is the decreasing numbers of students in traditional agronomy programs. Nationwide, this is a huge problem. These programs are being cut. These are land-grant institutions where agriculture has been our base.”

“Of any agricultural science, I think sustainable agriculture, agroecology are growing in ways that traditional programs haven’t. We have for example, a lot more, I guess you could say, untraditional people coming back to agriculture via sustainable agriculture and agroecology. I have more women in our minor compared to our traditional agriculture courses. I have on average 50 percent women in my courses, I have more underrepresented minorities, people that perhaps didn’t grow up in agriculture and come from non-agricultural backgrounds. Myself included.” (Schroeder-Moreno’s Ph.D. is in ecology and evolutionary biology, not agriculture. She jokes: “I was unsure when I came to interview in a crop science department, I have to say.”)

Schroeder-Moreno has been among those active in the development of a new association, the Sustainable Agriculture Education Association, which is gearing up for its third national conference this July, at Iowa State University. “We need a formal organization to be able to share curricula, to be able to be visible, to share with students or potential students what are the programs that exist and who directs them,” Schroeder-Moreno says.

Profiles of Programs

So what programs do exist?

The University of Maine, it’s fair to say, was way ahead of the pack; the university launched a bachelor of science degree in sustainable agriculture in 1988. There, too, sustainable agriculture was seen as an antidote for declining enrollments.

“Sustainable ag was [seen as] something new that would draw students from outside the state. That’s exactly what it did, in the early years. The majority of students were from out-of-state, mostly from New England, but we had students from the West Coast even coming occasionally,” says Marianne Sarrantonio, the program coordinator and associate professor of sustainable agriculture. Maine’s sustainable agriculture program is oriented toward the hard agricultural sciences, with the core curriculum including courses in the plant and soil sciences, cropping systems, insect/pest ecology, entomology, and weed ecology and management.

“Now more of the other land-grants have gone in that direction, if not offering a degree in sustainable ag, at least offering a concentration or a minor in it,” Sarrantonio says.

Among the land-grants that have more recently gone in that direction, the University of Missouri at Columbia’s sustainable agriculture major has two tracks – one in animal and plant production systems and one in community and food systems. The latter is “more social science-oriented,” explains Sandy Rikoon, a professor of rural sociology who was involved with development of the major. “It’s for people who are going to get involved in sustainable agriculture on the

international level, in terms of development projects. It's for people who are working on food security issues here in the U.S."

Rikoon is also director of Missouri's Community Food Systems and Sustainable Agriculture Program – an outreach and extension program that, in this chicken and egg equation, came first. "When it got going, for its first 15 years, there was no academic program in sustainable agriculture; it was truly an outreach and extension program. About five years ago, some of the so-called stakeholder groups -- farmers' groups, consumer groups, religious groups -- basically went to the College of Agriculture here at the university and said you guys have no academic program," Rikoon recalls. The college put together a committee, which he chaired, and the rest is history.

That story -- of an extension program dedicated to sustainable agriculture coming first -- seems to be a common one.



Meanwhile, Montana State University's sustainable food and bioenergy systems undergraduate major is brand-new, having been approved by the Board of Regents in November. The B.S. degree is jointly run by the College of Agriculture and the College of Education, Health and Human Development, which houses nutrition, explains Mary Stein, the program coordinator. "I think this program does a nice job addressing not only the agricultural production aspect but also the implications for human health, for local economies, for farm viability, preservation of farmland. I think taking a systems approach to these problems is really a strength of this program."

In 2006, as part of a larger curricular effort to emphasize whole agricultural and food systems, Washington State University created a new major in organic agriculture systems. Undergraduate certificates are also available, and in 2008 the university launched a graduate certificate in sustainable agriculture, says Jessica Goldberger, an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Rural Sociology. In assessing the various programs, they've found that students "are very much enjoying the hands-on learning experiences," she says. "And I think you see that across the country, this demand for more out-of-the-classroom, practical learning experiences. Students are very much enjoying these kinds of classes, especially since a lot of the students that

are attracted to sustainable and organic agricultural programs don't necessarily have agricultural backgrounds."

Sustainable agriculture programs often feature internships and opportunities for students to work on campus farms and sell produce locally through community-supported agriculture (in which community members purchase a share in a farm, and share the harvest). Montana State students, for instance, will intern with the university's Towne's Harvest Garden, a community-supported agriculture operation.

As one example of a hands-on opportunity at Washington State, Goldberger co-teaches a class called Field Analysis of Sustainable Food Systems, in which students travel over spring break "and intensively get to know a particular ag and food system in a particular region of the state. We spend a whole week visiting about 20 different sites, farms, processing plants, packing houses for say, tree fruits, grocery stores, farm stands, agritourism operations. We sometimes meet with chefs," Goldberger says.

Burgeoning student demand for these programs is a common theme. At the University of Florida, faculty developed a major in organic crop production in response to perceived interest on the part of students, says Rebecca Darnell, professor and associate chair of the horticultural sciences department, and the undergraduate coordinator.

That interest has in fact materialized. The major was approved for the 2006-7 academic year and, already, 27 of 48 majors in the horticultural sciences department are in the organic crop production track, Darnell says.

'Transforming' the Curriculum

For all the activity in sustainable agriculture education, it's still happening in pockets, says Jerry DeWitt, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State, which, for instance, has a young graduate program in sustainable agriculture but no undergraduate program. "I think we've seen some movement towards sustainability from the research side, I think we've seen a movement toward sustainable-type activities through extension, and then of course the last is through teaching or through curriculum enhancement. They haven't come equally," DeWitt says.

For all the new programs in recent years, "the curriculum revitalization has been so slow. I can't put my finger as to why that is the case," DeWitt says. "We have data, we have the obvious need for it, it's not being prevented by industry. I think it comes down to the individual faculty member – is he or she aware of what's going on in the world around them, the real market place and the need for balance in programs.

"One of my criticisms of the traditional universities and colleges, and maybe even especially the land-grants, is we have been slow to change and adapt programs that can allow us to better compete in this new environment," DeWitt says.

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A March report from the National Academies, "Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World," stresses the need for agriculture programs to be more agile. While not focusing solely on sustainability, the authors write: "Agriculture must adapt to a continually changing landscape of health and nutrition issues, consumer preferences, national security concerns, environmental impacts, and many other factors."

Asked about obstacles to change, as far as sustainable agriculture is concerned, some interviewed point to the influence of big agribusiness, which produces fertilizers and pesticides (an argument that's ultimately tied to discussions about just how much colleges of agriculture rely on industry support for research). But just as many professors seem to downplay the notion as to propagate it, suggesting -- as DeWitt does -- that industry is changing, too.

And, furthermore, that there's room for industrial and sustainable agriculture research and education in large land-grants, that it's not an either-or. "Most of our faculty do sustainable ag and something else," says Rikoon, of Missouri. "People live on external research funding and there's much more of that coming from the conventional companies and industrial ag side of things; that's what keeps their labs going. But our courses are taught by people who teach crop genomics Monday, Wednesday and Friday and on Tuesday, Thursday, they teach sustainable crop and livestock systems."

Some faculty successfully straddle both approaches to agriculture in their work. Still, in interviews, many cite a kind of cognitive dissonance factor as a primary obstacle to curricular change.

"Sometimes change can be internalized and thought of, if I'm really changing, making a dramatic change, is that a repudiation of what I've done in the past?" DeWitt says. "What I stand for, what I've done?"

— Elizabeth Redden

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Courthouse News Service

Tuesday, May 05, 2009

New Pesticide Could Hurt Honeybees, Groups Claim



MANHATTAN (CN) - Even as honeybees suffer widespread mortality from a mysterious disease, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency approved a new pesticide, spirotetramat, despite evidence that it could "cause serious harm to bees," the Natural Resources Defense Council says in Federal Court.

The NRDC says the feds approved the pesticide in June 2008 without adequate review, without notice and without seeking public comment.

Bees pollinate nearly 70 percent of the world's flowering plants, contributing billions of dollars to U.S. agriculture every year. The NRDC and co-plaintiff the Xerces Society say that "For reasons that are still unknown, bee populations in the United States have plummeted in recent years." The mysterious Colony Collapse Disorder has unnerved beekeepers, farmers and growers worldwide in the past three years.

The EPA approved spirotetramat for use on a wide variety of crops, including apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries, apricots, oranges, citrus fruits, cucumbers, squash, watermelon, tomatoes, peppers, grapes, lettuce, onions, tree nuts and other crops. It also approved it "for use directly on livestock and in plant nurseries," according to the complaint.

It did this even though "In its Fact Sheet, EPA concludes that spirotetramat causes significant mortality and 'massive perturbation' to honey bee broods (larvae) through trace residues brought back to the hive by adult bees. EPA approved spirotetramat despite this identified harm to bees."

Co-plaintiff the Xerces Society is dedicated to protecting wildlife by preserving invertebrates and their habitat.

Plaintiffs want the EPA approval rescinded. They are represented by Mitchell Bernard.

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The Buzz on Native Pollinators

By Laura Tangley

As European honeybees decline, indigenous bees and other pollinating animals can provide a backup—with a little help from their human friends



WHEN ECOLOGIST Rachel Winfree set out to survey native bees in the Delaware Valley of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, she was not optimistic about her results. Not only is the region far from any known hot spots of bee diversity, such as the U.S. Southwest, “New Jersey is also the most densely populated state in the country,” says Winfree, an assistant professor in the Department of Entomology at Rutgers University. “I was worried that after getting funding and hiring a staff, the project would turn out to be a waste of time.”

Her fears were unfounded. “We found bees everywhere,” says Winfree—thousands of individuals of 46 different species. More surprising, she and her colleagues discovered that the number of flower visits by these natives was sufficient to fully pollinate the watermelon crop on 21 of 23 farms in her study region.

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Gleaning such data was the goal of Winfree's work. As European honeybees decline in a mysterious phenomenon known as Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD), "I wanted to find out whether native bees could fill in for them," she says. While Winfree cautions against extrapolating her results too broadly to other crops in other parts of the country, "if we lost all honeybees in this region to CCD tomorrow, between 88 and 90 percent of the watermelon crop would be fine," she says. "Native bees are providing a backup plan—for free."

Winfree's results, published in *Ecology Letters*, have generated an excited buzz among native pollinator proponents, a diverse group of scientists, conservationists, gardening enthusiasts and others who are sponsoring activities nationwide this June to celebrate the third official National Pollinator Week. Yet even as they applaud her study—and others that show wild bees contribute to the production of crops such as blueberries, cranberries, peppers, tomatoes, alfalfa and squash—they worry about the welfare of these unsung natives.

"There has been little effort to document the long-term status of pollinator populations in the United States," says biologist May Berenbaum, chairman of the Department of Entomology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Yet in a 2006 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, a scientific committee chaired by Berenbaum found that in cases where data do exist, pollinator population trends are "demonstrably downward."

Pollinators comprise a diversity of wild creatures, from birds and bats to butterflies, moths, beetles, flies and even the odd land mammal or reptile. But "there's no question that bees are the most important in most ecosystems," says Winfree, who calls the insects "the 800-pound gorillas" of the pollinator world. Unlike social honeybees, imported to North America in the 1600s, the majority of the continent's native bees are solitary, nesting in burrows on the ground or small holes in wood rather than building hives. Worldwide, there are some 20,000 bee species, 4,000 of them found in North America.

Bees and other pollinators are essential to human survival. "Without them, you'd lose most of your plants, and ultimately everything else," says Winfree. To produce seeds and reproduce, three-quarters of the world's flowering plant species rely on animal pollinators. (The others use the less precise methods of wind or water to transfer pollen between male and female flower parts.) Animal-dependent plants include more than two-thirds of the world's crop species, whose fruits and seeds provide more than 30 percent of the foods and beverages we consume. Scientists estimate that in the United States alone, native bees perform up to \$3 billion worth of pollination services annually.



Natural ecosystems and their inhabitants also rely on pollinators. Many North American songbirds, for instance, feed on the fruits, seeds and berries of plants pollinated by animals. Pollinating insects themselves, especially their plump larvae, provide protein for adult songbirds and their fast-growing fledglings. Even the notoriously carnivorous grizzly bear depends more directly on pollinators than one might expect. According to wildlife ecologist Kimberly Winter, NWF's habitat programs manager, in some places between 80 and 90 percent of the bear's diet is made up of fruits, nuts, bulbs and roots of animal-pollinated plants. On an ecosystem level, "losing a pollinator can have a domino effect on countless other species," she says.

To detect pollinator population trends, long-term surveys are essential. “The few hardy souls who have undertaken such studies are finding indisputable evidence of declines,” says Berenbaum. She cites the work of biologist Arthur Shapiro, a professor of evolution and ecology at the University of California–Davis who has been monitoring butterflies on fixed transects across the state for the past 37 years. Many of the several dozen species he has tracked have declined, some dramatically. “Butterflies that were once considered utterly common are going into a tailspin, and no one knows why,” says Shapiro.

In addition to butterflies, the NAS report provides evidence of decline in three other pollinator groups: hummingbirds, bats and—especially—bumblebees. A 2008 report from the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a nonprofit based in Portland, Oregon, paints an even bleaker picture of the familiar, fuzzy insects' fate. Compiling data from more than three dozen scientists and "citizen monitors" across the country, the report concludes that populations of three formerly common species—the rusty-patched, yellowbanded and western bumblebee—have dropped drastically over the past decade. A fourth species, Franklin's bumblebee (restricted to coastal Oregon and Northern California), has only been seen once in the past several years.

Though the jury is still out on the cause of these declines, the most likely culprit is an exotic disease introduced by commercially reared bumblebees, says the society's executive director, Scott Hoffman Black. Between 1992 and 1994, he explains, queens of the western bumblebee, a species commonly used to pollinate greenhouse tomatoes, were shipped to Europe to produce colonies subsequently shipped back to U.S. farms. Scientists suspect the bees picked up a fungal disease from European bees, then spread it to wild bumblebees across the country as colonies were moved among commercial growers. (All beleaguered species are closely related to those that spent time in Europe.) "Like Native Americans decimated by smallpox brought in by Europeans, our native bees have no resistance to exotic diseases," says Hoffman Black.

Beyond disease—suspected as a major cause of CCD in honeybees—blame for pollinator declines runs the gamut: habitat loss and fragmentation, introduced species, pesticides and global warming. "But in most cases, we don't know," says Laurie Davies Adams, executive director of the Pollinator Partnership, a San Francisco-based nonprofit working to raise awareness about pollinators' plight. "We simply haven't paid enough attention."

There are a handful of exceptions. In the U.S. Southwest, two species of nectar-feeding bats—the lesser long-nosed and Mexican long-tongued bat—have declined due to destruction of their roosting caves. Pesticides are implicated in problems facing several native insects, though given the animals' special sensitivity to these chemicals, "pathetically few toxicity studies have been conducted, even on honeybees," says Berenbaum.



A RUBY-THROATED hummingbird drinks nectar from a cardinal flower in the Adirondacks. Scientists are concerned that long-distance migrants such as hummingbirds are particularly threatened by global warming.

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Like virtually all living things, pollinators are also threatened by global warming. According to biologist David Inouye of the University of Maryland, some are already beginning to respond to climate change. In the Colorado Rockies, for example, he and his colleagues recently surveyed the altitudinal distribution of several bumblebee species at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory (RMBL). They compared the results with those of a survey they had conducted along the same transect as graduate students more than 30 years ago and found that at least one species has shifted its range upward by 1,500 feet.

Pollinators are particularly at risk to undergo effects of warming—when changes in temperature in precipitation cause shifts in the distribution of plants or the timing of nectar they produce. In another study at the Colorado lab, Inouye and RMBL colleague Billy Paul found that springtime emergence of Miller's monarch butterfly, *Danaus*



HOW TO PLANT FOR POLLINATORS

"The next threat about pollinator conservation is that animals, from the corner of a spot course to an apartment dweller with a window box, can do something to help," says Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Pollinator Partnership for Invertebrate Conservation. All it takes is to provide appropriate food and habitat for bees, butterflies and other pollinating species and to avoid using the pesticides that harm them. "Using pollinator-friendly products is also an easy, win-win strategy," says Kimberly Wilson, RMBL's habitat program manager. "And you are creating a sustainable ecosystem in your own backyard."

Here are a few suggestions to get started:

- To provide pollinators with the best source of food—nectar to prevent the spread of nectar robbing—choose as many plants as you can for your region as possible. For advice, recommendations, consult the Pollinator Partnership's free companion planting guide for your area (www.pollinator.org) or you find it a page on the web.
- Select plants that provide a lot of nectar and pollen. Many ornamentals have been specifically bred to provide lots of nectar and pollen for bees.
- Plant a diversity of species for your yard will provide bees, butterflies and other animals with nectar and pollen from spring through fall. To attract bees and other pollinators, consider night-blooming plants in addition to day-blooming.
- Be a "nectar" gardener. Leave some patches of untrimmed yard and brush piles. These areas, and other areas, can be of great benefit to pollinators. Consider leaving or establishing a few bushes for nesting bees and birds.
- During hot, dry periods, provide water in shallow saucers or pans where pollinators can easily drink. Soak sponges and honeycomb in it to build their nests, and substitute it for water in nesting tubes.
- Do not use pesticides, and encourage your neighbors to reduce their reliance on these chemicals. According to RMBL, most pesticides are used in urban areas before they are in agricultural regions of the United States.

For more tips, check out these sites: www.xeriscaping.org and www.wildlife.org.

CELEBRATE POLLINATORS

The first annual National Pollinator Week runs June 20-26, 2009. To find out how to host a garden tour or pollinator event in your area, visit www.pollinator.org and how to get involved, go to www.xeriscaping.org.

Like virtually all living things, pollinators are also threatened by global warming. According to biologist David Inouye of the University of Maryland, some are already beginning to respond to climate change. In the Colorado Rockies, for example, he and his colleagues recently surveyed the altitudinal distribution of several bumblebee species at the Rocky Mountain Biological

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Laboratory (RMBL). They compared the results with those of a survey they had conducted along the same transects as graduate students more than 30 years ago—and found that at least one species has shifted its range upslope by 1,500 feet.

Pollinators are particularly at risk to indirect effects of warming—when changes in temperature or precipitation cause shifts in the distribution of plants or the timing of nectar they produce. In another study at the Colorado lab, Inouye and RMBL colleague Billy Barr found that springtime emergence of Milbert's tortoiseshell butterfly has been getting progressively earlier since the 1970s. Yet blooming time of the region's spring wildflowers has not kept up. The findings demonstrate that "pollinators and plants do not respond the same way to environmental changes caused by global warming," says Inouye. "This

means they may lose the synchrony they once had." Inouye is particularly concerned about hummingbirds—important wildflower pollinators—that migrate thousands of miles between winter habitats in the Tropics and breeding grounds in North America. Research shows that tropical and temperate ecosystems are responding very differently to global warming, and there's no way a hummingbird wintering in Colombia would be able predict what the weather is like in Colorado.

Fortunately, there's good news as well. Thanks to the NAS report and efforts of conservationists, there has been a flowering of appreciation for native pollinators in recent years. Concern about European honeybees has also helped. CCD, first detected soon after the report's publication, had "a silver lining," says Hoffman Black. "Now many more people know that their food is pollinated, and that we need bees and other animals to do that."

Davies Adams agrees that "we see more interest in pollinators than just a few years ago—and more resources to help people help pollinators." Among her organization's activities is the creation of a series of ecoregional planting guides to advise gardeners on planting native species for insects and other animals. Launched in 2008, the final set of 32 guides is scheduled to be completed this June. The Xerces Society has published the Pollinator Conservation Handbook as well as a series of guides for farmers and managers of parks, golf courses and other lands.

Perhaps the biggest coup scored by pollinator proponents came last year with congressional reauthorization of the Farm Bill, which for the first time has provided specific financial incentives to growers who restore habitat for pollinators and authorized \$100 million for research on the animals. Winfree has applied for funding through the law to continue working with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in New Jersey on combinations of plants that attract the greatest diversity of pollinators. She suspects the reason she found so many bees in her own study is because the region's small farms are nestled among suburban gardens and scraps of

native vegetation, habitats that provide nesting sites and additional food for the insects. Similar research conducted within vast monocultures of California’s Central Valley has so far been less encouraging.

Winfree, who launched her project in 2006, obtained equally promising results during the 2007 and 2008 growing seasons. “When it comes to human disturbances like fragmentation,” she says, “some bees may turn out to be more robust than some larger animals like birds and mammals. And that would be very good news for conservation.”

Senior Editor Laura Tangley provides food, water and nesting sites for pollinators in her own yard.

Garden for Wildlife

How to Plant for Pollinators

“The neat thing about pollinator conservation is that anyone, from the owner of a golf course to an apartment dweller with a window box, can do something to help,” says Scott Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. All it takes is to provide appropriate food and habitat for bees, butterflies and other pollinating species—and to avoid using the pesticides that harm them.

“Being pollinator-friendly also means you are being wildlife-friendly,” says Kimberly Winter, NWF’s habitats program manager. “And you are creating a sustainable ecosystem in your own backyard.”

Here are a few suggestions to get started:

- To provide pollinators with the best sources of food—and to prevent the spread of invasive species—choose as many plants native to your region as possible. For specific recommendations, consult the Pollinator Partnership’s free ecoregional planting guide for your area (www.pollinator.org); all you need is a zip code.
- Select plants that provide a lot of nectar and pollen. Many ornamentals have been specifically bred to produce little or none of these essential foods.
- Plant a diversity of species so your yard will provide bees, butterflies and other animals with nectar and pollen from spring through fall. To attract bats and nocturnal moths, consider night-blooming plants in addition to day-bloomers.
- Be a “messy” gardener: Leave some patches of unmulched soil and brush piles that bees, birds and other animals can use to construct nests. Consider building or purchasing a bee house for wood-nesting wasps and bees.
- During hot, dry periods, provide water in shallow birdbaths or pools where pollinators can easily alight. Some wasps and bees need mud to build their nests, and butterflies like to gather in muddy puddles.
- Do not use pesticides, and encourage your neighbors to reduce their reliance on these chemicals. According to Winter, more pesticides are used in urban areas today than in agricultural regions of the United States.

For more tips, check out these sites: www.nwf.org and www.xerces.org.

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Native bees are a rich natural resource in urban California gardens

by Gordon W. Frankie, Robbin W. Thorp, Jennifer Hernandez, Mark Rizzardi, Barbara Ertter, Jaime C. Pawelek, Sara L. Witt, Mary Schindler, Rollin Coville and Victoria A. Wojcik

Evidence is mounting that pollinators of crop and wildland plants are declining worldwide. Our research group at UC Berkeley and UC Davis conducted a 3-year survey of bee pollinators in seven cities from Northern California to Southern California. Results indicate that many types of urban residential gardens provide floral and nesting resources for the reproduction and survival of bees, especially a diversity of native bees. Habitat gardening for bees, using targeted ornamental plants, can predictably increase bee diversity and abundance, and provide clear pollination benefits.

Outdoor urban areas worldwide are known to support a rich diversity of insect life (Frankie and Ehler 1978). Some insects are undesirable and characterized as pests, such as aphids, snails, earwigs and borers; urban residents are most aware of these. Other urban insects are considered beneficial or aesthetically pleasing, such as ladybird beetles and butterflies; this category includes a rich variety of insects whose roles in gardens go largely unnoticed and are thus underappreciated (Grissell 2001; Tallamy 2009). They regularly visit flowers and pollinate them, an important ecological service.

We report the results of a 2005-to-2007 survey of bees and their associations with a wide variety of ornamental plant species in seven urban areas, from Northern California to Southern California. While nonnative honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) are common in many gardens, numerous California native bee species also visit urban ornamental flowers. Of about 4,000 bee species



About 1,600 native bee species have been recorded in California. The bees provide critical ecological and pollination services in wildlands and croplands, as well as urban areas. Above, a female solitary bee (*Svasta obliqua expurgata*) on purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*).

known in the entire United States, about 1,600 have been recorded in California.

Our recent work on urban California bees in the San Francisco Bay Area (Frankie et al. 2005) is part of a larger movement to conserve and protect native pollinators; participants include the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and the Xerces Society. Mounting evidence worldwide indicates that pollinators, especially bees, are declining as human populations and urban areas continue to expand (NRC 2007).

Important economic concerns are at stake, in terms of the value of bee pollination in crop systems and wildland environments (Allen-Wardell et al. 1998; NRC 2007). To recognize and protect the pollination services of native bees (Daily 1997), we must learn more about their role in natural environments, crop pollination (Kremen et al. 2002, 2004) and urban areas (NRC 2007). In the urban environment, native bees offer im-

portant benefits to people that include aesthetic pleasure, awareness of urban native fauna conservation, pollination of garden plants that provide food for people and animals, and environmental education.

Urban bee surveys

Previous surveys of ornamental plants in residential neighborhoods of the San Francisco Bay Area (Albany and Berkeley) revealed 82 bee species, of which 78 were native to California and four were nonnative, including the honey bee (Frankie et al. 2005; Hernandez et al. 2009; Wojcik et al. 2008). That work resulted in questions about whether similarly diverse native bees visit ornamental flowers in other urban areas of the state, and whether the same types of bees are associated with the same types of flowers in those urban areas. More specifically, can particular ornamental plants be used as predictors for visitation by certain taxonomic groups of bees over



Fig. 1. Ornamental plant and bee survey sites in California.

a wide geographic area, from Northern California to Southern California?

To address these questions, we conducted garden surveys in Albany and Berkeley (Alameda County) and six other medium-large urban areas throughout the state (from north to south): Ukiah (Mendocino County), Sacramento (Sacramento County), Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz County), San Luis Obispo (San Luis Obispo County), Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara County) and La Cañada Flintridge (Los Angeles County) (fig. 1). Ukiah and Sacramento are inland and subject to climatic extremes in winter and summer. Santa Cruz is coastal and has similar conditions to that of Albany and Berkeley. Santa Barbara is coastal, and San Luis Obispo is slightly inland but is also subject to nearby coastal climatic influences. Finally, La Cañada Flintridge is inland, in an upland site near Pasadena.

Neighborhood gardens. We compared gardens in Albany and Berkeley with those in the other six cities. Only gardens in residential neighborhoods were surveyed and evaluated for their bee-attractive ornamental plants. About 30 gardens were visited statewide each year. The main gardens in each of the seven cities were visited 6 to 12 times each year, depending on the city, during the 2005 through 2007 study period.

Bee plant visits. To evaluate the attraction of bees to ornamental flowers, we used visitation or frequency counts

TABLE 1. Ornamental plants and their origins, flowering season and their visitor bee groups in seven California cities, 2005–2007

A. Plants with restricted visitor bee groups	Family	Origin*	Flowering season	Restricted bee group†
Yarrow (<i>Achillea millefolium</i>)	Aster.	CA	Summer	Halictidae
Mexican daisy (<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i>)	Aster.	NN	Spring/summer	Halictidae, Hb, Megachilidae
Pumpkins, squash (Cucurbitaceae)	Cucurb.	NN	Summer	<i>Peponapis pruinosa</i> ‡, Hb
Manzanita (<i>Arctostaphylos</i> spp.)	Eric.	CA	Spring	<i>Bombus</i> §, Hb
Palo verde (<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>)	Fabac.	NN	Summer	Hb, <i>Xylocopa</i> §
Wisteria (<i>Wisteria sinensis</i>)	Fabac.	NN	Spring	<i>Xylocopa</i> §, Hb
Autumn sage (<i>Salvia greggii</i> cvs¶// 'Hot Lips' <i>S. microphylla</i>)#	Lamiac.	NN	Summer	<i>Xylocopa</i> §, Hb
California poppy (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>)	Papav.	CA	Spring	<i>Bombus</i> §, Halictidae, Hb
Sky flower (<i>Duranta erecta</i>)	Verben.	NN	Summer	<i>Bombus</i> §, Hb, <i>Anthophora urbana</i> §
B. Plants with diverse native bees and two or three prominent bee groups	Family	Origin*	Flowering season	Prominent bee groups
Blanket flower (<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i> cvs)§	Aster.	NN	Summer	<i>Melissodes</i> §, Halictidae, Hb
Sunflower (<i>Helianthus annuus</i>)	Aster.	CA	Summer	<i>Melissodes</i> §, Hb
Goldenrod (<i>Solidago californica</i>)	Aster.	CA	Summer	Halictidae, Megachilidae, Hb, <i>Bombus</i> §
Pride of Madeira (<i>Echium candicans</i>)	Borag.	NN	Spring	Hb, <i>Bombus</i> §
Lavender (<i>Lavandula</i> spp.)/cvs¶	Lamiac.	NN	Spring/summer	Hb, <i>Bombus</i> §
Russian sage (<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>)	Lamiac.	NN	Summer	Hb, Megachilidae
Salvia 'Indigo Spires'	Lamiac.	NN	Summer	<i>Bombus</i> §, Hb, <i>Xylocopa</i> §
Bog sage (<i>Salvia uliginosa</i>)	Lamiac.	NN	Summer	Hb, <i>Xylocopa</i> §, <i>Bombus</i> §
Chaste tree (<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i>)	Lamiac.	NN	Summer	Hb, Megachilidae

* Origin: CA = native to California; NN = nonnative in California.

† Bee taxa listed from left to right, more frequent to less frequent; Hb = honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) (fam. Apidae).

‡ Squash bee of the family Apidae.

§ Family Apidae.

¶ cvs = cultivars. These and *S. 'Hot Lips'* were listed together because of their similar floral structure and reward (nectar), and because they attracted the same bee taxa.

cv = cultivar 'Hot Lips'.

for a given plant type whenever we could study a flowering patch that was approximately 1 by 1.5 square yards (1 by 1.5 square meters). We counted visiting bees to each patch for 3 minutes on warm, sunny days, and after numerous replicated counts, we determined an average attraction level (Frankie et al. 2005).

Species identification. During the counts, native bees were identified at the species, genus or family level, and honey bees were recorded separately. General notes were also taken on other types of flowering plants adjacent to the target plants, and the bees that visited them. Sometimes a plant type could not be located in a city, or its patch was smaller than the study size. In these cases, we transported potted flowering plants of the target species from Berkeley and made frequency counts on them. The time for leaving potted plants in position before recording bees usually varied from 1 hour to 24 hours.

In a few cases, we returned 3 to 5 days later. Representative (or voucher) bee collections were made for each ornamental plant evaluated, and each collection was taken to UC Davis for species identification. Voucher bee species were pinned, labeled and stored in special insect collection boxes at UC Berkeley.

Target ornamental plants. The 31 target plants were selected for evaluation mostly because they were relatively common in more than half of the surveyed cities and were all known to attract native bee species in Albany and Berkeley (Frankie et al. 2005) (tables 1 and 2). When all species, cultivars and hybrids were considered separately, the target plants actually comprised more than 50 distinct types (Brenzel 2007). Numerous other candidate plants were also evaluated in the statewide survey but not chosen as target plants because they were either rare or only present in some of the cities. Bee visitor groups were compared among the same orna-

TABLE 2. Ornamental plants and their origins and flowering season visited by diverse bee taxa with no prominent bee groups in seven California cities, 2005–2007

Plants	Family	Flowering season	Origin*
Monch (<i>Aster x frikartii</i>)	Aster.	Summer	NN
Bidens (<i>Bidens ferulifolia</i> cvs)†	Aster	Spring/summer	NN
Coreopsis (<i>Coreopsis grandiflora</i> cvs)†	Aster.	Summer	NN
Cosmos (<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>)	Aster.	Summer	NN
Cosmos (<i>C. sulphureus</i>)	Aster.	Summer	NN
Sea daisy (<i>Erigeron glaucus</i>)‡	Aster.	Spring/summer	CA
Black-eyed Susan (<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>)§	Aster.	Summer	NN
Tansy phacelia (<i>Phacelia tanacetifolia</i>)	Hydro.	Spring	CA
Catnip mint (<i>Nepeta</i> spp.)¶	Lamiac.	Spring/summer	NN
Rosemary (<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> cvs)#	Lamiac.	Spring/summer	NN
Black sage (<i>Salvia mellifera</i>)	Lamiac.	Spring	CA
Wild lilac (<i>Ceanothus</i> spp.)**	Rham.	Spring	CA
Toad flax (<i>Linaria purpurea</i>)	Scroph.	Spring/summer	NN

* Origin: CA = native to California; NN = nonnative to California.

† cvs = several cultivars.

‡ Mostly *E. glaucus* 'Wayne Roderick'.

§ Mostly large, single-flower cultivars.

¶ Mostly catnip mint species (*Nepeta x faassenii* and *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant').

Several cultivars, especially *R.* 'Ken Taylor' and *R.* 'Lockwood de Forest'.

**Mostly *C.* 'Ray Hartman', *C.* 'Julia Phelps' and *C. thyrsiflorus* 'Skylark'.



In the seven urban areas studied, specific bees were often associated with particular ornamental plants. Above, a digger bee (*Anthophora edwardsii*) forages on a manzanita flower (*Arctostaphylos* sp.).

mentals in each city, using as a starting point Albany and Berkeley — where numerous and consistent bee observations and frequency counts had been recorded from 1999 through 2005.

Bee-frequency counts. In late 2005 and early 2006, continuing through 2007, we visited selected gardens periodically to locate those that had a diversity of flowering plants known to attract bees. We then solicited co-operators/owners of gardens and collected voucher bee species from candidate plants (tables 1 and 2). Bee-frequency counts were recorded every 3 to 6 weeks (in San Luis Obispo, counts began in early 2007).

During 2006 and 2007, we made 2,485 3-minute bee-frequency counts, 1,718 from Northern California and 767 from Southern California. Usually one or two but sometimes up to five recorders were present on each count day. Over this survey period, 400 recorder person-days (3 to 6 hours of observation and counts) were logged in Northern California and 220 in Southern California.

Bee-frequency counts were not equal for each of the 31 target plant types. Some easily accessible plants — such as cosmos (*Cosmos* spp.), lavender (*Lavandula* spp.) and catnip mint (*Nepeta* spp.) — received high numbers of counts, partly due to their long flowering periods. Other plants — such as

manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) and wild lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.) — received fewer counts, usually due to a shorter bloom period or difficulty finding enough patches to monitor.

Bee-plant associations

For almost all target plants, the same characteristically associated bee taxa were found in each of the seven cities. This was especially noticeable with native bees. As expected, nonnative honey bees used a wide variety of ornamentals, and their abundance depended on plant type. The two most attractive plant families to bees were Asteraceae (which provide pollen and nectar) and Lamiaceae (which provide nectar), consistent with the earlier survey results from Albany and Berkeley (Frankie et al. 2005).

Based on bee-frequency counts in the seven cities, we divided the plants into three categories according to their associated bee taxa (tables 1 and 2): (1) those visited by limited (or restricted) bee types, (2) those with diverse native bees that were dominated by a few prominent bee groups and (3) those with diverse native bees that were not dominated by any prominent groups.

Restricted bee types. Nine plants were in the first category, with a limited number of bee taxa (table 1A). While other bee taxa would visit some of these plant types on rare occasions, this

plant visitation pattern was consistent in all seven cities. Furthermore, there was no obvious association within this category with plant family, origin or flowering season (table 1A). One of the best plants for observing restricted bee taxa was the widespread California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), where bumble bees (*Bombus* spp.), small sweat bees (Halictidae) and honey bees were common and predictable visitors. Other good examples included palo verde (*Parkinsonia aculeata*), wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*) and autumn sage (*Salvia greggii/microphylla*/cvs.), all of which consistently attracted honey bees and large carpenter bees (*Xylocopa* spp.).

Diverse native bees/prominent groups.

The second category of plants had diverse native bees that were dominated by a few prominent bee groups (table 1B). Each plant type in this category also attracted at least three other bee taxa, but usually at much lower frequencies. These plants were found mostly in two families (Asteraceae and Lamiaceae), were mostly nonnatives (seven of nine) and mostly flowered in summer (seven or eight of nine) (table 1B). Two common examples were blanket flower (*Gaillardia x grandiflora*) and sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), both of which attracted long-horn bees (*Melissodes* spp.) and honey bees. Blanket flower also attracted halictid bees (Halictidae). Another common example of this plant type was lavender (*Lavandula*

Small urban areas can sometimes have relatively high percentages of the bee species found in the surrounding geographic region.

spp./cvs.), which mainly attracted honey bees and *Bombus* as well as lower frequencies of *Xylocopa* and leafcutting bees (Megachilidae). As in the first category of plants, these bee-plant associations were consistent throughout the state with few exceptions.

Diverse native bees/no prominent groups. The third category of plants attracted a wide variety of bee species from different genera in at least three families. These plants, again, were mostly from the Asteraceae and Lamiaceae families (10 of 13) and were a mixture of natives and nonnatives that flowered in the spring and/or summer (10 of 13) (table 2). All had long blooming periods, which means that flowers were available to the different types of bees that occurred in a seasonal sequence from spring through summer (Wojcik et al. 2008). This was particularly noticeable for the two-season plants that were visited by spring bees as well as summer bees, which are largely different from each other. The bee-plant associations in this category were consistent wherever the plants were found from Northern California to Southern California.

Urbanization and bees

Urban bees are those that lived in an area prior to urbanization and were able to adapt to anthropogenic (human) alterations to the environment. In addition, a few exotic species have become naturalized in urban areas of California: honey bees (*Apis mellifera*), alfalfa leafcutting bees (*Megachile rotundata*), *Megachile apicalis* and *Hylaeus punctatus*. *Megachile rotundata* is a commercially important leafcutting bee;

TABLE 3. Collected and identified bee species from seven California cities, 2005–2007

Location	Families	Genera	Species*
 no. bee taxa		
Ukiah	5	24	67
Sacramento	5	23	63
Berkeley	5	25	82
Santa Cruz	5	20	41
San Luis Obispo	5	24	59
Santa Barbara	5	19	67
La Cañada Flintridge	5	28	73

* Includes a few morphospecies, morphologically distinct bee types that could not be immediately associated with a recorded scientific name.

Hylaeus punctatus is not considered commercial and belongs to a group called yellow-faced or masked bees.

We identified five bee families and about 60 to 80 species in each city (table 3). Berkeley had the most recorded urban bee species at 82. We have collected there for several years and continue to add species to our list. At 41, Santa Cruz had the fewest; the severely wet winters and springs of 2005 and 2006 are believed to have greatly reduced native bee populations there. (New collections have been made in 2008 and 2009, and the bee species totals of all the cities continue to increase.)

Some bee species have been found throughout the urban areas surveyed (fig. 1). Those commonly observed are the honey bee, the most common yellow-faced bumble bee (*Bombus vosnesenskii*), the large carpenter bee (*Xylocopa tabaniformis orpifex*) and the ultra-green sweat bee (*Agapostemon texanus*) (table 4).

Specialist bees. Most bees from our sampling are generalist flower visitors with relatively few specialists, where the females collect pollen from only one or a few closely related species of plants. Specialist bees depend on the presence of their favored host flowers for their existence. For example, many specialist bees that occur in the wild areas of the Berkeley hills are not found in nearby urban gardens because their host plants, such as buttercups (*Ranunculus californicus*) and suncups (*Camissonia ovata*), are rarely used as ornamentals. We might expect to find males or nectar-seeking females of specialist bee species in gardens near wildlands, as they are not restricted

TABLE 4. Common native bee species found in most (> 70%) California gardens surveyed

Common name	Scientific name
Andrenidae	
Mining bee	<i>Andrena angustitarsata</i>
Apidae (Including Anthophorinae)	
Small digger bee	<i>Anthophora curta</i>
Digger bee	<i>Anthophora urbana</i>
Honey bee*	<i>Apis mellifera</i> *
California bumble bee	<i>Bombus californicus</i>
Black-tip bumble bee	<i>Bombus melanopygus</i>
Yellow-faced bumble bee	<i>Bombus vosnesenskii</i>
Small carpenter bee	<i>Ceratina acantha</i>
Small carpenter bee	<i>Ceratina nanula</i>
Gray digger bee	<i>Habropoda depressa</i>
Long-horn digger bee	<i>Melissodes lupina</i>
Long-horn digger bee	<i>Melissodes robustior</i>
Squash bee	<i>Peponapis pruinosa</i>
Cuckoo bee	<i>Xeromelecta californica</i>
Large carpenter bee	<i>Xylocopa tabaniformis orpifex</i>
Colletidae	
Masked bee	<i>Hylaeus polifolii</i>
Halictidae	
Ultra-green sweat bee	<i>Agapostemon texanus</i>
Large sweat bee	<i>Halictus farinosus</i>
Spined-cheek sweat bee	<i>Halictus ligatus</i>
Small sweat bee	<i>Halictus tripartitus</i>
Tiny sweat bee	<i>Lasioglossum incompletus</i>
Megachilidae	
Leafcutting bee	<i>Megachile angelarum</i>
Leafcutting bee	<i>Megachile fidelis</i>
Leafcutting bee	<i>Megachile montivaga</i>
Alfalfa leafcutting bee*	<i>Megachile rotundata</i> *
Mason bee	<i>Osmia coloradensis</i>
Blue orchard bee (BOB)	<i>Osmia lignaria propinqua</i>

* Introduced.

to their pollen host plants when foraging for nectar. Recent plantings of squash (*Cucurbita* spp.) flowers at the UC Berkeley Oxford Tract garden have attracted the specialist squash bee (*Peponapis pruinosa*), which has been historically recorded in urban Berkeley. We also found a female of the sunflower bee (*Diadasia enavata*), a sunflower specialist, where sunflower is present in this garden.

Specialist bees (with preferred host plant genera in parentheses) that have been encountered in our garden surveys include: *Andrena auricoma* (*Zygadaenus*), *Diadasia bituberculata* (*Calystegia*), *Diadasia diminuta* (*Sphaeroclea*), *Diadasia enavata* (*Helianthus*), *Diadasia laticauda* (*Sphaeroclea*), *Diadasia nitidifrons*



The leafcutting bee (*Megachile perihirta*) was found in many of the gardens surveyed. *Top*, a female carries a cut piece of leaf; *above*, a female with strongly developed mandibles lands on a cosmos flower (*Cosmos bipinnatus*).



Some 60 to 80 species were identified in each city; the ultra-green sweat bee (*Agapostemon texanus*) was among the most common. *Top*, a female on bidens (*Bidens ferulifolia*); *above*, a male on sea daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*).

(*Sphaeroclea*), *Peponapis pruinosa* (*Cucurbita*), *Svastra obliqua expurgata* (*Helianthus*), *Chelostoma marginatum* (*Phacelia*) and *Chelostoma phaceliae* (*Phacelia*).

Seasonal bees. Seven plant types flowered during both spring and summer and attracted several bee taxa that were seasonal to each period (tables 1 and 2). Five of these plants were in the third category of attracting diverse native bees without prominent groups (table 2). With additional sampling, lavenders (table 1B) may eventually be moved to the third category as well. Bee species visiting bidens (*Bidens ferulifolia*) and catnip mint species provide examples of this pattern. Depending on

the city, between 8 and 14 bee species visited these two plant types where adequate samples had been taken (Ukiah, Sacramento and Berkeley for bidens; Ukiah, Sacramento and La Cañada Flintridge for catnip mint). One highly diverse bee group that was attracted to both plant types in the spring was the Megachilidae, especially members of the genera *Megachile* and *Osmia*.

Timing of bee visits. Most bee-frequency counts and collections in 2005 and 2006 were done opportunistically, that is during whatever time of day bees could be observed and recorded. In 2007, more attention was paid to time of day for the main visitation period. While more focused work is needed for more

plant species, bees appeared to visit flowers throughout most of the day for most plant types. However, for some plant types, the greatest bee diversity could be observed during particular times of the day (table 5). Main attraction periods could best be observed on warm, sunny days with little or no wind; however, if the day started off with fog, coolness and/or wind, these periods would be delayed or obscured, with reduced bee activity.

Bee-plant variations

As indicated, the relationships between each of the target plants and visiting bee groups (tables 1 and 2) were almost the same in Northern California

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and Southern California. One notable exception was observed in Sacramento, where five plant types were visited at high frequencies by a large solitary anthophorid bee (*Svastra obliqua expurgata*), a local Central Valley species. Four of the five plants — cosmos (*C. sulphureus*), blanket flower, sunflower and black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) — were also visited by *Melissodes* species, a taxonomic relative of *S. obliqua expurgata* and also the predominant bee group visiting these four plants throughout the state. The fifth plant, chaste tree, was also visited at high levels by *S. obliqua expurgata*. In other cities, honey bees and leafcutting bees (Megachilidae) were the main visitors (table 1B).

There were several small variations within cities (tables 1 and 2). However, while these variations influenced monitoring, they did not change the placement of a plant in one of the three categories. In Sacramento, rosemary (*Rosmarinus* spp.) attracted diverse bee taxa in one garden but primarily honey bees and halictid bees in a second garden 2 miles (3 kilometers) away. In a large, diverse San Luis Obispo garden, long-horn digger bees were common in late spring but extremely rare to absent during summer. In contrast, in a second San Luis Obispo garden 3.1 miles (5 kilometers) away, long-horn digger bees were common all summer on plants such as cosmos (*C. bipinnatus* and *C. sulphureus*). This type of variation was addressed by increasing the replications of frequency counts and monitoring several gardens in the surveyed cities.



Solitary (nonsocial) bees will nest in a variety of substrates in urban gardens. The digger bee (*Anthophora edwardsii*) nests in bare dirt.

TABLE 5. Selected plant types and periods of greatest daily bee attraction*

Plant type	Period of greatest attraction	Floral resource	Bee taxa
Goldenrod (<i>Solidago californica</i>)	11 a.m.–3 p.m.	Pollen/nectar	Halictidae, Megachilidae, Hbt, <i>Bombus</i>
Pumpkins, squash (Cucurbitaceae)	Before 9 a.m.	Pollen	<i>Peponapis pruinosa</i> , Hb
Palo verde (<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>)	Before 10 a.m.	Nectar	Hb, <i>Xylocopa</i>
California poppy (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>)	Before 11 a.m.	Pollen	<i>Bombus</i> , Halictidae, Hb
Wild lilac (<i>Ceanothus</i> spp.)	Before noon	Pollen/nectar	Diverse native bees
* See also tables 1 and 2.			
† Hb = honey bee (<i>Apis mellifera</i>) (fam. Apidae).			

Target plant abundance

The presence, absence or abundance of target plants in the cities also influenced bee frequencies. Target plants were infrequent in a few cities, but while this often resulted in overall lower bee counts, it did not affect the placement of plants into the three categories (tables 1 and 2). These plants include bidens (*B. ferulifolia*), sea daisy (*Erigeron glaucus*), black-eyed Susan, tansy phacelia (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*) and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). Some target plants, including large perennials such as pride of Madeira (*Echium candicans*), palo verde and sky flower (*Duranta erecta*), could not be found in a few cities.

The differences that we found in ornamental plant presence and abundance are important variables, suggesting different gardening practices and plant availability and selection among cities. These variables can greatly influence bee populations by determining the overall amounts of their preferred floral resources. In this regard, some urban areas (such as Monterey-Carmel-Pacific Grove, Paso Robles and San Diego) were not selected for the survey because they lacked diverse and sufficient bee plants. At the opposite extreme were the diverse gardens of Berkeley and Santa Cruz, where species-rich and abundant collections of plants that bees preferred were found. The five other surveyed cities were intermediate in bee-friendly plant diversity and abundance.

Nesting in urban areas

Bees are known to nest in various substrates in urban areas. Most solitary bees (about 70%) nest in the ground, including *Andrena* (Andrenidae), *Colletes* (Colletidae), most halictid

bees (Halictidae), most Anthophorinae (Apidae) and some Megachilidae. (Solitary means a male and a female bee mate, and the female constructs a nest and lays an egg in each single cell she creates, with 3 to 10 cells per nest depending on space; there is no hive, division of labor or social structure as in the social honey bees and bumble bees.) Many of these solitary bees prefer to construct their nests in soils with specific characteristics, such as composition, texture, compaction, slope and exposure. Nesting habitat can be provided for these bees in gardens by leaving bare soil and providing areas of specially prepared soil, from sand to heavy clay to adobe blocks. Excessive mulching with wood chips will greatly discourage ground-nesting bees, which need bare soil or a thin layer of natural leaf litter.

Other bees nest in pre-existing cavities. Honey bees nest in large tree cavities, underground and in human structures such as the spaces between walls, chimneys and water-meter boxes. Bumble bees commonly nest in abandoned rodent burrows and sometimes in bird nest boxes. Most cavity-nesting solitary bees such as *Hylaeus* (Colletidae), and most leafcutting bees and mason bees (*Osmia* [Megachilidae]) prefer beetle burrows in wood or hollow plant stems. Nest habitats for these bees can be supplemented by drilling holes of various diameters (especially 3/16 to 5/16 inches) in scrap lumber or fence posts, or by making and setting out special wooden domiciles in the garden (Thorp et al. 1992). Once occupied by bees, these cavities must be protected from sun and water exposure until the following year, when adult bees emerge to start new generations.

Neglecting to protect drilled cavities occupied by bees can lead to bee mortality.

Large carpenter bees (*Xylocopa*) excavate their nest tunnels in soft wood such as redwood arbors or fences, and small carpenter bees (*Ceratina*) use pithy stems such as elderberry or old sunflower stalks. Partitions between the brood cells are usually composed of bits of excavated material.

Bee diversity and conservation

Several studies in Europe, North America, Central America and South America confirm that urban areas can support rich faunas of bees (Cane 2005; Eremeeva and Sushchev 2005; Frankie et al. 2005; Hernandez et al. 2009; Matteson et al. 2008; Wojcik et al. 2008). Furthermore, long-term monitoring has shown that small urban areas can sometimes have relatively high percentages of the bee species found in the surrounding geographic region. For example, Owen (1991) recorded 51 bee species during a 15-year monitoring study in a small residential garden in Leicestershire, England, representing an amazing 20% of the British bee list of 256 species.

The main pattern that emerges from the statewide California survey is that a predictable group of native bee species can be expected to visit certain ornamental plants (tables 1 and 2). With this kind of information, gardens can be planned with predictable relationships between bees and ornamental plants. The California survey also revealed that not all urban areas can be expected to support measurable populations of native bees. Urban areas must have the right plant types, and enough of them, to attract native bees. Predictable bee-flower relationships are well known among wildland plants and native bee taxa that visit them in California and elsewhere (G. Frankie and R. Thorp, personal observation).

Much is still unknown about the ecology and behavior of native bees in urban environments, especially regarding how to encourage the bees to visit gardens. Our monitoring work will continue for at least two more years, with the same target plants in the same seven cities. We also added two additional cities: Redding, in far north-



Almost 2,500 3-minute bee-frequency counts were conducted statewide over a 2-year study period. At the UC Berkeley Oxford Tract, researchers Jaime Pawelek (left) and Katie Montgomery counted bees on purple toad flax; note the garden's close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

central California, and Riverside, south-east of Pasadena. More attention will be paid to bee-plant relationships within cities and also to temporal visitation patterns, which will provide more accurate information on the optimal times of day to record the greatest diversity and abundance of bees.

From a biodiversity perspective, it is easy to understand why we should conserve and protect native bees. The approximately 1,600 species of native California bees have had a long evolutionary history with about 6,000 different kinds of native California flowering plants. Like the plants, bees are an integral part of the heritage of the state's natural resources. Despite the fact that most gardens in the state use a high percentage of nonnative plants (instead of the native plants preferred by native bees), they are nonetheless visited by native bees (Frankie et al. 2005).

Likewise, there is still much to be learned about how to convey scientific knowledge in user-friendly language to urban audiences. Native bees can be used as "tools" for a range of activities, including habitat gardening, environmental education and scientific

inquiry to solve current environmental problems. Great opportunities exist for increasing biodiversity in home, school and community gardens if the right plants are grown. Besides bees, the plants will attract other flower visitors such as birds, butterflies and beneficial flies and wasps (Grissell 2001). Once established, diverse gardens offer opportunities to observe, conserve, protect and enjoy a variety of floral ecological relationships close to home. In the case of school gardens, which usually have mixtures of food and ornamental plants, teachers have opportunities to connect students with the natural world (Louv 2008) as well as the world from which our food comes.

Information on pollinator-plant relationships can be used for more ambitious projects such as restoring ecological functions to degraded or fallowed landscapes (Peter Kevan, University of Guelph, Canada, personal communication). Some larger urban gardens with high plant diversity can be used as stations for long-term pollinator monitoring (NRC 2007) that could provide valuable information, especially as the global climate changes; in Sacramento and La Cañada Flintridge,

two of our largest survey gardens are being used for this purpose. It is noteworthy that urban landscape gardens may be more suitable for monitoring certain bee pollinator species than wild areas because urban plants are usually intensively managed. Watering, pruning and replanting produces floral resources that are more consistently available to pollinators, even in times of drought.

As suggested by Owen (1991), urban areas can serve as genetic reserves for pollinators and other species that we deem beneficial for humans. Some of these may eventually be a resource for the pollination of agricultural crops (G. Frankie and R. Thorp, personal observation). The effects of colony collapse disorder in honey bees (NRC 2007) once again remind us of the need to consider the value of ecological services provided in biodiverse landscapes (Daily 1997).

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We thank the California Agricultural Experiment Station for support of this research; Maggie Przybylski, Sue Holland, Katie Montgomery, Kristal Hinojosa and Kloie Karels for assistance in collecting bees and bee-frequency counts; and Peter Kevan for reading a draft of the manuscript. Finally, we thank the numerous gardeners, managers and directors of the gardens we monitored for their cooperation during survey periods.

For more information

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign

www.pollinator.org

Urban Bee Gardens

<http://nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens>

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

www.xerces.org



The study found that while many urban gardens include a high percentage of nonnative ornamental plants, a great variety of native bees visit them. Above, Kimberly Gamble's garden in Soquel (Santa Cruz County).

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Spring 2009 · Vol. 8, No. 1

A Dean Who Raised the School's Profile and Broadened Its Reach Steps Down



When James “Gus” Speth came back to Yale in 1999 to take over as dean at the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, he already could claim to have won what might be considered a triple crown for Earth advocacy.

In 1969 as a Yale law student, he helped launch the Natural Resources Defense Council and then acted as its chief attorney while it grew into one of the nation’s leading environmental groups.

In 1982, after serving as head of President Jimmy Carter’s Council on Environmental Quality, he founded the World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C., now regarded as a premier environmental think tank.

Then for most of the 1990s, he led the United Nations Development Programme, which had a \$2 billion budget and offices in 132 countries at the end of his tenure.

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With such a distinguished career behind him—spanning the modern environmental movement—it was fair to wonder what Speth, who graduated from Yale College in 1964, could do to top himself.

It turns out that he had ambitions for F&ES that were as large as those that he'd had for the other institutions he had nurtured. In fact, he set the bar for measuring his deanship early.

“I will tell you what I am going to do, and I will do it,” he wrote in a memo to faculty on August 13, 1999, a month after his arrival. His goal, he said, was “to build the greatest school of environmental science, management and policy in the world.”

By November, he was telling the Yale Club of New York City that he wanted “to build not only the best school of the environment, but the world’s first global school of the environment.”

Speth backed up these audacious pledges with more concrete goals that he declared in many forums, in varying degrees of refinement. In an address prepared for the school’s 100th anniversary celebration in October 2000, he condensed the goals to six:

- Complete the school’s transition to a “broad-gauged” institution, with expertise in policy, management and science.
- Enlarge the faculty.
- Forge closer ties with Yale College.
- Expand scholarship support, especially for foreign students.
- Build new facilities.
- Push the school into the forefront of public discourse.

Now, as his deanship winds to a close, the plaudits for Speth’s accomplishments show that he delivered on everything he promised.

“The school has seen remarkable growth in faculty, student applications and the availability of scholarship assistance over the past 10 years,” said President Richard Levin in praising Speth’s “superb leadership.”

Levin also said that Speth has been “a passionate advocate for a greener Yale and has played a key role in increasing national and international awareness of climate issues.”

In response, Speth amended Levin’s assessment with slightly more detail and a protest of modesty.

“The things that have happened here at the school—which I feel very good about—are things a lot of people were responsible for,” Speth said. “They happened while I was dean, but they weren’t things I did by myself. So credit should be very widely shared.”



Dean Speth congratulates Dimos Anastasiou '02 at graduation.
Credit: Peter Otis

But, yes, he believes that one of his proudest achievements has been that “we dramatically strengthened the faculty and research going on here at the school.” He added that the resident faculty has grown to 44 full-time equivalent positions from 29 since 2000, with the recent additions of Karen Hébert, an environmental anthropologist whose specialty is globalization and environmental change, and an economics position that was expected to be filled this spring. In addition, Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) since 2002 and a former Dorothy S. McCluskey Visiting Fellow for Conservation at F&ES, was recently appointed director of the Yale Climate and Energy Institute, a new interdisciplinary research and policy initiative.

He pronounced himself pleased that “we’ve been able to increase the number of applicants to the school” (by about 50 percent, to 557 this year from 351 in 2000), and pleased too with “the new work in building an undergraduate environmental studies program” (now a full major).

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And he said he felt “very good about, and appreciative of, the fund-raising we’ve been able to do. We’ve raised a lot of money, thanks to the generosity of a lot of people. And that has allowed us to expand the faculty, increase student scholarships and build this wonderful building.” The building he was referring to is Kroon Hall, the new F&ES home on Science Hill (see cover story, page 4).

After his term ends in June, Dean Speth plans to move to a home that he and his wife, Cameron, built in Strafford, Vt., and embark on the next stage of his career, teaching at Vermont Law School.

Kroon Hall is the most visible evidence, literally, of Speth’s met goals. Besides giving F&ES a central facility, Kroon set a standard for buildings constructed using sustainable principles. “He was determined to have it finished before he left,” said Frances Beinecke ’74, who, as a member of the school’s Leadership Council, witnessed what she said is his “deep commitment to global issues.”

Beinecke, the president of the Natural Resources Defense Council and a former Yale Corporation director, is one of many prominent environmentalists and faculty members who reflected on Speth’s tenure as dean.

She said that as “stunning” as Kroon Hall is, it is but one example of how Speth raised the profile of the environment and the school, both inside and outside Yale.

“He never holds back on what the times demand,” Beinecke said. “Gus is a mover and shaker. That’s what he does, and he’s very effective at it. He’s just opened up what was a hidden gem at Yale and made it a centerpiece of what Yale has to offer.”

The school, she said, is now “at the center of the conversation of what the direction of the planet is going to be.” She cited Speth’s recruitment, among others, of Pachauri and Wangari Maathai of Kenya to spend whole semesters in New Haven as McCluskey Fellows. Both subsequently won the Nobel Peace Prize—Pachauri as chair of the IPCC, and Maathai for her women-driven Green Belt Movement.

Pachauri and Maathai are the very embodiment of Speth’s success at attaining his global goal. But there are other measures, like the increase in master’s-degree applications from international students. This year there were 144, compared to 104 in 2000.

Gordon Geballe, associate dean for student and alumni affairs since 1983, said a shared internationalist vision is partly what led Levin to recruit Speth as dean. Global prominence doesn’t come cheap, though, nor does a new school building that aspires to achieve a platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating. So it may be, Geballe said, that Speth will be best remembered for being an extraordinarily successful fund-raiser.

Under Speth, the school’s overall endowment grew from \$112 million to \$400 million at the end of 2007, according to the annual financial memo that he sends Levin. The new wealth allowed the school’s total expenditures to triple, to slightly more than \$38 million, which has been

important for attracting international students who often don't qualify for regular financial aid. The average scholarship award has more than doubled, to about \$17,000. Even with the pounding that endowments have taken during the current economic crisis, F&ES has remained on solid financial footing.

Geballe and Development Director Eugenie Gentry both attributed Speth's fund-raising ability partly to members of his own Yale College Class of 1964. "These are people who came back to campus, listened to Gus and said, 'This is the right thing to do,'" Gentry said. "Gus has a moral vision and people respond to it."

Speth, she said, resembled a "cyclone" or "whirling dervish" in the way he spins off ideas and tries to inspire. Geballe, reaching for similar descriptors, likened Speth to a "provocateur" and "pied piper" in his drive to move the school forward.

Geballe said the three deans that he has served with were all strong managers in their own way, but each had different missions dictated by the times. In the 1980s, he said, John Gordon reinvigorated the school's research mission and increased the number of applicants, and Gordon's successor, Jared Cohon, who left early to become president of Carnegie Mellon University, concentrated on broadening its scope and boosting its presence within Yale.

In some sense, "Gus just took all of that and moved it forward," Geballe said. But the pace of progress has speeded up on many fronts. Besides Kroon Hall, the fund-raising bonanza and the world-famous visiting fellows, environmental studies is now a full major for Yale undergraduates; more women (six) are in tenure-track positions; and several new study centers and programs have been established.

Among them, the Center for Business and the Environment at Yale, the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy and the Center for Green Chemistry & Green Engineering at Yale reflect the school's expansion into areas outside natural science and Speth's view of what the environment as a discipline entails.

"It bridges ecology and economics and, more generally, between those disciplines that seek to understand nature and those that seek to understand human societies and their economic activity," he said.

The Center for Industrial Ecology also fits that definition. It was created before Speth's arrival, but Marian Chertow, Ph.D. '00, who directs the Industrial Environmental Management Program, said it has "blossomed" during the years of Speth's tenure.

"There is one big thing I have to say: The truly great thing about the school is the students. They inspire me." Dean Speth

Speth, she said, also supported the creation of a *Journal of Industrial Ecology* and the International Society for Industrial Ecology, for which Yale is the secretariat. She described Speth as "tenacious." "He sets a goal and tries everything to meet it," she said. "Sometimes you need a leader like that to show you what is possible."

One of Speth's largest goals, outside the school proper, and one of his most noted accomplishments was instilling environmental values in the university itself. Beinecke said the breadth of Speth's impact ranged from high-profile projects such as Kroon Hall to the university's adoption in October 2005 of a rigorous greenhouse gas emissions reduction target—a signal achievement of his deanship. “Gus is not a lone voice there anymore. Levin is a powerful voice,” she said.

Yale is committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 43 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. That decision was informed by F&ES student research that showed that Yale's emissions exceeded those of 32 countries. “They were little countries, but that's a dramatic sort of statement and it got attention,” said Speth. “Of course the [emissions] decision in the end was President Levin's. I give him tremendous credit.”

Speth, said Geballe, is “pretty good at getting other people to step up to the plate. Even though Gus wouldn't claim sole responsibility for the university greening itself, the fact is the president is now a green president and environmental best practices are a priority of his administration.”

Indeed, as if to prove Geballe's point, Levin led a delegation of F&ES faculty in March to the International Scientific Congress on Climate Change in Copenhagen, where he chaired the plenary session.

Geballe said the dean's impact sometimes passed unnoticed, as when he persuaded Levin to fund a committee chaired by Thomas Graedel, Clifton R. Musser Professor of Industrial Ecology, that led to the creation of a university Office of Sustainability and the hiring of its director, Julie Newman.

“If you had to pick the most surprising thing of all,” Geballe said, “Kroon Hall has inspired the construction people—the people who do the heating and building at Yale—to consider this (sustainability) stuff. That's something we didn't fully expect.”

Stephen Kellert, Ph.D. '71, Tweedy Ordway Professor of Social Ecology, said that the school “was already a strong, prominent institution before Gus came, but Gus has been extraordinary,” and judged him especially effective at raising the school's standing in policy circles outside the university and improving its public outreach. “That wasn't something that was particularly strong at the school—and it is much more so now,” Kellert said.

Part of that outreach effort included a major conference in 2005 hosted by F&ES in Aspen, Colo., on one of the greatest practical and intellectual challenges of our time—climate change. That conference (and one that would follow in 2007) was organized by another Speth initiative, the Yale F&ES Project on Climate Change, part of the Office of Strategic Initiatives that was created to enhance the school's role in public discourse. The conference attracted leaders and thinkers from across the country. And last year, the school established an online environmental magazine, *Yale Environment 360*, which has expanded the reach of the school, with significant collaborations with India and China.

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Mary Evelyn Tucker, an organizer of the 2007 conference, which examined the values and worldviews underlying society's relationship with the natural world, said Speth "recognizes that environmental issues need to include ethical concerns, so he's expanded the faculty to include people like us." The "us" refers to Tucker and her husband, John Grim, co-founders and co-directors of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. Both hold joint appointments at F&ES and the Yale Divinity School.

In Speth's most recent book, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing From Crisis to Sustainability*, Kellert and Tucker are both mentioned as proponents of the deep cultural changes needed to reverse the degradation of the planet. Named by *The Washington Post* as a best nonfiction book for 2008, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* is surprisingly tough on the environmental movement for someone *Time* magazine once labeled "the ultimate insider."

Speth writes that the kind of environmentalism he helped create—one of government regulation guided by science—is insufficient to address the harm being inflicted on the planet by global capitalism and its growth fetish.

Early in the book, he writes: "My conclusion, after much searching and considerable reluctance, is that most environmental deterioration is a result of systemic failures of the capitalism that we have today and that long-term solutions must seek transformative change in the key features of this contemporary capitalism."

Speth said he considers his books his main personal contribution to the world beyond Yale during his deanship. Yet he gave Yale some credit for them. *Red Sky at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment* grew out of an undergraduate course that he taught, and *The Bridge at the Edge of the World* expanded on his contribution to the DeVane Lectures, which are a special series open to the public and the Yale community.

"I wasn't even sure I was going to write a book when I came here. The ideas came later," Speth said. "What the school did for me was to give me a little time and a little distance so that I could reflect on my earlier years—where environmentalism had left us both nationally and internationally—so that was a great gift."

The recognition that environmentalism must embrace disciplines outside nature and engage in societal change may best characterize Speth's deanship. "The overarching theme here—the takeaway message—is the uniqueness of Gus' leadership of the school," said V. Alaric "Al" Sample '80, D.F. '89, president of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation and a past president of the F&ES Alumni Association Executive Council.

He said Gus offers "the broad global vision and the long-term perspective that you typically do not find in a school led by academics. You look at most academics and they're narrowly focused. They have to be to succeed. To do what Gus has done, you have to be almost the inverse. You've got to be a lumper, not a splitter."

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He added: “Gus has taken seriously the notion that we need to lead by example, so if F&ES was going to be truly global, it had to have more international connections and prove, with Kroon Hall, that it practiced what it preached about sustainability.”

In October 2007, after Speth was named Carl W. Knobloch, Jr. Dean, Sample wrote Levin praising Speth’s work and urged its continuation. “Part of Gus’ legacy is that he significantly raised the public awareness of the seriousness of climate change, the global nature of the problem and the need for immediate, decisive action,” he wrote.

Mark Ashton ’85, Ph.D. ’90, Morris K. Jesup Professor of Silviculture, likened the school’s growth during Speth’s time to a “root system. The scope has gotten broader and broader.” He also said that Speth’s focus on climate change “really put the school in the limelight,” helping to attract money and students. And he observed that Speth’s efforts in addressing the climate change issue, in some sense, recalls the school’s forester founders, Gifford Pinchot and Henry Graves, who also were alarmed by the destruction of natural resources on a huge scale.

“The original focus of the school was similar—on timber famine and water shortages,” Ashton said. “I would say [Speth] has brought us right back to those resource issues that the nation and the world are facing [with climate change destruction].”

Ashton, whose own specialty is comparative forest reproduction, said the school has benefited from its broader focus, though there is some sentiment that the natural sciences have not received the attention they should. “The school continues. The only thing that changes is the dean,” Ashton said. “But my suspicion is that the imprint of Gus’ tenure will stay for a long time. The faculty will try to cement what we have and not broaden further.”

Gordon Geballe recalled that one of the “brouhahas” of Speth’s administration was the attempt to get people to say environment, instead of forestry, when referring to the school in shorthand, fueling concerns among some faculty, students and alumni that the school was jettisoning its proud heritage.

“I think everybody’s happy in the aggregate,” Geballe said. “A strong leader is not somebody who tries to be liked by everybody, but a person who sees what the institution—not only our school, but Yale as a whole—needs to go through. It’s remarkable how much has gotten done.”

Geballe said Speth signaled his approach to the deanship when, early in his administration, he took six graduate students and six undergraduates to a major environmental conference in South Africa. He wanted to introduce them to global players, spread the F&ES name and inspire them with what he called “Jazz”—grassroots, decenralized and improvisational voluntary initiatives that seek solutions to problems confronting civil society.

“There is one big thing I have to say: The truly great thing about the school is the students. They inspire me. And what they do when they are here and, even more, what they do after they leave is really so important and so hopeful,” Speth said recently.

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He noted that the school's graduates now hold influential positions in business, government, nongovernmental organizations and academia. "There's no institution in the world that has produced more environmental leaders than ours, and I'm sure that will continue in the future."

Maria Ivanova '99, who earned two master's degrees and a doctorate at Yale and now is on the faculty of the College of William & Mary, said the dean's feelings of respect and admiration for the students are mutual.

Ivanova said she witnessed the transformation of F&ES into a truly global school and that the first word that springs to mind when she thinks of Speth is "leadership."

"Most schools act as if recruiting foreign students makes them international," she said, "but that's not the case at Yale or with Gus. He brought in faculty. He brought in Wangari Maathai, before she was a Nobel Peace Prize winner. They engaged with us as students, and now they engage with us as colleagues."

Ivanova recently returned from Nairobi and said her students "couldn't believe I was on a first-name basis with Wangari—and it's because of Gus Speth."

She recalled that in 2005 she went to Nairobi with Geballe to present the results of an evaluation that they had done of the United Nations Environment Programme. "That kind of vision and leadership and engagement is really because of Gus Speth. It has opened doors that none of us really knew were there. It has enabled us to become leaders in our own right."

Ivanova added that she is pleased to now be in a position to send students of her own to F&ES.

"Another thing that has stuck with me for a long time is Gus saying that his generation was a generation of talkers," she said. "What he has tried to do is build us up as a generation of doers. I only hope we can live up to his expectations."



Left to right, Dean Speth during 2007 commencement with Rugemeleza Nshala, Choony Kim and Heather Murray.
Credit: William Sacco

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Dean Speth chats with Peter Seligmann '74, left, and President Levin at a 2001 Leadership Council meeting.
Credit: Peter Otis



Dean Speth addresses a gathering at Marsh Hall during an event sponsored by the Global Institute of Sustainable Forestry in 2002.
Credit: Dana Keeton

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'Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens'

David Perlman, Chronicle Science Editor

Sunday, August 30, 2009



Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens

Frank Oppenheimer and the World He Made Up

By K.C. Cole

(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt; 396 pages, illustrated; \$27)

Visitors to San Francisco's magical Exploratorium know little about its founder, the remarkable Frank Oppenheimer, who lived four extraordinary lives and survived brilliantly from destruction at the hands of the Cold War's red hunters.

Oppenheimer was a distinguished physicist. He caught cosmic rays, built the first machine to extract the deadly form of uranium for America's atom bombs, conducted ground-breaking research at Berkeley and Caltech, won professorships in physics at two other major universities, and revolutionized the art of science teaching at a rural high school.

And when witch hunts exiled him from academe during 10 long years, he ran an 830-acre cattle ranch in the remote mountains of Colorado with his wife and dedicated helper.

All that and more marked Oppenheimer's career - until he came to San Francisco in midlife to bring a new way of seeing and understanding the phenomena of the natural world to millions of people, young and old, in every continent.

It was Oppenheimer's conviction that every person from early childhood on is endowed with irrepressible curiosity and an equally irrepressible need to discover the endless "whys and hows" of everything around us - the electric currents that light lamps, the eyes of animals and humans that see the world, the twisting tornadoes that lift houses, the stars that light the sky and the art that enriches.

So Oppenheimer launched his Exploratorium 40 years ago in a cavernous half-ruined building left over from the city's 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, and in the years since then virtually every science museum in America - and countless others from France to China - have used the ever-changing experiments and exhibits first built in the Exploratorium's own workshop to be inspired and duplicated everywhere by Oppenheimer's concepts.

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The Exploratorium today is also an innovator for science teaching and an inspiration for science teachers who come from all over to wonder, to learn and to practice.

K.C. Cole is a fine journalist who came to know Oppenheimer intimately, to love his whimsical humor, his crotchety ways, his compulsive tinkering and his passion for poetry and art and music (a talented flautist, he taught Cole to play the flute).

With vivid insight, Cole relates the fascinating story of Oppenheimer's life, and the confrontations of his career. She came to know his ability to charm everyone he met, from rambunctious kids in this city's projects to the wealthiest Silicon Valley pioneers and National Science Foundation officials whose money is still vital to the museum's survival. Her story is at once an absorbing - even dramatic - biography of Cole's hero, and a wonderfully anecdotal history of the museum itself.

Oppenheimer's own story is one of triumph over undeserved ruin, in sad contrast to the permanent tragedy of his ambitious older brother, J. Robert Oppenheimer, who ultimately fell from the heights of scientific and political power after leading the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, N.M., whose bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

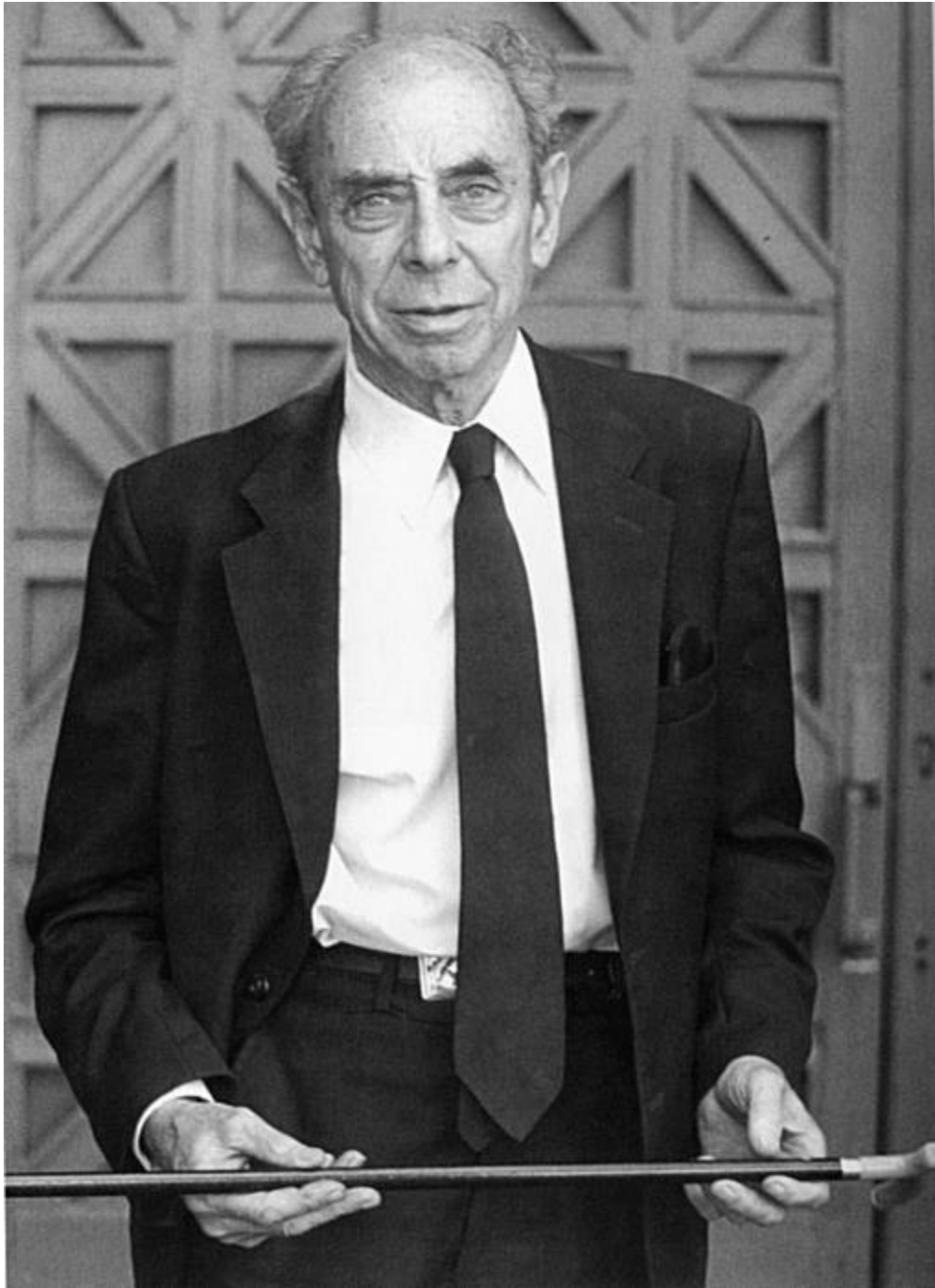
Born in New York to wealth and liberal idealism, Robert and Frank were as close as brothers could be in their youth; they went to private school together, hiked the mountains of Colorado and New Mexico together, and both became superb physicists. But as adults both became politically radical and close friends of many left-wing activists. Frank and his wife, Jackie, briefly joined the Communist Party because they felt that party members, as Cole writes, "were the only ones fighting racism and unemployment on the home front." However, both quit in 1940 as Stalin's terror became widely known. Robert, the records show, was never a party member, but he was caught in a confusion of lies from interrogators bent on destroying him, and they did.

Frank, on the other hand, lied once - disastrously - under questioning and then admitted his one-time party membership but staunchly refused to name other names. His penalty: banishment from his highly prestigious faculty post at the University of Minnesota, although he was much later accepted at the University of Colorado.

In between he became a rancher - knowing nothing about herding cattle - and living with Jackie without electricity or running water. His neighbors, stubbornly independent, didn't care that he was a disgraced physicist, and were quick to hire him to teach science in the nearest town, Pagosa Springs, where his high school kids astonished the elite Eastern colleges by scoring astronomically high in science exams. To Harvard as a kid majoring in physics from somewhere called Pagosa Springs? Unbelievable!

It was during that time as a rancher, teacher and professor that Oppenheimer matured the philosophy and the conception that would become the science playground, the "Palace of Delights," that is the Exploratorium.

"He emerged from the dark side, clear and strong, idealism intact, the world still an endless wealth of wonders," Cole writes. "He created a place where playful exploration - together with science and art - was put in service of saving the world from self-destruction."



Frank Oppenheimer, founder of the Exploratorium.
Photo: Houghton Mifflin

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food for thought



UNCERTAIN PERIL

CFS's Executive Director, Andrew Kimbrell, reviewed *Uncertain Peril* for a recent issue of *Resurgence* magazine, reprinted here courtesy of *Resurgence*.

"Seeds are messengers from the past. They are an embodiment of hope for the future. Seeds are a promise of life to come." So writes journalist and former environmental lawyer Claire Cummings in her new book *Uncertain Peril: Genetic Engineering and the Future of Seeds*. In this clear and passionate analysis Cummings explains the symbolic and very real significance of seeds in past and present human history. She also describes the three decade long legal and technological onslaught by the biotechnology industry on the biological integrity of seeds and the traditional right of farmers to save and reproduce their own seed.

It is no easy task to explain in an engaging and accessible way the history, science, and regulatory regimes surrounding the current use Genetically Modified organisms (GMOs). Not to mention the corollary issue of gene, seed and plant patenting. I know: I've tried it several times myself! But this book succeeds wonderfully. Part of the reason is that, thankfully, Cummings the journalist is always present. She has an ear and eye for personalities and stories that perfectly embody her themes.

She talks with Kim Ralph, a heroic Tennessee cotton farmer persecuted into bankruptcy and prison by Monsanto. Ralph recoils at the millions of tons of seeds being thrown away because of fears about patent infringement. "What a waste!" he tells Cummings. "And sister, it's all because they want to control our food."

And the embattled farmer is right: the Monsanto's of the world certainly do want control the world's seed and the profits that come with it. So exactly how do these corporations get control over our food? Well, it starts with acquisitions of the world's seed companies. Throughout the 1990s the world's major agricultural chemical companies began buying up the world's seed firms. As a result Monsanto is now the world's largest seed company and owns more than 20% of the world's commercial seed supply. If you add the holdings of Syngenta, DuPont and Bayer to that of Monsanto, the four companies own more than 40 % of commercial seed. These companies know that whoever controls the first link in the food chain—the seeds—can eventually control the food supply.



UNCERTAIN PERIL:
*Genetic Engineering and
the Future of Seeds*
by Claire Hope Cummings
Published by Beacon
Press, Boston, 2008

The next step to seed hegemony is to patent the seeds you own. Cummings, this time wearing her 'lawyer hat', describes the U.S. and international history of intellectual property protection of seeds throughout the 20th century. It was only in 1985 that the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) allowed for 'utility' patents on seeds, granting companies two decades of monopoly-like control over any plant patented.

That means no seed saving, no regeneration of seeds, no research without royalty payments to the patent holder. Since that time, thousands of plants have been patented the vast majority of them hybrids not GMOs. The control does not end there; when selling their patented hybrid or GM seed, companies often make farmers sign 'use agreements' that force the farmer to buy their chemicals and line of products and obey their rules.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says "unless you change direction you're likely to end up where you're headed." Fortunately Cummings describes how so many are changing the direction of our food future. She explores the worldwide movement of what she calls the "new agrarians." We see a renaissance of passionate interest about foods and seeds. We are witnessing an explosion of organic and beyond food that is grown locally, and in appropriate scale, that is socially just, humane and biodiverse. Local and indigenous seed saving organizations worldwide are successfully preserving germplasm biodiversity and protecting this vital commons from expropriation by Monsanto and its ilk.

Cummings feels, with some reservations, that national and international seed banks can only play a role. Additionally, she is one of the few to point out that current science is now demonstrating that the very basis of genetic engineering, the idea that the gene is the 'CEO of heredity' in living things has been disproved. We now know that heredity of plants is infinitely more complicated and mysterious and well out of the 'ken' of the gene tinkers. This alone dooms the technology, but not the damage they can do with their continuing misguided experiments.

In sum this is a must read for anyone concerned about the future of food in the 21st century. Perhaps my only caveat about this book is its title. Believe me, after reading this book everyone will agree that there is nothing uncertain about the peril facing the world's seeds and the very future of food. You will also know with great certainty that we all need to act now to save those "embodiments of hope for the future"—our seeds.

This is an edited version of Andrew Kimbrell's review "Certain Peril" from the March / April 2009 edition of *Resurgence* Magazine www.resurgence.org.

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Commencement Address to the Class of 2009

University of Portland, May 3rd, 2009

When I was invited to give this speech, I was asked if I could give a simple short talk that was "direct, naked, taut, honest, passionate, lean, shivering, startling, and graceful." No pressure there.

Let's begin with the startling part. Class of 2009: you are going to have to figure out what it means to be a human being on earth at a time when every living system is declining, and the rate of decline is accelerating. Kind of a mind-boggling situation... but not one peer-reviewed paper published in the last thirty years can refute that statement. Basically, civilization needs a new operating system, you are the programmers, and we need it within a few decades.

This planet came with a set of instructions, but we seem to have misplaced them. Important rules like don't poison the water, soil, or air, don't let the earth get overcrowded, and don't touch the thermostat have been broken. Buckminster Fuller said that spaceship earth was so ingeniously designed that no one has a clue that we are on one, flying through the universe at a million miles per hour, with no need for seatbelts, lots of room in coach, and really good food—but all that is changing.

There is invisible writing on the back of the diploma you will receive, and in case you didn't bring lemon juice to decode it, I can tell you what it says: You are Brilliant, and the Earth is Hiring. The earth couldn't afford to send recruiters or limos to your school. It sent you rain, sunsets, ripe cherries, night blooming jasmine, and that unbelievably cute person you are dating. Take the hint. And here's the deal: Forget that this task of planet-saving is not possible in the time required. Don't be put off by people who know what is not possible. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was impossible only after you are done.

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When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world. The poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "So much has been destroyed I have cast my lot with those who, age after age, perversely, with no extraordinary power, reconstitute the world." There could be no better description. Humanity is coalescing. It is reconstituting the world, and the action is taking place in schoolrooms, farms, jungles, villages, campuses, companies, refuge camps, deserts, fisheries, and slums.

You join a multitude of caring people. No one knows how many groups and organizations are working on the most salient issues of our day: climate change, poverty, deforestation, peace, water, hunger, conservation, human rights, and more. This is the largest movement the world has ever seen. Rather than control, it seeks connection. Rather than dominance, it strives to disperse concentrations of power. Like Mercy Corps, it works behind the scenes and gets the job done. Large as it is, no one knows the true size of this movement. It provides hope, support, and meaning to billions of people in the world. Its clout resides in idea, not in force. It is made up of teachers, children, peasants, businesspeople, rappers, organic farmers, nuns, artists, government workers, fisherfolk, engineers, students, incorrigible writers, weeping Muslims, concerned mothers, poets, doctors without borders, grieving Christians, street musicians, the President of the United States of America, and as the writer David James Duncan would say, the Creator, the One who loves us all in such a huge way.

There is a rabbinical teaching that says if the world is ending and the Messiah arrives, first plant a tree, and then see if the story is true. Inspiration is not garnered from the litanies of what may befall us; it resides in humanity's willingness to restore, redress, reform, rebuild, recover, reimagine, and reconsider. "One day you finally knew what you had to do, and began, though the voices around you kept shouting their bad advice," is Mary Oliver's description of moving away from the profane toward a deep sense of connectedness to the living world.

Millions of people are working on behalf of strangers, even if the evening news is usually about the death of strangers. This kindness of strangers has religious, even mythic origins, and very specific eighteenth-century roots. Abolitionists were the first people to create a national and global movement to defend the rights of those they did not know. Until that time, no group had filed a grievance except on behalf of itself. The founders of this movement were largely unknown -- Granville Clark, Thomas Clarkson, Josiah Wedgwood — and their goal was ridiculous on the face of it: at that time three out of four people in the world were enslaved. Enslaving each other was what human beings had done for ages. And the abolitionist movement was greeted with incredulity. Conservative spokesmen ridiculed the abolitionists as liberals, progressives, do-gooders, meddlers, and activists. They were told they would ruin the economy and drive England into poverty. But for the first time in history a group of people organized themselves to help people they would never know, from whom they would never receive direct or indirect benefit. And today tens of millions of

people do this every day. It is called the world of non-profits, civil society, schools, social entrepreneurship, non-governmental organizations, and companies who place social and environmental justice at the top of their strategic goals. The scope and scale of this effort is unparalleled in history.

The living world is not "out there" somewhere, but in your heart. What do we know about life? In the words of biologist Janine Benyus, life creates the conditions that are conducive to life. I can think of no better motto for a future economy. We have tens of thousands of abandoned homes without people and tens of thousands of abandoned people without homes. We have failed bankers advising failed regulators on how to save failed assets. We are the only species on the planet without full employment. Brilliant. We have an economy that tells us that it is cheaper to destroy earth in real time rather than renew, restore, and sustain it. You can print money to bail out a bank but you can't print life to bail out a planet. At present we are stealing the future, selling it in the present, and calling it gross domestic product. We can just as easily have an economy that is based on healing the future instead of stealing it. We can either create assets for the future or take the assets of the future. One is called restoration and the other exploitation. And whenever we exploit the earth we exploit people and cause untold suffering. Working for the earth is not a way to get rich, it is a way to be rich.

The first living cell came into being nearly 40 million centuries ago, and its direct descendants are in all of our bloodstreams. Literally you are breathing molecules this very second that were inhaled by Moses, Mother Teresa, and Bono. We are vastly interconnected. Our fates are inseparable. We are here because the dream of every cell is to become two cells. And dreams come true. In each of you are one quadrillion cells, 90 percent of which are not human cells. Your body is a community, and without those other microorganisms you would perish in hours. Each human cell has 400 billion molecules conducting millions of processes between trillions of atoms. The total cellular activity in one human body is staggering: one septillion actions at any one moment, a one with twenty-four zeros after it. In a millisecond, our body has undergone ten times more processes than there are stars in the universe, which is exactly what Charles Darwin foretold when he said science would discover that each living creature was a "little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and as numerous as the stars of heaven."

So I have two questions for you all: First, can you feel your body? Stop for a moment. Feel your body. One septillion activities going on simultaneously, and your body does this so well you are free to ignore it, and wonder instead when this speech will end. You can feel it. It is called life. This is who you are. Second question: who is in charge of your body? Who is managing those molecules? Hopefully not a political party. Life is creating the conditions that are conducive to life inside you, just as in all of nature. Our innate nature is to create the conditions that are conducive to life. What I want you to imagine is that collectively humanity is evincing a deep innate wisdom in coming together to heal the wounds and insults of the past.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. No one would sleep that night, of course. The world would create new religions overnight. We would be ecstatic, delirious, made rapturous by the glory of God. Instead, the stars come out every night and we watch television.

This extraordinary time when we are globally aware of each other and the multiple dangers that threaten civilization has never happened, not in a thousand years, not in ten thousand years. Each of us is as complex and beautiful as all the stars in the universe. We have done great things and we have gone way off course in terms of honoring creation. You are graduating to the most amazing, stupefying challenge ever bequested to any generation. The generations before you failed. They didn't stay up all night. They got distracted and lost sight of the fact that life is a miracle every moment of your existence. Nature beckons you to be on her side. You couldn't ask for a better boss. The most unrealistic person in the world is the cynic, not the dreamer. Hope only makes sense when it doesn't make sense to be hopeful. This is your century. Take it and run as if your life depends on it.

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'Wisdom of the Last Farmer'

Nicolette Hahn Niman, Special to The Chronicle

Sunday, August 9, 2009



Wisdom of the Last Farmer
Harvesting Legacies From the Land
By David Mas Masumoto
(Free Press; 239 pages; \$25)

For what seems like forever, urbanites have been exposed to headlines about the loss of family farmers out in the nation's rural hinterlands. Smaller-scale, nonindustrialized farming, we are told, is a dying business, and the people willing to do it a vanishing breed. The work is simply too grueling and the financial reward too uncertain.

And yet a determined core of traditional farmers persist in practicing their craft. A person removed from agriculture could justifiably wonder why. What is the irresistible force that draws these souls, like moths to a flame, to doggedly practice a profession that so many others have been forced out of or willingly abandoned? Are today's traditional farmers foolhardy anachronisms clinging to a bygone era? Or perhaps they're just masochists.

The best response I've seen to this mystery is David Mas Masumoto's new book, "Wisdom of the Last Farmer: Harvesting Legacies From the Land," a book that portrays the farmer's life with so much passion, warmth and honesty that it's hard to avoid seeing farming's beauty and gritty appeal. Written from the author's perspective, in language that is poetic yet unadorned, it's part memoir, part manifesto, part philosophical discourse and wholly enjoyable.

The book tells the story of a Japanese American peach farmer in the Central Valley dealing with his father's stroke. Initially, the family grapples with what they believe will be a fatal affliction. When it becomes apparent that the father will recover, the son helps his father's rehabilitation, in part, by reintroducing him to farm chores. The son struggles to know how much his father can handle: Should he encourage his father to use the tractor - one of his father's favorite tasks - or is that just putting him (and others) in danger?

The elder Masumoto is an experienced farmer who has passed on much of his knowledge to his son. The son writes of his father with a palpable love and respect. Their relationship forms the foundation of the narrative.

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But all the while, the author expatiates on subjects as broad and profound as the Japanese immigrant's experience in America and as seemingly trivial and banal as sweat. Here's a bit of what he writes on the latter subject:

"On the farm, we don't wear deodorant. We don't cover up sweat stains on our clothing. Trees and vines don't judge us if we look sweaty and stressed. They don't associate sweat with dirt, perspiration with ineptitude. They don't worry about appearances."

Surprisingly, the soliloquy on sweat continues for six pages. Even more surprisingly, it's a lot of fun to read. Masumoto drops pearls like "the sweat thesis" into his narrative in unexpected places and ways, yet they always seem to fit nicely. The book flows languidly forward as the reader experiences the daily life of one farming family.

"Wisdom of the Last Farmer" opens with a delightful foreword by chef Dan Barber of Blue Hill restaurant, who once trained at Chez Panisse. There, Barber had his first encounter with the Masumotos' peaches. He writes of how he watched in amazement as servers brought out the individual peaches on plates - with nothing done to them - as dessert. The peaches are just that good. And so is this book.

Nicolette Hahn Niman is a rancher and the author of "Righteous Porkchop: Finding a Life and Good Food Beyond Factory Farms" (HarperCollins, 2009). E-mail her at books@sfchronicle.com.

The Boston Globe

G FORCE | DAVID MAS MASUMOTO

Nearing peach perfect



David Mas Masumoto finds similarities in his two avocations: “Just as a peach takes three to four years from planting to first crop, so too with a good idea developing into a book.” (Charles O’Rear/Corbis)

By Mark Feeney
Globe Staff / August 19, 2009

The author of eight books, David Mas Masumoto grows organic peaches, nectarines, and grapes (for raisins) on his 80-acre farm in Del Rey, Calif., near Fresno. Masumoto, 55, is perhaps best-known for “Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm.” His latest book is “Wisdom of the Last Farmer: Harvesting Legacies From the Land” (Free Press). Last week, he spoke by telephone from his farm (“Just finished the peach harvest - there’s a break now before the raisins come up”).

Q. Are farmers born or made?

A. Very good question! I really think it’s a little of both. You have to have this passion for hard physical work. At the same time, you do learn how to farm. There was a sense once that you had to grow up on a farm to know what to do. That’s not true. People who did not grow up on a farm bring new skills, strength, and perspective to this work, and I find that refreshing.

Q. Are there ways in which writing is like farming?

A. Absolutely. One, it’s a very slow and tedious process - at least for me! Just as peaches do, ideas continue to grow and, hopefully, ripen. Just as a peach takes three to four years from

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planting to first crop, so too with a good idea developing into a book. Also, I tend to take a long-term perspective with both. I'd like to think I'm still learning things as a farmer and a writer.

Q. You use a lovely phrase in the new book, "peach perfection." How often have you attained it?

A. I've gotten close at times. Really close. There have been a few times, . . . often surrounded by family, where I realize we're there. But another part of me thinks, if you find that perfect peach, would you need to grow it again?

Q. What's your favorite way to eat peaches in a dessert?

A. Sometimes just freshly sliced in a bowl, sometimes with ice cream. We just had some Elbertas and they're so fun to bake and cook with because they keep their color and shape and texture in food. So when you cut into a cobbler the food *glows*. Ironically, it almost seems artificial.

Q. You wonder in the book if the arrival of color television, in the 1960s, didn't speed the disappearance of heirloom produce.

A. I think it had to do with the colorizing of the world. It's a very controlled, almost unnatural colorizing. Just as on TV, where they do special things with lighting, it's as if we lost the ability to see the whole color spectrum. The world became pretty monochromatic in terms of looking at just red fruit.

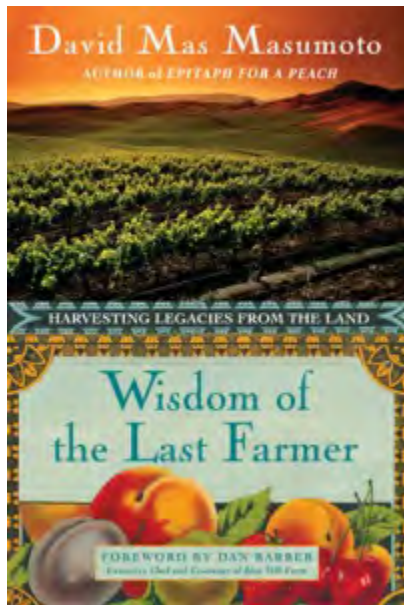
Q. Do farmers ever retire?

A. I don't think so. It's sort of that [Douglas] MacArthur quote about old soldiers who just fade away. That's what farmers do. They just stay on their land until they fade away. And I don't see that as a sad thing. Our daughter is planning on coming back to the farm. That changes everything. I realize I'm not the last generation. There's a sense now of not just the immediate future but the long-term future in what I do. At the same time it's terrifying, since I have to pass on to my daughter what I know as my dad did to me. It's a lot of pressure!

CIVIL EATS

Mas Masumoto Gives Young Farmers the *Wisdom of the Last Farmer*

August 21st, 2009 By Paula Crossfield



In farmer David “Mas” Masumoto’s latest book, *Wisdom of the Last Farmer*, he looks back on his agrarian life so far. In it, Masumoto focuses primarily on the things he has learned from his father — the things he wishes he’d paid more attention to (like welding) and the things he chose to do differently once he’d taken over his 80 acre peach, nectarine and grape farm near Fresno, California (like transitioning to organic, and making the tough decision to rip out some very old grape vines in order to preserve and nurture others). Meditating on farm legacies seems to have more meaning just now, when his 23 year old daughter, Nikiko, has decided that she too will continue farming Masumoto peaches.

Wisdom of the Last Farmer contains within it a wealth of experience, which make great lessons for young and beginning farmers. It made sense, then, that Mas and Nikiko Masumoto led a workshop together for young farmers last weekend at Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Tarrytown, NY. The workshop gave beginners the opportunity to ask questions of the experienced farmers present, including Stone Barns’ own livestock manager Craig Haney and four-season vegetable grower Jack Algieri. It was also a chance for local apprentice farmers to get to know each other, fostering a sense of farmer community — something Stone Barns hopes to continue building upon. (For more details on Stone Barns, here is a piece I wrote about my visit there last fall, and here is an interview I did then with chef Dan Barber, whose restaurant on the property, Blue Hill, buys much of the farm’s produce.)

Nena Johnson, Public Programs Director for Stone Barns, had this to say:

“Stone Barns Center’s Growing Farmers initiative is meant to fill the gap in technical training that exists for those in our region who are new to farming. Sky-high land prices combined with

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an aging farmer population have made it all the more difficult for young farmers to receive the traditional knowledge and support that new agriculturalists need to be successful.”

The young farmer focus at Stone Barns really took hold last December during the Young Farmers Conference, a series of workshops and talks to inform newbies about farm skills, acquiring land, and policy issues, giving new farmers the chance to network and even swap seeds. The interest and attendance for the event was more than expected — 171 people took part, and there was even a waiting list of others who wanted to attend. (One of the attendees, Annie Myers, wrote about it for us here) This year, the event will take place again, December 3rd-4th. According to Johnson, workshops will include Beginning Poultry, Introduction to Permaculture, and Financing the Farm among others. But aside from the conference, Stone Barns hopes to continue to support young farmers through workshops like the one with the Masumotos throughout the season.

“In addition to the annual Young Farmers Conference and a robust apprenticeship program,” Johnson said, “the evolving Growing Farmers initiative will also include monthly skills-building workshops and a vibrant online community for participants to network with other young farmers. As the program continues to grow, Stone Barns Center will support and educate our region’s burgeoning population of young farmers working in sustainable agriculture.”

Indeed, the Young Farmers Movement is well underway. (Featuring leaders like Severine Von Tscharner Fleming: check out the new extended trailer for her movie about young farmers, called *The Greenhorns*, currently in post-production and slated for release at the end of this year). This movement is part of a growing desire in younger people to do something with their lives that has a direct impact on others — feeding people, taking care of the environment, and building community. Farmers have a lot of power to change our future, and young farmers are particularly positioned to start our food system again from scratch, and renew sustainable ways of bringing food to our tables. Groups that support young farmers do so likewise in order to revalue farming as an occupation, and to encourage young people to take on this valuable work. Just looking at the statistics reveals farming to be a dying art — the average age of US farmers is 55 years old. But the tide is changing, Masumoto said on the Leonard Lopate Show on New York Public Radio on Monday. “People from non-farming backgrounds are gravitating towards agriculture, and I see that as renewal.” He characterized these new farmers as a part of “a whole generation interested in food, cooking and also how to grow food.”

And to all of our loyal young farmer readers out there who may or may not be able to make it out to Stone Barns for these workshops, you can still benefit from Mas Masumoto’s farm wisdom. Three young farmers who **email us at contest (at) civileats.com** and tell us **1) where and what you farm 2) why you became a farmer and what keeps you going, and 3) what you would like to read about in our Young Farmer’s Series (issues big and small, questions you have, resources explained)** will receive a free copy of Mas Masumoto’s *Wisdom of the Last Farmer*, courtesy of Free Press and Civil Eats! This contest will run through next week, and we will announce the winners on Monday, August 24th.

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Los Angeles Times

Preserving the fruits of a season's labors

Organic farmer David Mas Masumoto ponders preservation -- and self-preservation.



(Ken Hively / Los Angeles Times)

By David Mas Masumoto

August 26, 2009

My harvest season always begins with worry about weather, prices and accidents. If I'm fortunate, it ends with a hope for preservation -- both the preserving of foods and the sustaining of farms and family farmers.

As this summer started, the last thing I wanted to think about was extending it. Recent failures have outweighed gains. A string of 100-degree days stung my nectarines; they ripened unevenly and were easily bruised. Johnson grass, a truly evil weed, had taken over a vineyard, stealing sunlight and water, dwarfing the struggling grapes. A neighbor commented that there was more weed than vine, and he was right. I bent a tractor disk after hitting an end post while trying to cut a path down one row.

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Now, as the end of the harvest draws near, the reality of unfulfilled "what ifs" burdens my rhythms. What if we had had more spring rains and the fruit could have had consistent water? What if I had a better tractor with more horsepower to pull the disk deeper? What if buyers had been more accepting of funny-looking peaches with extra-pointy tips, a character nuance of this 2009 season in our old Sun Crests?

But as August draws to a close, I find I am missing no longer having the next fruit variety to look forward to, the hope that finally something might work right and the farm will forgive my mistakes.

Desperate, I turn my thoughts to self-preservation: preserving my own produce. I am adding value to my farm by curing, canning or pickling my best fruits and vegetables. Other farmers are doing the same.

Time for 'jamfest'

On our farm, we host an annual "jamfest," bringing together friends and community to make peach jam. We peel, cook and sweat, and by the end of the evening, everyone takes home a piece of our farm in their jam jars. We sun-dry some more of our best fruits -- hoping to capture the magic of their flavor so it can be shared later.

By extending the season, I'm offered a reprieve, a second and third chance to do right. It's like planting and harvesting a "winter crop" in August. Preserves seize the season -- time in a bottle -- and inspire creativity and poetry. During a school visit, I once asked sixth-graders to tell me what they saw as they examined small jars of peach jam. Most described the color and anticipated the aroma, but one bright boy, holding the jar up in the light, said, "I see summer."

I want to see summer throughout the year and be reminded of both the joys and the challenges of this work. Farmers who live on their farms can't hide from their mistakes, we live with them daily. Farming organically poses greater challenges -- pest control treatments often are slow to act and require acute timing. Grape mealy bug, an invasive creature that leaves sticky residues on our raisins, has evaded most of my efforts; I now realize it will take years to contain it.

And looming in my future is another challenge: water. All through the spring and summer, I studied the lack of snow in the Sierra and worried about future water supplies. Water is not only a scarce resource that will be allocated by price, it is also sacred and must be shared by many. The solution won't be easy; I anticipate some of my fields will become fallow, if not next season, then soon.

But I also want to enjoy my successes, things I want to preserve. I call for a new definition of fresh, a new "seasonality" of food by exploring the old traditions of food preservation. We can have wonderful peaches in January with new twists on old methods like drying fruit so that during the cold and wet winter months we can revisit summer with each bite. A straight-from-the-farm flavor can be still had with the proper preservation techniques.

My parents understood this, my mom freezing our best peaches and my dad saving the most

plump raisins for the ultimate domestic market: our home. They sometimes felt a little guilty, believing their actions were selfish. Yet why not reserve the best produce for those who best appreciate the quality and best understand what it took to bring a crop to harvest?

Perhaps for a farmer, the greatest benefit of preservation may involve our spirit. During the sprint of harvest, we often don't have the time to savor our own produce. The worry element of farming can overwhelm us -- I often lose sight of priorities, trying to predict the weather and respond to the pressures of growing, of pests and plant diseases, and of course, to the occasionally bright but mostly dark skies of prices, input costs, labor and profits or losses.

Caught up in the whirlwind of harvest, I will sometimes surrender to a definition of success based on market prices, as if dollars were the only measure of my worth. Do cheap peaches imply I'm a lousy farmer? At this point in the year, I can't help but make such a linkage. Isn't that at the core of our capitalist system? This past season, some of our fruits had "arrival problems," mostly bruises from being overripe. Buyers asked for "protection" and we made price adjustments to compensate for any losses. But who protects the farmer?

I believe time saves me from being overwhelmed by all of this. Only during the off-season, when things are slower, can I take the moment to enjoy our crop of peach jam. When life is calmer, our family can pause, snack on a dried peach slice and reflect: "Hey, maybe what we grew was and is great."

Found memories

I remember cleaning out our shed. On Dad's workbench I found an old, small tin coffee can. Inside the container, Dad had hidden a private stash of raisins -- snacks he'd enjoyed while repairing equipment during the off-season. Lifting the cover, the distinct aroma of sweet raisins filled our work space and made me pause and grin. I too sneak a handful for a quick treat.

Preserves enable farmers to enjoy the fruits of their labor on their own schedule, when time permits them. It's these priceless moments that help inspire us for one more year. They can also trick us into believing in "next years" -- making foolish, wonderfully human but economically irrational decisions to keep farming despite all the negatives. The reminder that we did good can be enough motivation by itself to keep going. Unfortunately in today's rapidly paced world, farmers don't do this enough.

So tomorrow, as the summer heat lingers and I worry about what will break next, I will close my eyes, dream of winter rains and thick fog and the flavors of a prior harvest. Nothing will taste better or will be better for me.

Masumoto is an organic farmer; his most recent book is "Wisdom of the Last Farmer."

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Switzerland

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Geneva

During Verdi's lifetime, *Il trovatore* was one of his most popular operas. Today, the work is often regarded as an enigma (good music to a trivial libretto), almost impossible to stage. It took two unconvincing attempts by the Met before that company succeeded, finally, with David McVicar's recent production; something similar happened in Geneva, where the last staging dated back to 1978. Finally, on June 4, the GRAND THEATRE came up with a new production that did justice to this splendid work.

The stage director Stephen Taylor is obviously fascinated, like Verdi, by the darker side of the Spanish romantics whose plays inspired the composer. War is a constant presence in the opera. Taylor's choice of setting—the Spanish Civil War—displeased some, but his idea was respectful to the original García Gutiérrez play, and much more consistent and convincing than many *Fidelios* or *Carmens* set in the same period. At the beginning, a movie shown to the nationalist troops effectively explained Ferrando's tale. The second part of Act I, when the gypsy blacksmiths were forging weapons for their republican allies, became a splendid and contemporary hymn to liberty. The beautiful scenery, designed by Laurent Peduzzi, was dominated by huge walls which offered many dramatic possibilities and kept the action fluid.

Evelino Pidò brought fire, refinement and rhythmic urgency to the score, and the orchestra grew in confidence as the evening wore on, though it never overwhelmed the voices. An enlightened stylist, Pidò encouraged the principals to sing accurate, crisp ornaments and *gruppetti* and true pianissimos or *mesa di voce*. Irina Mishura sang Azucena with passion and musicality. Giorgio Petean's phrasing was superb in Di Luna's 'Il balen', and Zoran Todorovitch sang Manrico with an unusual array of colours and shades, and with bravura in 'Di quella pira'. Tatiana Serjan sang Leonora's long, arching phrases with rare power in all registers, and with ²⁴⁵dynamic finesse. Her 'D'amor sull'alli rosee' was a simple and moving romanza delivered with extraordinary pianissimos and expressive flexibility.

MARCEL QUILLEVERE



IN REVIEW

GENEVA — *Il Trovatore*, Grand Théâtre de Genève, 6/5/09

For their final production of the season and the last show of Jean-Marie Blanchard's tenure as director of Geneva's Grand Théâtre, the company chose to present Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in a new production by Stephen Taylor, with a cast of non-Italian singers whose lack of stellar status flew in the face of Caruso's quip that all the the opera needed was "the four greatest singers in the world." Authentic Italian style was left to Evelino Pidò, who conducted the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande (seen June 5).

Verdi's masterpiece, with its flickering twilight hue, has often been criticized for its muddled libretto, which places atmosphere above dramatic clarity, but the principal quality of this staging was its presentation of the drama as a cogent whole. Taylor updated the drama to the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s — a period of suitable violence and vengeance, complemented by the austere, monumental sets of Laurent Peduzzi.

Burak Bilgili's Ferrando began the evening by showing a home movie to his fellow soldiers of the past, a simple device that placed the characters in their historical context. The bass savored every word of his fearsome narration and encompassed the wide vocal range with ease. Another intelligent moment was Irina Mishura's gasp of recognition as Azucena when she realized that di Luna was Manrico's brother, making the tragic denouement inevitable. In an evening that in general lacked strongly profiled performances from its leading artists, Mishura was outstanding: from her initial sharp turn of the head for the opening of "Stride la vampa," she created a captivating character. Vocally she deployed her mezzo generously, burrowing into her chest register and rising to a pungent top. Her only miscalculation was "Ai nostri monti," for which she adopted the wispy voice of a child to remember her youth — a decision that may have had dramatic point but was an Expressionist step too far.

It was also in the last act — where Verdi's writing is at its most fluid and forward-looking — that the lack of strong characterization from the other principal singers was at its most evident. Tatiana Serjan's Leonora seemed detached; the Russian soprano's final phrases had insufficient intensity, especially after an evening of outstanding spinto singing. Her "D'amor sull'ali rosee" lacked a genuine trill, but the arching phrases were managed with diaphanous ease, and the blazing cabaletta after the Miserere was viscerally exciting. A little more dramatic and musical poise would transform this excellent performance into something outstanding.

Similar comments could apply to the di Luna of baritone George Petean, who despite his wooden stage presence was equally at ease vocally, with an upper register of outstanding quality. If "Il balen" was too foursquare and inflexible, the honesty of his singing was never in question. Zoran Todorovich's Manrico is a known quantity; he was in good form on opening night, capping his cabaletta with a confident interpolated high note. He has the right girth of tenor for the role and a

handsome stentorian approach, even if his phrasing occasionally slips into the provincial and a sense of effort is never entirely absent.

Pidò found all the dark tints in the score, to which he brought unusual sophistication: customary usual coarse bandstand approach to this opera was absent. His reading looked forward to the composer's later operas, and primal excitement was sidestepped in favor of a more symphonic approach. On the debit side, the maestro paused between numbers for just a second too long and basked in the burgeoning lyricism of the final act, when surging expediency would have been more effective. □

STEPHEN J. MUDGE

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