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Sustainability Communicator is a quarterly publication about population, consumption, and conservation issues. Its purpose is to promote dialogue and action among League members and others interested in building a sustainable future.

SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATOR

Izaak Walton League of America Sustainability Education Program News

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marketplace

When Sustainability Means Business

American Public Radio's *Marketplace* is a 30-minute, business, economic, and personal finance news program. It airs weekdays on more than 330 public radio stations nationwide to 4.5 million listeners. In October 2005, *Marketplace* launched a new "desk," or area of coverage, for sustainability.

According to the *Marketplace* Web site, sustainability:

Is a time-tested concept that highlights the need to build replenishing systems that can supply the present without compromising the future.

Is about people: How to foster a robust workforce and strong communities.

Addresses innovation: How to spark it, nurture it, and protect it so the idea pipelines don't run dry.

Can be a lens to focus on values: Inspired by faith, family, personal commitment ... on the built environment and on markets.

And, of course, it is also about natural resources: How to use, renew, and account for environmental capital.

But it boils down to this: Don't eat your seed corn.

Recently, Sustainability Communicator interviewed sustainability desk editor Margaret Koval, reporter Sam Eaton, and public insight analyst Joellen Easton to find out how the desk got started, what they are learning about sustainability in the business world, and how it makes them feel about the planet's long-term prospects.

SC: *What was the thinking behind Marketplace starting a sustainability desk?*

Margaret: *Marketplace* formerly had an environmental desk. It is something that we have been interested in for years. It's something that we have a duty to report on because it's such a prominent issue in the business world—in markets and finance and corporations and so on. So we wanted to get it up and going again with a slightly different angle.

Sam: Approaching it as a sustainability desk rather than an environment desk allows us to do a lot more. It's a broader, more interesting subject to pursue. Instead of "There are spotted owls dying in the old growth forest" being a story in itself, sustainability brings it back to the human element: Who is affected here?

With sustainability being so broad, how do you decide what stories get assigned to the sustainability desk?

Joellen: Something that affects people's lives so clearly like rising gas prices obviously vaults [sustainability] into the forefront. But really, it's almost impossible to open a newspaper or turn on the radio or television without seeing some story that touches on sustainability in some way.

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Being Part of the Marketplace Sustainability Story

- Listen to Marketplace on your local public radio station.
- Visit www.marketplace.org. From there you can:
 - Become part of the Sustainability Public Insight Network by describing how your life intersects with sustainability. (<https://www.publicradio.org/sustainabilitysurvey>)
 - Review recent sustainability stories either in the website archives or by signing up to get the Marketplace Sustainability RSS feed sent to your inbox.

When Sustainability Means Business

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Does it seem to you that there is any conflict for companies between sustainability's long-term outlook and the need to maximize short-term profits?

Sam: What we're seeing is, from the investor perspective, the conflict really isn't there. Profits in the short-term may be impacted if you take a more sustainable approach, but in the long term, a lot of investors are demanding that companies do this so that there aren't any surprises. A lot of analysts are saying that companies that do this will have better profits because they're not taking on the risk of unsustainable practices, whether it's pollution or what have you. One guy said that if you're not creating a Superfund site, you don't have to pay to clean it up. So I think in terms of long-term profits, a more sustainable approach for companies can be a positive one. Whether that is a universal phenomenon remains to be seen.

Margaret: I would point to some other fairly obvious things. The Japanese car companies, for instance, are pretty far out in front when it comes to hybrid and ethanol technology, and obviously, that's doing them very well. So, there is plenty of evidence that aiming for sustainable markets is positive for the bottom line in any quarter.

Joellen: From a journalist's point of view, we see all kinds of economic incentives and profit incentives at play. We're certainly not trying to claim the world has turned green overnight.

In same vein, do you encounter evidence of green-washing or sustainability-washing?

Margaret: No doubt about it. I wouldn't want to name who, but marketing is marketing; and people will market whatever is the best foot to put forward. We have an eye on that constantly as we do our reporting. We even keep our eyes out to do stories on green-washing. But you know, it's an interesting phenomenon that pretending to be green would be putting your best foot forward. Even that's a story, I think.

Sam: And as a reporter, I think it's something I always have to keep an eye out

Sustainable Journalism

Marketplace Public Insight Analyst Joellen Easton specializes in a new approach to newsgathering that mirrors the collaborative approach of sustainable development. She is building a network of "regular folks" who have personal expertise in different areas, in order to increase the source pool for finding stories, story angles, and interviews. She has sent thousands of emails asking people to tell the Sustainability Desk the role sustainability plays in either their personal or professional lives. "Now we know people with experience on brewing biodiesel or in green building certification or green chemistry," she says. "We can draw upon them as we do reporting. It helps us to be more diverse, get off the coasts, and find ideas that we might not have found otherwise."

The approach, called Public Insight Journalism, was pioneered at Minnesota Public Radio. "But in the context of this desk, I've started thinking of it as Sustainable Journalism," Easton says. "Media producers and journalists find ourselves in a new environment as people become more involved and interactive with their media. So we are saying, how do we change our approach to newsgathering to involve our audience and the public more broadly to make our product more rich?" On a recent story on the practicalities of using biodiesel, for example, she sent out questions to people in the network that she knew had relevant experience. "We got a bunch of really helpful responses saying, 'This is exactly how it is easy and exactly how it is hard.'" Reporter Tess Vigeland interviewed one respondent for the story on *Marketplace Money*.

"We don't want to raise expectations that if you sign on to the network, you'll become a radio star," says Easton. "Sometimes we'll get 100 responses from really smart people with intriguing experiences, but they aren't necessarily going to be in the piece. But the collected knowledge we get from our public sources will definitely inform the reporter and the story."

If you would like the chance to inform *Marketplace's* reporting on sustainability, fill in the online survey at <https://www.publicradio.org/sustainabilitysurvey/>. Or you can email Joellen at jeaston@markerplace.org.

for, because we hear these stories about, say, Wal-Mart starting to sell only fish that are sustainably harvested, or incorporating green energy into their stores. You always have to approach these stories with a little bit of skepticism. Is this just one press release, or an action that they're really doing?

Margaret: That being said, we also have to fight the urge to be too cynical. When Wal-Mart does something—say, convert to corn-based plastics all around the world—that's a big market. So who cares why they're doing it if there is a profound benefit from it?

Sam: In fact, larger companies have the ability to tip the scales with small actions much more than, say, a small company that went 100 percent sustainable. So, I think there's some interesting interplay there between mega companies pursuing sustainable approaches versus the small-scale, grassroots stuff.

Do you think that sustainability is really a viable economic approach at the macro level?

Sam: I don't know if we've seen yet a successful model. There are companies that are doing very interesting things, like Patagonia and others, that truly have sustainability in the core being of their companies' business models. But I think that's what's exciting—that everyone's kind of exploring it right now. It's a work in progress. We don't really have set templates that people are operating from. So, from a journalist's perspective, it's really interesting to see how this manifests itself within different businesses, different sectors, and different scales of businesses.

Do you have any big stories on the horizon?

Sam: Climate change is something that

we are very interested in covering in terms of the economic effects. That's one big project, without giving away what we are doing, really looking at how that is shifting certain economies. That should be a high-profile series. Another thing that I am looking at in the immediate term is agricultural subsidies and the sustainable practice of agriculture in the U.S., and some of the far-reaching effects of that.

Does this beat make you more or less hopeful about the prospects of people on the planet?

Margaret: I have been surprised by how many businesses are taking this on, and in how many different ways: in finance, in markets, in their own internal practices, and so on. So that's certainly very notable to me and encouraging. Yet, the more you look, the more difficult things you see also.

Sam: I think Margaret really hit on it in the sense that there's a lot of encouraging signs out there, but, through the sustainability desk, we see both the good and the bad, and it's hard to digest it all and come out with a prediction on which way the world is going to go. To clarify, it's not really our decision, at least not through the desk and, outside of our personal lives, to make a judgment. But I think that there are so many interesting things happening at this point in history in regards to this. I wake up every day extremely excited about my job and what I get to learn and the stories I get to tell.

Joellen: I find it really intriguing. I haven't been involved in sustainability or environmental reporting. I only came to this beat in December. But I find it fascinating watching how the national discussion of sustainability issues evolves and changes. A number of people that I've been talking to through the network keep saying that five years ago, ten years ago, the discussion wasn't like this. It was a lot more about spotted owls. But now it's a much more mainstream discussion, and people are talking about very practical ways in which sustainability affects your life and how you affect the sustainability of society and of your own wallet as well. So I just think it's very fascinating to watch the conversation evolve, and it's a very fun place to be that's for sure.

take action

Support Legislation to Increase Funding for Population Programs

The Izaak Walton League is working on an exciting piece of legislation. The Focus on Family Health Worldwide Act (H.R. 4188) increases funding for U.S. international population programs, including voluntary family planning. Representatives Betty McCollum (D-MN), James Oberstar (D-MN), Jim Ramstad (R-MN), and Christopher Shays (R-CT) introduced the bill last fall. Now is a great time for you to show your support.

What does the bill have to do with conserving natural resources?

Since 1970, the League has supported voluntary family planning as an important part of conservation. Families are better able to manage the natural resources needed for food, shelter, energy, and income when they can plan the timing and spacing of their children. These programs also help women take advantage of economic and education opportunities. All of this results in slower population growth and reduced environmental stresses.

How does rapid population growth affect natural resources?

People already use more than half of the world's annual available fresh water. By 2025, that number could rise to 70 percent due to population growth alone.

Since 1970, total global emissions of

greenhouse gasses have increased by 61 percent, largely due to the increased consumption of fossil fuels by a growing population.

Currently, more than 1 billion people live in ecological hotspots—areas richest in biological diversity and highly threatened by increasing human activity. Though comprising just 12 percent of the Earth's land surface, these hotspots hold nearly 20 percent of global population. In fact, population is growing nearly 40 percent faster in ecological hotspots than in the rest of world.

What does the bill do?

H.R. 4188 is an authorizing bill. That means if it passes, Congress promises to spend money on a specific program. That's just the first step. The second step is the appropriations bill, which is like writing the check to pay for the promise. H.R. 4188 starts this important process by authorizing increased funding for programs carried out by the U. S. Agency for International Development. Specifically, it authorizes \$600 million for family planning programs in 2007, with increases an additional \$100 million each year through 2011.

Visit the League's Action Center at www.iwla.org to ask your representative to co-sponsor H.R. 4188.

2006 readers survey contest winners

In December 2004, we sent out a questionnaire to gauge readers' satisfaction with Sustainability Communicator. One hundred and forty-five responded—about 6 percent of the mailing list. Thank you all for your time, comments, and criticisms. The input is valuable. A summary report will appear in the next issue. Contact us for a copy of the full findings.

118 respondents entered the prize drawing. Congratulations to the 5 lucky winners.

The Grand Prize winner, Kristi Lindquist from New Ulm, Minnesota, has designated the Putting Green Eco-Adventure Park to receive her \$100 prize.

The Really Great Prize winners, who received a copy of The Angry Trout Restaurant Sustainability Guide, are:

- Jenn Colby, *Montpelier, VT*
- Rosemary Leary, *Galveston, TX*
- Matt Stark, *Minneapolis, MN*
- Mike Williams, *Watertown, SD*

E-Communicator


You can now receive your Sustainability Communicator via email in a PDF file. Contact us at sustain@iwla.org. If you still want the printed version but would like the ease of a PDF file for sharing with others, you can download recent issues from the IWLA website: www.iwla.org.

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For more information, contact the Izaak Walton League of America, 707 Conservation Lane, Gaithersburg, MD 20878-2983; call (301) 548-0150; E-mail sustain@iwla.org; or visit our site on the World Wide Web at <http://www.iwla.org>.

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Dear Sustainability Communicator reader:

By promoting sustainable use of our natural resources, Izaak Walton League members work to protect America's outdoors from sprawl, over-consumption, and unwise development.

As a Sustainability Communicator newsletter subscriber, we know you are already taking steps to move America's communities toward more sustainable practices and a better future for us all.

We'd like you to consider taking one more step by joining the Izaak Walton League. Membership is not a requirement for you to continue receiving this newsletter, but we would love to have you support our organization more broadly, and in return, you would get access to our other newsletters as well as our quarterly magazine, *Outdoor America*.

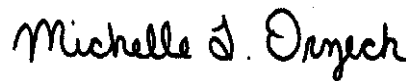
We've enclosed a membership brochure for your convenience. You can also sign up through our Web site, www.iwla.org.

Thanks for everything you are doing for America's outdoors and for considering an increased commitment to the League's work.

Sincerely,



Jim Baird
Director
Sustainability Education Program



Michelle Orzech
Coordinator
Sustainable Population Campaign

P.S. If you are already an Izaak Walton League member, please help us recruit a new member by passing this brochure along to a like-minded conservationist.

Founded in 1922, the Izaak Walton League of America is dedicated to common sense conservation that protects America's hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage relying on solution-oriented conservation, education, and the promotion of outdoor recreation for the benefit of our citizens. The League has more than 40,000 members and supporters in 21 state divisions and more than 300 local chapters in 32 states.



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