
Atlantic CoastWatch

Reviving Haiti

Relief and recovery efforts there are still in the emergency mode of providing food, water and medical care; but now while the world's attention is focused, say international aid experts, it is time to start putting in place some long term solutions to the country's inherent problems if future humanitarian disasters are to be averted.

The extent of the earthquake's destruction is seen by some as an opportunity for a renewed impetus. The devastation from four hurricanes in 2008, reducing the nation to what a *Slate* article called an "ecological disaster," had already prompted efforts to rebuild and restore the country's ecosystem and economy. The **Haiti Regeneration Initiative**--a coalition of **United Nations** agencies, government entities, NGOs and technical institutes--had launched a 20 year plan in the wake of the storms. Now, said **President Rene Preval**, if his country is to achieve sustainability, it will be necessary to keep this long term environmental planning on track while working shorter-term to repair the tattered infrastructure.

Massive deforestation, started initially under French rule, accelerated drastically in the 20th century because of the need for cheap fuel in the form of charcoal. At present only 2% of Haiti's territory is forested, according to an article in *PlanetArk*. The lack of trees has not only increased the country's vulnerability to severe storms. It also allows the topsoil to wash away, making the land less productive: Haiti provides less than half the food it needs, according to an editorial by **Gabriel Marcella** in the *Patriot News*. The damage to the land has also contributed to the exodus of people from the country to the city in search of employment.

But earthquake devastation in Port-au-Prince has caused a reverse exodus, expected to grow from 200,000 people to 1 million or more, according to the website of the **Lambi Fund of Haiti**. While rural communities were less affected by the catastrophe, the sudden influx of people is going to strain their meager resources--water, sanitation, and food. Again, this may present a hidden opportunity to focus on the rebuilding of the countryside, where the Fund is putting its efforts.

Hudson PCB Results Disputed

Last fall **EPA** and **General Electric** completed the first full year of court-mandated dredging to remove toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) from a stretch of the Hudson heavily afflicted by dumping from GE plants at Fort Edward and nearby Hudson Falls. At a February meeting to review initial results from Phase 1 of the massive cleanup, project managers from each side presented sharply conflicting information as to what had happened.

Unexpected setbacks had occurred, EPA has admitted, including "sediment-contamination in some areas that was deeper than expected." But with an estimated 265,000 cubic yards of PCB-laden sediments removed, "established goals" for Phase 1 had been more than met. While dredging operations had caused more PCBs to escape into the river than had been anticipated, reported the *Albany Times-Union*, EPA claimed that in only three instances had federal drinking water safety standards been exceeded.

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January/February 2010

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Atlantic CoastWatch

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Sayings

*(What follows was written by **Linwood Pendleton**, director of Ocean and Coastal Policy at The Nicholas Institute of Environmental Policy Solutions at **Duke University**. The article was first published in the Bangor Daily News, February 8, 2010.)*

If you want to understand the economic and cultural importance of the ocean, you need look no farther than the coast of Maine. For the last 10 years, I've watched the comings and goings of seafaring folks on Cobscook Bay. I'm one of those nonresident taxpayers, those people from away, who show up at odd times of the year to soak in the Maine coast. Through rain, sun and tropical storms, my daughter and I have spent summers camping on our property in North Lubec, waking early to watch the seals and lobstermen make their rounds.

It is easy to think of the ocean as a vast resource, but it only takes a few days on the waters of Cobscook Bay to realize how crowded parts of the ocean have become. In North Lubec, the bay is narrow enough to row across, yet this small body of water is home to lobstering, clamming, periwinkle and rockweed harvesting, salmon aquaculture, whale watching and proposals for liquid natural gas plants and tidal power. Second-home owners, hotels and fishermen compete for coastal access and waterfront.

Add to that the fact that the bay is bordered by the U.S., the Passamaquoddy Tribe and Canada and split up the middle by a shipping channel and you wonder how anything happens on the bay without ending up in a fistfight (and sometimes it does).

The challenges of managing ocean uses in this little piece of paradise are not unique to Maine. Nationwide, we require a lot from our seas — from fishing to shipping and energy development. Right now our oceans and coasts are governed by more than 140 laws and 20 different agencies, each with different goals and often conflicting mandates. There's no unifying policy or coordination in planning.

Instead, we evaluate development plans on a "first come, first served" basis. The result is ocean sprawl, with little thought given to selecting the best places for particular uses. This pressures our already-stressed oceans more than we need to, and jeopardizes the food, jobs and recreation they provide.

The **Obama** administration has proposed a new national ocean policy that could provide a more consistent and rational approach to dealing with our crowded oceans. Like a Clean Air Act for our air or a Clean Water Act for our water, a national ocean policy could provide a framework to make sure that our oceans and coasts live up to their economic and ecological potential. From rejuvenating fish populations to reducing pollution, from dealing with the challenges of sea level rise to protecting ocean jobs and communities, a national ocean policy could strengthen the country's ability to manage the ocean as a system, not a collection of lots of parts.

As part of the president's proposed national ocean policy, the administration is working to create a state-federal partnership for coastal and marine spatial planning to help identify a better approach to coordinating uses in an increasingly crowded ocean. This process could help ensure that all levels of government, business interests, fisheries managers and conservation groups participate in decision-making and reach a common understanding of the goals of managing areas so that they can work to achieve them.

Sayings, Continued

The administration has announced an ambitious timeline for developing and implementing regional ocean plans over the next three to five years, but much of the details of the plan will be left to states and regions. That means Mainers will have an unprecedented opportunity to plan for the ocean they want — not just along the shores of Cobscook Bay, but for the Gulf of Maine as a whole.

Mainers will need to start thinking about what exactly the state wants from its ocean. For example, how much of the state's and region's power should come from ocean sources such as wind and tidal energy? How many fishing jobs are critical to the state's culture? How much protection do Maine's coast and ocean require? We need to support the administration's effort to create a more rational and forward-thinking national ocean policy and a framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning.

Ultimately, though, the national ocean policy will only be as good as we make it. When the federal process unfolds, everyone in the state who cares about the ocean should take the time to invest in this process. Maine can lead the region and the country.

(On February 9 the blog *Climate Progress* posted this comment by **Jeff Masters**, director of meteorology for the **Weather Underground**):

A major new winter storm is headed east over the U.S. today, and threatens to dump a foot or more of snow on Philadelphia, New York City, and surrounding regions Tuesday and Wednesday. Philadelphia is still digging out from its second top-ten snowstorm of recorded history to hit the city this winter, and the streets are going to begin looking like canyons if this week's snowstorm adds a significant amount of snow to the incredible 28.5" that fell during "Snowmageddon" last Friday and Saturday

Philadelphia has had two snowstorms exceeding 23" this winter. According to the **National Climatic Data Center**, the return period for a 22+ inch snow storm is once every 100 years—and we've had two 100-year snow storms in Philadelphia this winter. It is true that if the winter pattern of jet stream location, sea surface temperatures, etc, are suitable for a 100-year storm to form, that will increase the chances for a second such storm to occur that same year, and thus the odds have having two 100-year storms the same year are not 1 in 10,000.

Still, the two huge snowstorms this winter in the Mid-Atlantic are definitely a very rare event one should see only once every few hundred years. The situation is similar for Baltimore and Washington D.C. According to the [National Climatic Data Center](#), the expected return period in the Washington D.C./Baltimore region for snowstorms with more than 16 inches of snow is about once every 25 years. This one-two punch of two major Nor'easters in one winter with 16+ inches of snow is unprecedented in the historical record for the region, which goes back to the late 1800s.

Media

In 1998 *Pantheon* published **Red Tails in Love** by **Marie Winn**, the striking story of raptors that nested on an apartment building overlooking New York's Central Park. Now comes **Frederic Lilien's** **The Legend of Pale Male**, an award-winning documentary film named after the alpha hawk in this gripping show. Contact: info @thelegendofpalemale.com

People

Senator Charles McC Mathias, Maryland liberal Republican, who over 26 years proposed legislation to protect the Chesapeake Bay, the Antietam National Battlefield, Assateague Island, and pressed for creation of the C&O National Historical Park, died in January at the age of 87. "While the bay's recovery remains in doubt, its prospects would be far worse today had the inestimable Senator Mathias not taken up its cause," the *Baltimore Sun* stated.

Awards

Herman Daly, ecological economist, **University of Maryland**, received the lifetime achievement award from the National Council for Science and the Environment, for his leadership in the field of science, policy and the environment. Conventional economics fails to account for the true costs of environmental degradation, he maintains.

Species & Habitats

The **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission** (ASMFC) reported that, while horseshoe crab abundance has increased in the Southeast and Delaware regions, it has decrease in New York and New England. Technical experts believe that the reason for the shift is that tighter harvest quotas in Delaware Bay, where horseshoe crab eggs are important to several migratory shorebird species, "encouraged increased harvest in nearby regions" In response, the ASMFC has proposed tighter controls in those regions. In May, its board will consider these measures.

Cold winter weather extending to South Florida prompted an unusual action on the part of the Florida Power and Light Company, reported Planet Ark. For years, dozens of manatees had gathered at an outlet from its Riviera Power Plant into the Intracoastal Waterway where heated water mixes with natural water to result in an "attractively balmy temperature" for the "bulky, wrinkly, and endangered sea mammals." Last year

the plant was shut for modernization. But when winter hit this year, the company created a special discharge system to warm the water near the outlet. Close to 400 shivering manatees obliged, huddling close to the balmy greenish waters.

Rescue operations were needed for another winter-troubled species: the brown pelicans that in recent years have extended their range from the U.S. Southeast up into the Chesapeake Bay, where 2,000 of them now nest each summer. Late last year, when winter cold hit the Chesapeake, some 40 of these birds failed to migrate back south and remained stranded on a windy southern Maryland beach and, reported the *Washington Post*, were “starving, freezing, and in danger of dying.” Wildlife officials scooped up 29 of these birds and took them to a rehabilitation center where, at last count, 23 had been treated with warm foot baths and were surviving.

For decades the US military has been increasingly mindful that the spacious landscape on many of its bases provide great habitat for wildlife including some endangered species. Protection and management measures are especially important at air bases, where a flock of birds in the wrong place can wipe out a \$40 million jet engine. In a recent article, the *New York Times* highlighted the military’s efforts. Examples cited include the Army’s partnerships in Georgia with the **Georgia Land Trust**, the **Nature Conservancy** and the state’s **Department of Natural Resources** to protect land near Fort Stewart and the **Marine Corps’** Townsend Range. Post commanders favor such moves, said the paper, since “the more the endangered plants and animals thrive, the fewer restrictions are put on training exercises to avoid destroying habitat.”

A recent **National Park Service** photo shows a ranger standing on a road, holding the tail of a huge snake that appears to be at least double his length. This Burmese python is one of 9 alien constrictor species of comparably impressive dimensions, which together form a substantial portion of (would you believe it?) the pet trade.

DC Bag Tax Helps River

Bag fee proposals have been on the dockets in many communities, but **Washington, D.C.** is one of the first to formally institute one. As of January 1, 2010, shoppers were asked to pay 5 cents for every plastic or paper disposable bag used when buying food or alcohol.

Additionally, under the statute, all carry out bags provided are required to be 100% recyclable, and be printed with the message “Please recycle this bag.” There are still some wrinkles to be ironed out in the proposed regulations, but the program will soon become law after a public comment period.

The goal of the District’s “**Skip the Bag, Save the River**” initiative is to raise \$12 million for its **Department of the Environment** to help clean up the badly polluted Anacostia River and generally reduce pollution in the Chesapeake watershed. Of the 5 cent fee, the stores get to keep one cent and the rest goes to the Office of Tax Revenue. Fines will be instituted for stores that don’t comply.

People seem to be catching onto the new shopping habit. Reusable bags are available in trendy designs, or promoting worthy causes. Signs in stores remind you to bring them from the car.

There is also a noticeable ripple effect: residents in nearby Maryland and Virginia are volunteering in the effort, and retailers are apt to ask “do you want a bag?” rather than “paper or plastic?” The *Baltimore Sun* published a post from staffer **Andy Green** raising the question of why its city council had not “simply followed the lead of the successful effort to reduce plastic bag use in Washington” which, said the author, has already cut it in half.

Saving the Chesapeake

Last spring **President Obama** launched an executive order labeling the Chesapeake as a “national treasure” and labeling it as a test case for restoration of troubled coastal water with leadership from federal agencies. Money and senior staff were tossed into the pot, with the selection at yearend of **EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson** as chairwoman of the multi-agency **Chesapeake Bay Program**.

Jackson’s close involvement, reported *Baltimore Sun* blogger **Tim Wheeler**, heralds a new era of progress on Bay cleanup after decades of missed deadlines and targets. But though her agency’s initial responses on paper were “light on carrots and heavy on sticks,” said the *Washington Post*, the jury was still out on how tough its follow-through would be, with the cleanup deadline rolled back from 2010 to 2025. “Bring on the sticks,” argued the paper.

In reaction, a coalition of local-level politicians, scientists and others put out a 24-point plan that, reported *AP*, is “much tougher” than what EPA has brought forth so far, featuring tight standards for pollution from farms and development. The **Chesapeake Bay Foundation** threatened to revive a lawsuit that had been tabled to leave time for negotiations.

And, said environmental writer **Tom Horton** in a *Washington Post* column, what is required is no less than an overhaul of the Clean Water Act to toughen federal controls on polluted runoff from farms and “impervious surfaces” associated with development. Though passage of such a measure is politically a challenge, Horton continued, it is “the best, if not only, chance in sight to achieve a restored Chesapeake by 2025.”

Controlling Cruise Ship Pollution

Despite the ailing economy and the resultant cutback in elective travel, the North American cruise ship industry continues to grow. “When it comes to vacations, cruising is the best deal financially for many people” said **Marcie Keever** of **Friends of the Earth** (FoE) as quoted in the *Ethical Traveler* blog. Public support for the industry is sturdy. Ports that in recent times have been badly affected economically by reductions in container ship traffic are anxious to have the revenues that the ever bigger cruise ships bring in, and are encouraging their visits.

A report prepared by **Ross Klein**, *Getting a Grip on Cruise Ship Pollution*, was released in early December by FoE. In it, Klein delineates the environmental impacts of the ships. In one week a moderate sized cruise ship, carrying 2200 passengers and 800 in crew, will produce 210,000 gallons of black water (sewage), one million gallons of gray water, 25,000 gallons of oily bilge water and eight tons of garbage. Ships also emit a large amount of carbon dioxide and particulates from burning bunker fuel, both at sea and in port.

In reaction, some states have put in their own regulations, but these are only partly effective. While Maine prohibits the discharge of gray water and treated sewage into state waters, that boundary is a scant three miles off shore. The port of Los Angeles has installed a “plug-in” facility which allows ships to turn off their engines while at the dock. Other ports will follow that lead, but not all ships are equipped to use such power sources.

Environmentalists and some politicians seek tougher national policy. Klein’s report supports a review of federal policy and a strengthening of regulations. Two bills, both titled “The Clean Cruise Ship Act,” were presented in Congress last fall. They await review by the **House Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation**. Their intent: “to amend the Federal Pollution Control Act to establish national standards for discharges from cruise vessels.”

Cape Wind, Again

In previous issues of this newsletter, we have fearlessly cited sources predicting the imminent approval and launch of the famous **Cape Wind** windpower project in Nantucket Sound. But we and they way underestimated the power of local Native Americans, who have managed to get the site listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a new obstacle. With new legal challenges brewing, further delays are now possible with many weary observers, including the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, urging **Interior Secretary Salazar** to damn the torpedoes and at last get an important project moving.

With Appreciation

Atlantic CoastWatch extends especially warm thanks to **Nelse L. Greenway** and **Freeborn G. Jewett, Jr.** for timely and most generous donations recently received. Likewise, we extend our hearty appreciation to these others providing new increments of support:

William C. Baker
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John S. Chatfield
Robert and Jane Geniesse
Christopher M. Weld

Last year **US Fish and Wildlife Service** inspectors handled more than 27,000 shipments of these creatures valued at more than \$1 billion or 16% of all wildlife imports. As we have previously noted, these enemyless giants can reach 20 feet in length and 200 pounds in weight. They have feasted on many native animal species in places such as the Everglades National Park, and spread into residential subdivisions where they are seen as a threat to domestic animals and even people.

Now **Interior Secretary Ken Salazar** has moved to have the 9 species of “injurious wildlife” under the Lacey Act, banning them from importation and interstate transportation. “A good start,” said the *New York Times*. A public comment period, now underway, precedes final action expected in the spring.

Restorations

In older times giant Atlantic sturgeons, ancient fish as much as ten feet long, left the oceans and crowded into Chesapeake Bay waters during their annual spawning runs. Now the species is all but extinct in the region. But recently, reports the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, scientists at **Virginia Commonwealth University** found a few babies in the James River. In partnership with the **James River Association**, they have taken a new step to bolster this tiny population, estimated at fewer than 300 adults using the James to spawn. With help from **Luck Stone Corporation** and two construction firms, they have put in place a rocky underwater reef to which, they hope, sturgeon eggs will attach and grow.

They will monitor the site this spring and, said the association’s **Chuck Frederickson**, “If we find an egg, that’s the holy grail. That will tell us a fish actually spawned here.” Meantime, reported *Bay Journal*, the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** is considering adding the Atlantic sturgeon, which saved early colonists from starvation, to the endangered species list.

Products

Brown University in a typical year distributes 250,000 plastic bottles of water on campus. When the Beyond the Bottle Campaign started, university usage dropped to 210,000 bottles. Students are planning to get that number to zero by the end of this year. **Ari Rubenstein**, campaign leader, told the *Providence Journal* that “we’re well along on this, and we’ll make it happen.” This makes Brown the first Ivy League school to try to stop the use of plastic-bottled water, noted the paper.

Baltimore refused to allow **Maxine Taylor** to keep her wood mulch driveway, installed to prevent polluting runoff, and fined her (\$66 reduced to \$35) for this “cleaner and greener” effort, NBC Washington reported. Some greens expressed shock at the city’s action. Mulching driveways, *NBC Washington* reported, is encouraged in nearby Falls Church, Va., where mulch is delivered by the town for free. Additionally, mulching driveways to reduce stormwater runoff is regarded as a good idea in at least these Florida places: Casselberry, St. Lucie and Seminole counties. Using mulch on driveways and walkways results in less stormwater runoff and abates stormwater management costs, noted a fact sheet from stormwatercenter.net. It added that installing and maintaining mulch was not costly.

The city’s move against Taylor’s driveway got support, however, in a letter to the *Baltimore Sun* from **Michael Braverman**, deputy commissioner for code enforcement, **Baltimore Housing Department**. He said that wood chips on driveways “will break down and eventually end up going into the storm drains, potentially clogging that system. Also organic material lowers dissolved oxygen that causes fish kills, among other things.”

Greener Golf

Environmentally sustainable golf facility management is moving ahead this year with the new **Environmental Institute for Golf and Audubon Lifestyles** (AL) in the vanguard. The Institute, part of the **Golf Course Superintendents Association of America**, will develop best management practices (BMPs) that golf course superintendents can use to demonstrate and document environmental progress, noted **Mark J. Woodward**, chief executive of the association. He said, “The debate should not be about where we are or where we are not, but on whether there is a concerted effort for improvement. Golf’s Drive Toward Sustainability represents that effort.”

The program will concentrate on golf facilities’ most pressing issues: water conservation, water quality protection and energy conservation, Woodward stated.

AL’s Sustainable Golf Facility Program is intended to focus on reducing consumption of non-renewable resources, minimizing waste and broadcasting the benefits of sustainably managed golf facilities. The relationship between economic, environmental and social concerns is not always intuitively obvious, but the three issues are nevertheless intimately connected, AL noted.

Hudson PCBs, Continued from p. 1

There were ten such violations, countered GE project manager **John Haggard**, who also challenged EPA’s figure for the amount of sediments removed and offered a lower figure. Haggard reiterated the company’s frequent claim that dredging had moved more PCBs downriver compared to doing nothing.

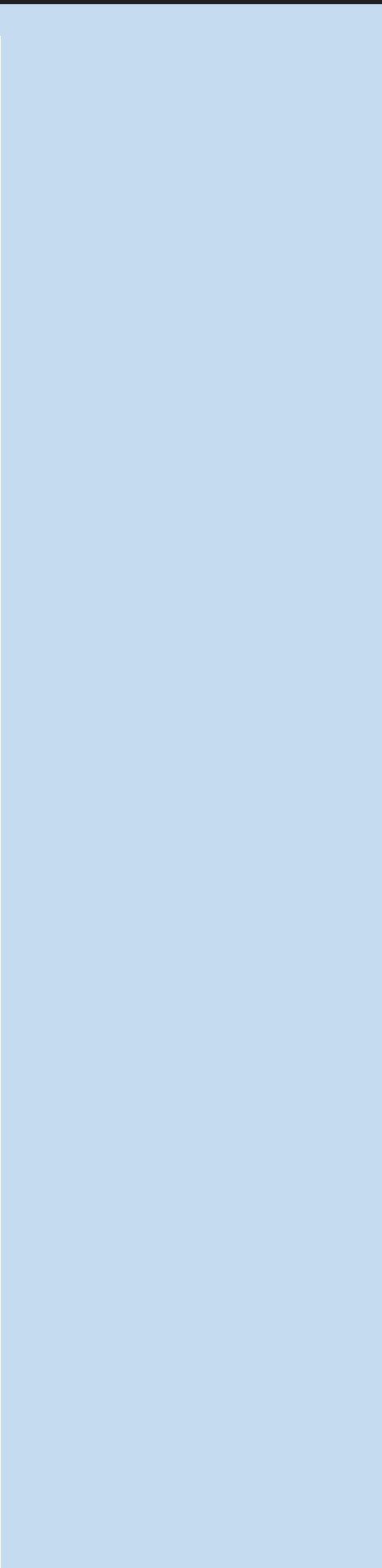
If the project is allowed to continue unchanged, added the paper, GE’s claim is that “the current process would leave a swath of stirred-up PCBs that would negate any benefits from the expensive project.”

For its Phase 2, due to begin next year and last about 5 years, GE consulting engineer **John Connolly** proposed tripling the quantity of PCBs that could be left undredged and covered up with fill or a hardened “cap.” This, he said, was the only “practical solution.” This spring the review panel will consider this among many other recommendations, and on May 28 submit a draft report proposing future design changes. According to the agreement between GE and EPA, reported the paper, the company can withdraw from the world’s biggest Superfund project if it “determines that the project design is not practical and effective. EPA could then either proceed unilaterally or go to court.

Atlantic Garbage Patch Described

At a recent ocean sciences meeting in Portland, ME, scientists from the Sea Education Association said they had discovered a portion of the North Atlantic where accumulations of plastic debris comparable to the well-known ones in the so-called Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

The researchers, reported BBC News, had conducted 6,100 tows in the Caribbean and North Atlantic with the highest concentrations of plastics occurring between 22 and 38 degrees north latitude. “The word ‘patch’ can be misleading, said scientist **Kara Lavender Law**. Though the maximum density found was 200,00 pieces of plastic per square kilometer, most of these were small.





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