

# Oklahoma Sierran

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## Just Say "No" to Euphemisms *by Paul Moore*

Q: What do all of these Bush era administrative and legislative titles share?

1. "Clear Skies Initiative"
2. The "Healthy Forests Restoration Act"
3. The "National Defense Authorization Act"

A: They all are euphemisms: "...substitution of an agreeable or non-offensive word or expression for one that is harsh, indelicate, or otherwise unpleasant..." Webster's New International Dictionary

The Clear Skies Initiative will allow the air to become dirtier than the laws that it replaces. In lieu of reasonable and enforceable air quality standards a complicated system of credit trading will allow utilities to sell the right to pollute the air we breathe. After Enron is there any question about the ability of energy companies to game the marketplace? In conjunction with the end of New Source Review, a program that assured

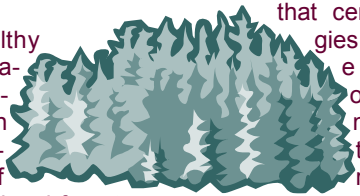
continual environmental improvement as energy plants grow and expand, the Bush administration's Clear Skies Initiative guarantees just the opposite.

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act will destroy old-growth forests and deprive citizens of their place in national forest management. Hundreds of thousands of acres located miles from the nearest human habitations will be opened up to logging. Forest planning will be allowed to proceed without the kind of public oversight that has proven necessary to protect our remaining wild lands. Once again our shared inheritance will be turned over to the government experts and their corporate partners, the same team that never met a clear-cut they didn't like. The first syllable in "restoration" is "rest", and that is exactly what the forests

need.

The National Defense Authorization Act will allow unneeded exemptions to the Endangered Species Act so that certain technologies harmful to endangered ocean mammals can be tested without regard to basic environmental protections. Are our best scientists really so clueless that they can't design a test that avoids indiscriminate damage to rare species? No, but this opens the door a crack for future exemptions for other programs. With an administration that sees a need for low-yield nuclear weapons, such a precedence could be valuable.

If Washington had a "truth in naming" law we might be listening as television anchors announce that the house has just passed the "National Forests (Continued on Page 3)



## The Secret Life of A Cola *by Susie Shields*

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality has provided a series of articles such as this one based on the book, Stuff--The Secret Lives of Everyday Things by John C. Ryan, encouraging citizens to think about the consequences of their consumption.

This article outlines the "ecological wake" of cola (aka soda pop). Americans drink more water carbonated in soda than they drink plain from the tap. The world drinks about 70 million gallons of soda every day. Following are the resources used to get you that can of pop.

**Corn Syrup.** The cola contained high-fructose corn syrup

from Iowa, a state where even the rain usually contains traces of pesticides. A milling plant used water, enzymes, acids, heat, grinders, and centrifuges to turn corn kernels into starch and then corn syrup. Making syrup is the second largest use of corn in North America; feeding livestock is the largest. On average, Americans consume 48 pounds of corn syrup a year.

To make your cola, the bottling plant combined corn syrup, citric acid, and flavor concentrate (a secret recipe containing flavors, preservatives, caffeine, and artificial coloring) first with water and then with carbon dioxide. The same corn-milling plant in Iowa

fermented corn to make the carbon dioxide. The caffeine was a by-product of making decaffeinated coffee.

**Bauxite.** Your last cola was in an aluminum can weighing 15 grams (about half an ounce). Five grams was recycled from melted-down cans and scrap. The other 10 grams began as 40 grams of bauxite ore in the Australian outback. Massive machines with 15-foot-high tires and shovels big enough to scoop up a car, strip-mined the ore from a thin layer of underground (Continued on Page 2)



# Chair's Corner

by Tom Libby

## One Small Step . . . One Giant Leap . . .

Neil Armstrong was a fighter pilot in the Korean War. If you would have asked him then what he'd be doing a dozen years later, I doubt he would have replied, "Standing on the moon." It would have seemed inconceivable. But because of several small steps made by Armstrong; from fighter pilot, to test pilot, to astronaut, and many other small steps made by NASA, the **giant leap** happened.

That's true for just about everything. There really aren't that many true big leaps. It's the **small steps** we take that add up over time to be **giant leaps**.

Like me for instance. When I joined the Sierra Club in 1992, if you would have asked me what I'd be doing today, "Chapter Chair" would never have come up. Besides, back then, I didn't even know the difference between the Chapter and the Group. All I wanted to do was go backpacking. It would have seemed inconceivable for me to become Chapter Chair. But here I am. And, although it would have been a **giant leap** from outing participant to chapter chair, it was really just a **small step** from my last position with the club.

**Now it's important for you to take your next small step in the Sierra Club.** Whatever that next small step is—attending a monthly meeting, volunteering at an event, leading an outing, calling or writing your representative, helping with trail maintenance, or becoming a committee chair. Because, if everyone takes the next **small step for the Sierra Club**, it will be a **giant leap** for Oklahoma's environment.

**Won't you take just one small step?**



rock. Bauxite mining destroys more surface area than mining of any other ore.

Near the mine, the bauxite was crushed, washed, dried, pulverized, mixed with caustic soda from California, heated, pressurized, settled, filtered, and roasted with calcium oxide from Japan. Forty grams of bauxite yielded 20 grams of the aluminum oxide powder known as alumina, which looks like wet sugar crystals. Most of the caustic soda was captured for reuse. The process also created 16 grams of "red mud", a skin-burning mixture of oxidized metals and other contaminants. Pipes siphoned the mud to a settling pond, where a fraction of it leached into groundwater.



A Korean freighter hauled the alumina across the Pacific Ocean to the wall of breakers at the Columbia River bar, the four-mile-wide river mouth that Lewis and Clark called "that seven-shouldered horror." The ship's captain used sonar and satellite linkups to plot his course through the bar's chaotic waves and shifting sands. He motored between the two-mile-long jetties. He entered the deep channel dredged into the Columbia's shallow estuary by the Army Corps of Engineers. Jetties, dikes, and dredges have washed away or filled in two-thirds of the river's tidal marshes. Tidal marshes and other estuary habitats are nurse beds for aquatic life, sheltering young fish, birds, and many other animals.

Despite all the electronic gadgetry and all the effort to tame the river, the bar—where the misnamed Pacific Ocean and the biggest river on the west coast of the Americas pound against each other—remained the most dangerous part of the freighter's 24-day journey. Once past the entrance, it was smooth sailing up-river toward the aluminum smelter in eastern Washington.

**Smelting.** The smelter dissolved the aluminum oxide in giant steel pots filled with a bath of cryolite (sodium aluminum fluoride). Carbon electrodes (made from Alaskan petroleum) were lowered into the pots and delivered a massive 100,000-amp jolt of electricity. The powerful charge broke oxygen atoms away from the aluminum and attached them to the carbon, forming carbon dioxide. Small amounts of fluorine attached to the carbon and escaped the smelter in the form of perfluorocarbons (PFCs)—greenhouse gases that trap thousands of times more heat per mole-

cule than carbon dioxide. Few processes are as damaging to the global climate as aluminum smelting.

**Electricity.** The smelter ran on purchased hydropower 24 hours a day. The smelter bought the electricity at discount rates from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), the Pacific Northwest's main provider of electricity. BPA markets power from 29 federal dams and a nuclear power plant. Eight of these dams along the main stems of the Columbia and Snake Rivers annually kill millions of young salmon heading to the Pacific. Dams, damaged stream habitats, hatcheries, and overfishing have eliminated more than 97 percent of wild salmon in the Columbia Basin.

**Aluminum** smelters use almost one-fifth of the electricity sold by BPA, but the eight aluminum smelters in Oregon and Washington provide only about 7,500 jobs—one-tenth of 1 percent of the regional total. The same smelters drink up to 16 percent of all electricity used in the two states—more than the million residents of Portland and Seattle combined. The average household served by BPA pays about \$2 per month extra to subsidize the smelters.

**Can.** The smelters' end products—giant slabs, or ingots, of aluminum—were trucked to the Seattle area. There, a mill pressed each thick ingot into a thin rolled sheet of aluminum. Then, at another factory, a high-powered press punched your can out to its final height, trimmed its edge, printed its colorful design, and applied a clear protective varnish. Ovens baked the can twice, once to dry the printing and once to cure a synthetic coating sprayed on the inside of the can. At the bottling plant, machines filled the can with near-freezing soda and immediately crimped the top on.

The can cost more than the soda inside. If you threw your cola can into a recycling bin, it was one of 100 billion beverage cans used each year in the United States—40 billion are tossed into landfills, and 60 billion are recycled. Your can was later trucked to a recycling center, shredded, and melted down. Within two months of being tossed, it reappeared as a new can. Recycling the can took 5 percent of the energy required to mine and smelt a fresh one.



**What to Do?** Drink less soda. It's just fizzy sugar water. Have some water instead.

# Book Review

## “The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy Sustainable Agriculture,” by James E. Horne and Maura McDermott

“Farming in the United States today truly stands at a fork in the road to the future,” writes John E. Ikerd, a professor of agriculture economics at the University of Missouri in the foreword to “The Next Green Revolution: Essential Steps to a Healthy Sustainable Agriculture,” by Jim Horne and Maura McDermott (Haworth Press, \$34.95)

Horne and McDermott know firsthand about the crisis facing America’s, and closer to home, Oklahoma’s farmers. In addition to being a part-time farmer, Horne also serves as the president and CEO of The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Poteau, Okla., where his education and career have been devoted to helping Oklahoma’s agricultural community find new and better ways of doing business. McDermott is the center’s communications director.

For those unfamiliar with the Kerr Center, a non-profit, its mission is simple: To encourage what might be called a more holistic approach to agriculture, but what is commonly known as sustainable agriculture in the state of Oklahoma and beyond. The center’s Web site defines sustainable agriculture as, “environmentally responsible, profitable for family farmers, and equitable, giving farmers fair prices, fair access to markets, maximum opportunities, and a good quality of life.” And as an added value to the mission, rural communities, whose heart and soul are linked to the fate of the farmer, are also given a leg up when farmers succeed.

“The Next Green Revolution” brings the challenges facing today’s farmers into sharp and somewhat alarming focus with a wealth of sobering and grim statistics. This doesn’t mean the news is all bad, but with a clarity and precision that even the least business-oriented reader will find accessible, they not only indict the current status quo of industrial agriculture, but offer a series of succinct steps for envisioning a new and revitalized agricultural world.

In Oklahoma, where corn really is as high as an elephant’s eye and agriculture is as synonymous with the state as the wind sweeping down the plain, it’s easy for urban dwellers to lose sight of the role agriculture plays. Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation in the production of all wheat, fourth in cattle and calf production; fifth in the production of pecans; sixth in peanuts and eighth in peaches.

But as Horne and McDermott so eloquently point out, high production yields do not necessarily a rosy economic picture make. Due to short-run economic thinking, the profit margin of farms are now so low that the small farm has all but disappeared, replaced by large, publicly held corporate farms with no connection to the land, whose bottom line is the greatest amount of profit period. Tracing the evolution of agriculture over the past 50 years, including the now ubiquitous use of pesticides, herbicides, confined animal operations, and so on, they show the fallacies in the status quo: depleted and degraded soil, polluted water supplies, a

weakened genetic base in both crops and livestock. But perhaps most importantly, they tell the reader what’s in it for them by connecting the impact and ramifications of today’s agriculture system to the present and future.

Today’s system is destined to fail, with grave implications for every citizen, which is what takes this book beyond being merely an excellent manual for farmers looking to reinvent their business, and into the realm of reading for everyday people. The impact of the disappearing family farm and today’s mammoth corporate industrial farms are only part of the problem. And while they explain the problems facing agriculture today, the real focus of Horne and McDermott’s book is on solutions, which are neither simple nor short-term, but are based in the concept that a healthy agricultural enterprise is one that takes into account the really big picture – a farm’s every action, seeds, water, soil, livestock and the impact of each on the other.

Imagine a farm being like the self-contained and self-sustaining ecosystems contained in glass spheres, and the gift of “The Next Green Revolution” becomes apparent: Greater independence and economic security, not only for the farmer but for the end-user, the majority of whom surveys show, would prefer to eat locally grown and produced food, grown with as few chemicals as possible. “The Next Green Revolution” looks beyond short-term gain to long-term profit, and with a sprinkling of humor, gentle admonitions, and the wisdom of experience, paints a realistic, powerful and positive vision for Oklahoma’s and ultimately America’s agricultural future.

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Article first appeared in the  
Oklahoma Gazette

### Euphemisms (Continued from Page 1)

Destruction Act” or the “Great Whale Extinction Authorization Act”. The president would be taped standing in the Rose Garden touting the “Dirty Skies/Dark Lung Initiative”.

One of the purposes of this type of subterfuge is to bamboozle the headline reading public into thinking their elected officials are acting in their best interest. Another is to provide a limited amount of cover to those politicians who want to link anti-environmental legislation to popular, higher-priority issues such as national defense and evade accountability for the results. The most devious purpose, however, is to hide a strategy that might be exposed if the titles were accurate. Is the purpose of employing such obvious euphemisms simply camouflage for a well-planned war on environmental protection? Is this what is going on?

A previous administration produced the litmus test for evaluating this slippery language: “It depends on what your definition of “is” is.” This is one philosophy that seems to have legs inside the beltway.



*Editor's Note: Interested in sustainable agriculture? The Oklahoma Chapter has purchased several copies of the reviewed book and will sell them to interested members for a 50% discount. Contact Susie Shields (see Directory on Page 4) for details. More comments about the book can be found on this link: <http://www.kerrcenter.com/kerrweb/HTML/green.html>*



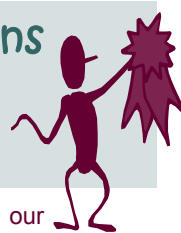
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### Congratulations to Tom Libby!

by David Franklin



Congratulations to our Chapter Chair, Tom Libby, for his selection as Oklahoma's volunteer of the year by the American Hiking Society for his efforts to preserve and maintain several of the state's hiking trails. Tom received the honor for improving trails by gardening, trimming and repairing them as well as picking up trash. He has tended to trails in the Beech Creek area of southeast Oklahoma, Beaver's Bend State Park and other southeastern Oklahoma parks.

Tom joined the Sierra Club in 1992 and while on outdoor excursions with the club, became interested in volunteering. He realized that trails didn't just appear, and if he was going to hike or backpack on a trail, he should do his part to help maintain it.

Tom said he never hikes on trails he has worked on because it's like trying to get away from the office. If you see a stick, you can't keep on going. Some trails are hard to find because of years of neglect and ice and thunderstorms can damage trails. Often, eight to twelve people will often go out and work on a section of a trail.

The American Hiking Society named one volunteer from each state. Each winner will receive a certificate and a pair of hiking boots.

### Environmental Education Update

by Susie Shields

The Oklahoma Chapter continually provides support for environmental education (EE) projects in Oklahoma. During May, we co-sponsored the annual Tar Creek Conference in Miami organized by Rebecca Jim and Earl Hatley. This conference was originally designed to call attention to the problems with the nation's #1 superfund site. The conference has been instrumental in getting bureaucrats off their duff to do something about this travesty in northeast Oklahoma.

In June, we co-sponsored the Windpower and Bioenergy Conference in Norman and the Oklahoma Consortium for EE Leadership Clinic at the OKC Zoo. The EE clinic brought in eight teams from throughout the state for an intense three-day event, alternating full group sessions and team planning sessions. Participants met many EE resource folks (including our own Tom Libby and David Franklin who represented the Club) and received resource notebooks to take home. They all left with an action plan for improving the environment or promoting environmental education in their communities. Teams attending the clinic hailed from Anadarko, Broken Arrow, Altus, Bristow, Stillwater, Hugo and two from the Oklahoma City area. If you are from one of these areas and want to know more about the action plan, contact me (see Directory above).

### Nature Conservancy Planning Purchase

A ribbon of life-giving water nestled amid the sculpted canyons of arid West Texas, the Devils River is a crucial contributor to water for people and wildlife. On Thursday, The Nature Conservancy of

Texas announced it has signed a contract to purchase 87,760 acres to protect the Devils River, considered the most pristine river in the state.

Comprising eight historic ranches in Val Verde County, the land surrounds the Devils' headwaters and includes eight miles of the 60-mile-long river. The Conservancy plans to protect the property with conservation easements permanently restricting development and subdivision, and sell it to a buyer or buyers committed to conservation. The deal is believed to be the largest private conservation effort ever undertaken in Texas.

The Devils River provides habitat for fish species found nowhere else on Earth. Its canyons support nesting endangered black-capped vireos and endangered Texas snowbells, and its wooded banks provide critical migration corridors for songbirds, raptors and monarch butterflies. From its abundant springs, the river contributes more than 22,000 gallons a minute to water for human needs as it flows south to Lake Amistad on the Texas-Mexico border. The lake provides agricultural irrigation for the region.