

High Country News

November 21, 1988

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A Paper for People who Care about the West

One dollar



Election results from 13 western states

The West voted left, right and center

If you can call a place of one million square miles a microcosm, then the West was a microcosm of the nation in this presidential election.

Four and eight years ago, Reagan's anti-big government, anti-taxation, pro-individual initiative fit in perfectly with the West's system of beliefs. But George Bush struck no such responsive chords here this fall, and his election wins were lackluster compared to the 20 to 30 percent margins racked up Reagan. As a result, Bush's coattails did not exist.

The failure of the campaign to address national issues — issues that could make Bush's presidency very difficult from the start — extended to Western issues. When the greenhouse effect, the ozone layer, toxic waste dumps and a national energy policy can't get a fair hearing, it is not surprising that Western issues like public land management, grazing fees, nuclear waste dumps and water policy also remain invisible.

Bush's presidency won't rise or fall on these Western issues. But they make up part of the array of issues that have been avoided rather than confronted over the past eight years. How Bush and his team deal with those problems will determine, and perhaps rather quickly, the fate of his administration.

In the absence of compelling issues and strong personalities on the national level, the real races in the region were for county commissioner, ballot questions, state legislatures and gubernatorial and U.S. Senate seats. Western voters didn't just cross, but crisscrossed party lines, splitting tickets and producing a confusing mix of results.

Montana Republicans engineered a landslide that registered high on the political Richter scale. Seeking a way out from under the economic black cloud of recent years, voters elected a new set of leaders: They installed a Republican governor, threw the state Senate to the GOP, and most surprisingly, replaced veteran Democrat Sen. John Melcher with untried Republican Conrad Burns.

On a smaller scale, economic backlash struck the Republicans in western Colorado. The Democrats took over Mesa County's (Grand Junction) board of county commissioners — a reaction to the enormous debt piled up by pro-development Republicans during and after the oil shale boom.

And in neighboring Grand County (Moab), Utah, voters rejected a proposed toxic waste incinerator as undesirable economic growth and threw out two Republican commissioners who supported

the project. The county will now pursue tourist dollars under Democratic leadership.

Statewide, Utah voters rejected three separate tax limitation initiatives proposed by the far right and gave Republican Gov. Norman Bangerter another term, rejecting what had seemed like an unbeatable campaign by Democrat Ted Wilson.

Southern Idaho's congressional seat, once held by far right radical George Hansen, is now firmly in the hands of moderate Democrat Richard Stallings.

In Nevada, the issue was the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump, and voters purged a Reagan Republican from the U.S. Senate for the second election in a row, sending Democratic Gov. Richard Bryan instead to Washington, D.C., to fight off the nuclear dragon.

Republicans in Arizona showed their strength by surviving the Mechem debacle and retaining hold of the state Legislature. Next door, New Mexico Democrats won back the state Senate and increased their control of the House. The results in the two Sun Belt states will be critical in two years, when the Legislatures re-draw congressional districts following the 1990 census.

Personal appeal was a quirky factor in this year's elections. In one term, rural western Colorado and the city of Pueblo have taken Democrat Ben Nighthorse Campbell to their hearts. In the past, Colorado's 3rd Congressional District has been an unstable seat. Now Campbell is so popular he only had token opposition.

But Colorado Gov. Roy Romer failed in his effort to make the state Legislature less Republican, as voters maintained the status quo there, although a successful ballot measure may loosen up that Legislature.

In Wyoming — a state that is more like a Republican monarchy than a democracy — Sen. Malcolm Wallop's increasing isolation from Wyomingites almost lost him a guaranteed election. That race was one of the closest and most surprising in the state's history.

Personal appeal was also the deciding factor in Nebraska Democrat Bob Kerrey's victorious quest for the state's U.S. Senate seat. Kerrey beat a lesser-known Republican.

The Democratic party's Nebraska and Nevada U.S. Senate victories cancel out the Republican win in Montana,

(Continued on page 16)

Dear friends,



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Elections

It is with relief that we send you this 16-page issue. *High Country News* has not been 16 pages since late summer, and while staff doesn't mind producing the extra pages, we know it is a burden on readers.

There is also the matter of following orders. At a meeting in June 1987, staff was told by the High Country Foundation board of directors that less is more. Were the paper to permanently increase its size, the board said, it might become a grab bag, with staff substituting volume for judgment about what ought to appear in print.

This is an issue on the elections in the West. The campaign has been universally described as disgusting and enervating. As a nation, we want our elections to replicate 1952, when a reserved and scholarly Adlai Stevenson engaged a reserved and soldierly Dwight Eisenhower.

Or perhaps we want elections to be like our butcher shops. No one entering the meat section of a supermarket would guess that the packages of red and yellow material had anything to do with an animal. Writer Theodore Rozak tells how shocked his daughter was, on entering a European butcher shop, to see hanging carcasses and to realize that cattle don't give beef the way dairy cows give milk.

We are like Mr. Rozak's daughter — distraught at our glimpse of how the world works. Every four years those of us who have television sets or who read the newspapers are forced to realize elections are a blood and guts process which bear no resemblance to the civics lessons of the fourth grade.

Once the election is over, our noses are rubbed into the fact that we are wildly different from each other. Is there anyone among us who — upon seeing how his or her election precinct voted — did not say, "Is this the way my neighbors really think? Am I surrounded by such a bunch of nuts?" It's a bit like coming on a carcass in the Safeway — shocking, but salutary.

Redcolor

Our neighbors, for example, voted by a large margin to make English the official language of Colorado. No sooner had that happened than a retired historian, Abbott Fay, who formerly taught at Western State College, dropped off a revised map of Colorado, or rather of "Redcolor," at our office.

Working feverishly, Fay had changed the name of Cheyenne County to Cut Arms, Yuma County to Tribe, the South Platte River to the South Flat River, Otero County to Feather, Las Animas County to The Souls, Dolores County to Sorrows, Conejos County to Rabbit, and Mesa Verde National Park to Green Table National Park. Sangre de Cristo Mountains has become Blood of Christ Mountains, and the Cache la Poudre River has become the Powder Hideaway River.

Fay apologized for not having changed all of the peaks and rivers yet, but promised to get to it soon.

Visitors

In the last issue of this column, we described a hunting-season killing that took place on the main street of Paonia. We said the shooting occurred because the two men involved each wanted the window seat of the pickup so they could shoot at deer from the vehicle.

Ed Bliss, a businessman in Paonia, tells us we got that wrong. He says they

were fighting for the middle seat. The person near the window, Ed said, must get out to open and close ranchers' cattle gates; neither wanted to do that.

HCN's readers must be out hunting or back at work, earning money for next year's trips. As a result, the flow of visitors through the office has slowed, but not stopped. Don Bachmann of Ajo, Ariz., came through to say he has found *HCN* in libraries around the region. But because he usually arrived late in the afternoon, librarians tended to turn out the lights before he could finish an issue. So he stopped by to subscribe.

Professional archaeologists Siste O'Malia and Tim Kearns of Farmington, N.M., stopped by to donate to the Research Fund and to pick up a few of *HCN's* diminishing stock of t-shirts. The couple has just finished their eighth season at the Smithsonian's Stewart's Cattle Guard excavation in Colorado's San Luis Valley.

The site has one of the region's best-known remains of a Paleo-Indian bison kill, dating back 10,800 years. Tim says a band of Folsom Indians apparently ambushed a small herd of buffalo there, and then camped for some time to butcher the meat, process the hides and refurbish their weapons and tool kits.

Isabel and Stewart Mace from Aspen, Colo., dropped in on their way to a meeting in Durango about sustainable agriculture. They also went off with *HCN* t-shirts.

Although he didn't come to our office, we did run into subscriber Bill Jones at a meeting of citizens who are attempting to raise money to put 800 acres of currently private land at the confluence of the nearby North Fork and Gunnison rivers into the public domain. Jones was formerly a weatherman with the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder. He recently retired to Cedaredge to raise fruit.

Father Syl Schoening came by to subscribe. Syl is pastor to three flocks: the Catholic churches in Paonia and nearby Hotchkiss, and to a pack of six wolf-Malmet hybrids he uses to pull his dog sled once snow is on the ground. He is also a key part of this operation, since his churches periodically lend us their church tables when we have large mailings.

Middle School Madness

Paonia is already something of a publishing capital. The town of 1,400 has three newspapers: this one, the weekly *North Fork Times* and *High Country Shopper*. Now it has a new paper, the *Middle School Madness* produced by the Sixth Grade Discovery Class taught by Dotsie Neill.

In it are a series of profiles of residents, including one of Ralph Wilson, whom we remember coming to a Halloween party a few years ago as an excellent likeness of Captain Hook. In their profile, the three sixth-grade writers — Connie Beard, Kelly Mattice and Crystal Sabatke — wrote:

Mr. Ralph Wilson is a very nice and interesting person. He has lived in Paonia all his life, is married and has three sons. He likes various sports, such as skiing and volleyball.

Nineteen years ago something happened to Mr. Wilson that changed his life dramatically. His left arm and leg were blown off when he stepped on a land mine during the Vietnam War. Now he wears an artificial arm and leg on that side of his body. The limbs are very decorative, for they are made from flowered swimsuit material.

In the lower part of his artificial arm, he has a hollow spot and in it he



Cathy Ciarlo

keeps a pen, a handkerchief, and the day he visited us, a plastic bag. He even found a piece of popcorn in there. His artificial leg has a very sophisticated shock absorber. He has cut a slit in his sponge-like foot for wearing thongs.

He can do everything a normal person can do except that he can't run as well. And then he added, "But that's okay because I never liked running in the first place!"

We like Mr. Wilson, for he is a very open and special person.

One of the things missing from small towns is the question, "And what do you do for a living?" That may be because everyone knows what everyone does for a living or because it's not considered to be very important. Had the interviewers asked Ralph that question, they would have been told that he is a second, or perhaps third, generation fruitgrower who is now in partnership with his wife, Sharon, in the travel agency business. In his spare time, he is a member of Delta County's five-person school board.

New intern

Our newest intern at *High Country News* is Cathy Ciarlo, 22, of Denver, Colo.

After four years of studying the abstract at Reed College in Portland, Ore., and earning a degree in English literature, Cathy says she came to Paonia to take up more tangible issues.

But the West's environmental struggles have proven all too real, she says, and now she eats, breathes and sleeps back issues of *HCN* just to catch up.

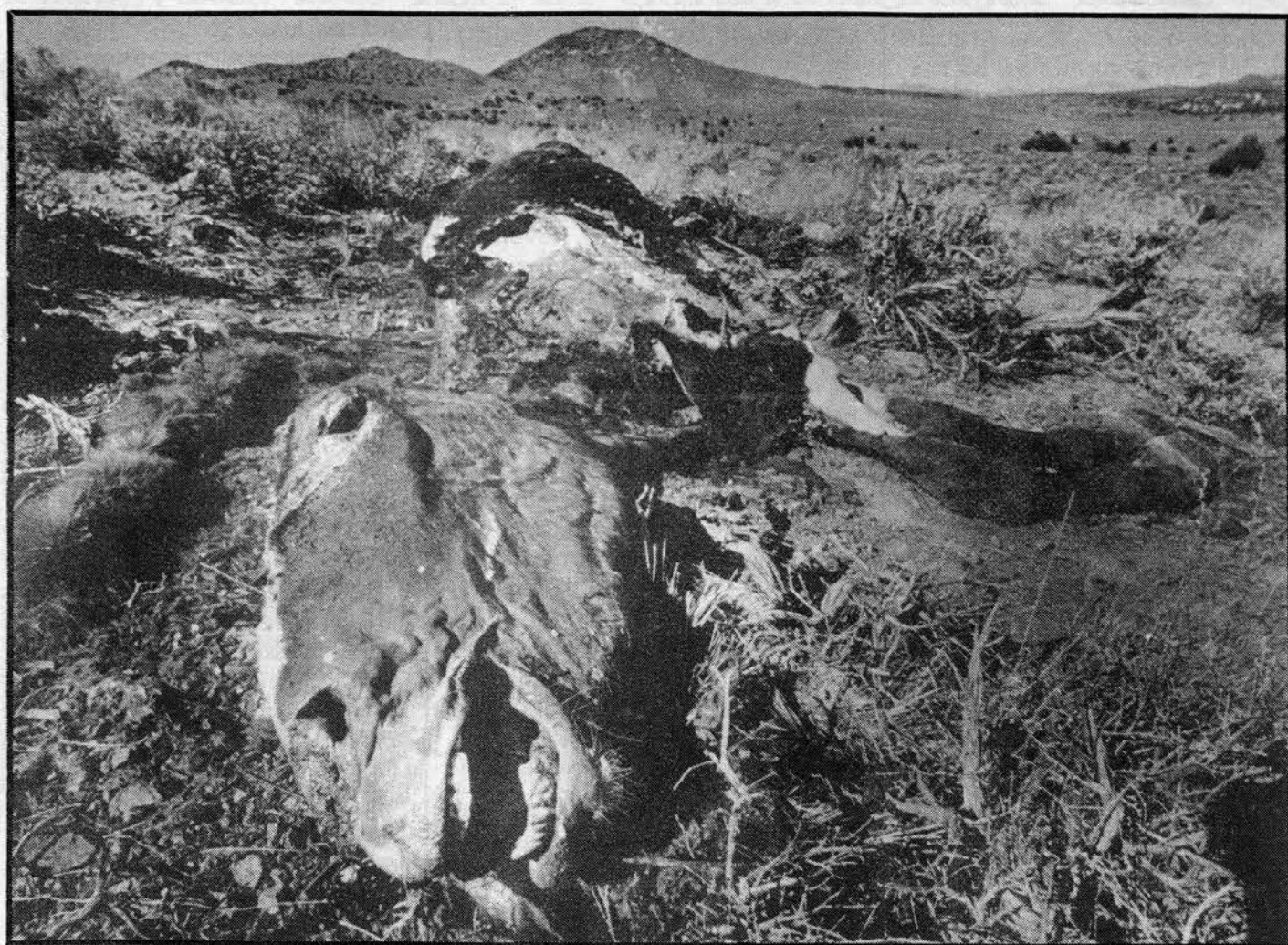
A native Coloradoan drawn back by the mountains and wide open spaces, she says that working for the paper has given her an entirely new perspective on a place she thought she knew well, and a reading list that extends well into the 21st century.

Correction

The Sept. 26, 1988, issue of this paper carried a long article by Deborah Epstein Popper and Frank J. Popper titled "The Fate of the Plains." Portions of the article had appeared earlier in *Planning* magazine, copyright 1987 by the American Planning Association, and were reprinted with the association's permission.

— Ed Marston for the staff

WESTERN ROUNDUP



Chuck Bigger

One of the horse carcasses found in Nevada

Wild horse killings are stirring Nevada

AUSTIN, Nev. — Close to 500 wild horses have been shot and left to decay in the Nevada desert over the last two years, including 11 fresh kills found near Ely, Nev., in early October.

The Bureau of Land Management says it has leads, but no one has been arrested yet. No forensic evidence has been released, although it is known that no carcass had more than one bullet in it, and no automatic weapons were used.

"I've never seen anything like it," said Rodger Bryan, a BLM wild horse specialist based in Battle Mountain. "We've found skeletons of mares that were pregnant at the time they were shot. The bones of the foals are right there inside."

There are about 25,000 wild horses in Nevada, and 3,000 are in Bryan's management area. He says more carcasses keep turning up, with the count in late October standing at 480.

The BLM declines to single out sus-

pects, although local cattlemen are on anyone's list of possibilities.

Bob Hillman, field services director for the Sacramento, Calif.-based Animal Protection Institute, said, "Everything points to the stockmen as far as I'm concerned."

"If you look at where the horses are, it tells me that the person who shot those horses did it as a very premeditated act. Someone spent a lot of time and effort. Whoever did it knew the land (and) systematically hunted them down near water holes."

Vickie Turner, executive secretary for the Nevada Cattlemen's Association, said, "We do not in any way condone any act that would result in the death of a feral horse."

Turner added that the BLM has not managed wild horses very well. "There's more than a stable herd number. It's growing by leaps and bounds." She added that stockmen would like the BLM to regulate wild horses the way they do cattle.

Most of the dead horses found have been in areas so remote that it is inconceivable they were shot from four-wheel-drive vehicles. Even with the aid of such a vehicle and the BLM's topographical maps, it is no easy task to find the carcasses.

Consequently, certain conclusions seem inescapable. The killers probably use horses, helicopters or all-terrain vehicles to chase their quarry. And because the horses have been found across hundreds of square miles of public lands, it seems doubtful that just one or two persons are responsible.

"There's a network, a grapevine situation among the ranchers," Hillman speculated. "They've had those grazing permits so long they consider the land theirs. They consider you and me interlopers."

Rancher Dean Johnson owns a grazing permit in the area near where many of the horses have been found. He rejects the notion that ranchers are to blame.

"I haven't (shot horses), although I've been accused of it," Johnson said. "I

wouldn't have that much money or time."

Johnson theorized that the reason so many horses have been found in clusters is, "We had an exceptionally hard winter last year, and I think a lot of them could have been winter-killed. They'd congregate in their little bands and stay there and die."

Johnson added, "I would like to see proof that they were all shot."

The BLM's Bryan says Johnson's winter-kill theory is not feasible. "Our winter last year wasn't all that tough," he said. As for evidence of shootings, Bryan acknowledged that BLM hasn't performed autopsies on many of the horses, but he said they are not necessary to determine whether a horse has been shot. Metal detectors have recovered bullets at some of the sites, Bryan pointed out.

Johnson, a self-described long-term critic of the BLM, also leveled a charge that has been repeated on the streets of Battle Mountain and Austin recently: "I'm not sure the BLM didn't do it themselves."

To that charge, Bryan managed a

tight-lipped smile and said, "That's amazing."

It may be difficult to imagine a scenario in which the BLM is roaming the desert butchering horses. But there are numerous people in wild-horse country who do not share a romanticized view of mustangs that is prevalent, perhaps, in urban areas.

"They're nothing but a nuisance. All they do is eat all the food and break fences," said Frank Alcorta of Round Mountain. He is a miner who was raised on a ranch. "They oughta send all them horses over to Ethiopia and feed all them starving (people)."

Still, Alcorta said, "I don't believe in shooting them. That's wrong. But the wild horses are a problem."

The horse shootings, now declared the top law enforcement priority in Nevada, also pose something of a public relations problem for the state.

"We're all sad to see this happen," said Paulene Furr, a clerk at Austin's only grocery store. "We have a lot more to offer than the killing of wild horses."

Revelations about the shootings also come at a time when many thought progress was being made in the handling of the burgeoning mustang herds. Congress has allocated more money for the establishment of additional adoption centers, and humane organizations have donated lands in South Dakota for wild horse sanctuaries.

But the long-standing dislike of many ranchers for the federal agency "goes back a long way," Bryan said. "I'm not sure how we're ever going to dispel that."

The discovery of the dead horses near Ely had ominous implications. The site is about 100 miles away from the group of 73 dead horses that was found in August. Bryan believes more aerial reconnaissance would lead to more grisly discoveries.

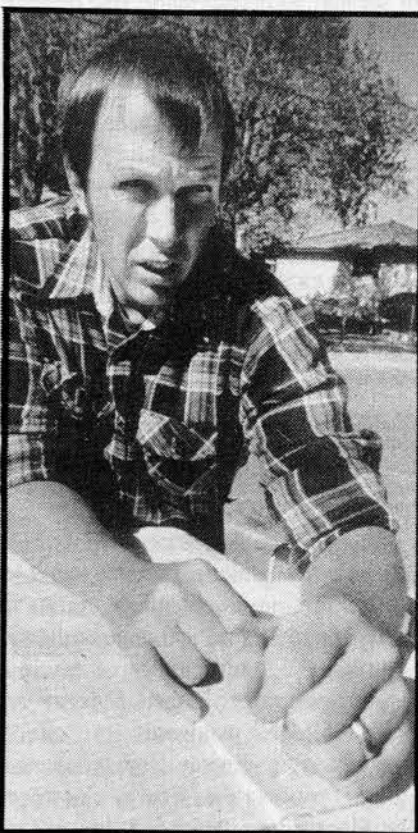
"If there was a little more flying in the other districts, we'd be filling in the gaps," he said.

Meanwhile, the reward offered for the horse killers has reached \$20,500, with several groups contributing. Of the total, \$5,000 was donated by the BLM, making this the "first time that they've offered a reward for anything," according to Bryan.

One hope is that because there are probably several killers, someone will break. "Sooner or later, someone is going to turn in someone for the money," the Animal Protection Institute's Hillman predicted.

— Barry Noreen

Barry Noreen is environment writer for the *Gazette Telegraph* in Colorado Springs. This story was paid for by the High Country News Research Fund.



Chuck Bigger

BLM wild horse specialist
Rodger Bryan



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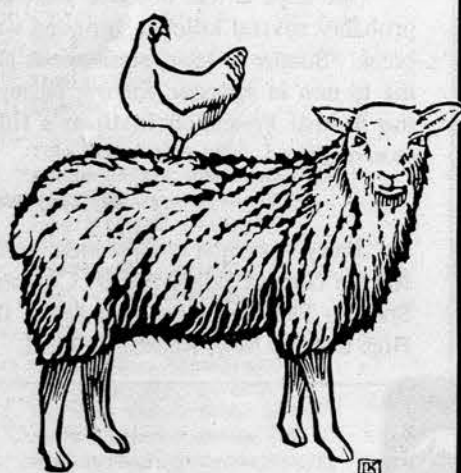
HOTLINE



Newspaper Rock, Utah

Navajo newspaper faces uncertain future

Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter McDonald says he wants the tribe's official paper to become independent. The paper has had a rocky existence. Without warning last year, McDonald closed the *Navajo Times Today*, touching off charges of censorship and demonstrations for freedom of the press (*HCN*, 3/16/87). The paper reopened later that year as a weekly with new management and staff. Now McDonald says, "Our newspaper will never be independent as long as the tribal government is footing the bill," reports the *Apache Scout*, a newspaper on the nearby Fort Apache Reservation. Addressing the Arizona Newspaper Association last summer, McDonald said he'd like to see two or three independent Navajo newspapers and more Native American journalists at work.



Animal Bill of Rights

Living conditions for farm animals in Sweden will take a turn for the better in coming years, thanks to the efforts of animal-rights activists and a writer of children's books. Astrid Lindgren, author of the well-known *Pippi Longstocking* series, spearheaded a movement that has resulted in a stringent law that forbids tethering pigs and confining chickens, grants cows grazing rights and bans the use of drugs and steroids except to treat disease. Lindgren's satirical allegories underscored the plight of farm animals and fueled the animal welfare campaign, the *New York Times* reports. Despite some protests that food prices would go up, the Swedish Parliament easily passed the new law.

River dredging turns into a federal case

An EPA decision in Colorado to enforce the Clean Water Act has led to a standoff with ranchers. Last May the Environmental Protection Agency sent a notice of violation to four ranchers near Carbondale, Colo., after they bulldozed the Roaring Fork River. Fearing flooding, the ranchers had dredged without an Army Corps of Engineers permit, required under section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The EPA has now served notice to the ranchers that they must restore the river to the condition it was in before the dredging. So far, the ranchers refuse to comply, and the EPA has referred the matter to the Justice Department for enforcement. The ranchers could face stiff fines - up to \$25,000 for each day they refuse to restore the river.

The ranchers say they had to dredge the river to clear rocks and stabilize its flow to prevent flooding from spring runoff. "If we didn't dredge, we would lose land through erosion, and some of our property would be flooded," said rancher Dennis Gerbaz. But EPA attorney Bruce Ray says, "This type of activity is harmful to a river. It stirs up sedi-

ments and can have a very adverse effect on fish." It does not even guarantee that stream banks will be stabilized, he added.

The ranchers, Larry, Dennis and Nile Gerbaz, Robert Nieslink and the Ranch at Roaring Fork, say they tried to get a 404 permit back in November 1985, but were turned down. "They said it would not be in the public interest to dredge," said Dennis Gerbaz in an interview. "The whole point is, what were we supposed to do? Watch our land get swept away, or operate without a 404? It was a major decision we had to make."

The ranchers decided to dredge illegally. According to Brad Miller of the EPA, unpermitted dredging in the area is not unusual. To the ranchers who face penalties, EPA enforcement seems unfair.

"They wanted to come down hard, to make an example of us, because they know people along this stretch have done the same before without a permit," said Gerbaz. "But it backfired on them. The 404 permit is in jeopardy now. I don't think any property owner will think of applying for a 404 after what

happened to us."

It is the threat of backlash to the permitting system that concerns Sen. Tim Wirth, D-Colo. He became involved after the ranchers contacted him and Rep. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, D-Colo., over a month ago. Wirth and Campbell, strong proponents of the Clean Water Act, initiated an inquiry with the EPA. Their staffers say the officials think the river needs to be restored but are also concerned about the cost to the ranchers.

"We're concerned with a public relations disaster if it looks like a big federal bureaucratic agency is going after small landowners," said Alan Salazar, a spokesman for Wirth.

The elected officials are now trying to create an ad hoc group composed of different federal, state and local agencies to resolve the controversy. In a recent letter addressing the situation, the congressmen said that litigation may be costly and time-consuming for all involved, with appeals dragging on while the river remains unrestored.

—Tom Mullen

Proposed coal mine is fought tenaciously

In an era when environmental disputes are marked by their divisive nature, a rare exception came recently in Somers, Mont. There more than two dozen people appeared before the International Joint Commission to speak out against the proposed Cabin Creek coal mine in British Columbia, roughly six miles northwest of Glacier National Park.

"I don't know of anything else in the Flathead Valley where there is this much consensus," said Ed Brannon, Flathead National Forest supervisor.

At the Sept. 22 hearing, Brannon was one of numerous federal, state, tribal and local officials to testify against the mine. Joining public officials were environmentalists and area residents in an attack on the massive project that seems to have few friends on either side of the border. A similar hearing in Cranbrook, B.C., also drew primarily opponents to the project.

The Cabin Creek mine has vexed conservationists since the early 1970s when exploration in the coal-rich area began. In 1984, the provincial government in Victoria gave a preliminary go-ahead to Sage Creek Coal Ltd. to operate a twin-pit coal mine and processing plant at a site within a mile of the North Fork of the Flathead River, which forms Glacier's western boundary downstream. After B.C.'s initial approval of the project, the U.S. government requested an investigation by the International Joint Commission, the body that studies water-related conflicts along the border. In the spring of 1985, the commission created the Flathead River International Study Board, which released a seven-volume report in July.

Based on conceptual plans submitted by Sage Creek, the operation would mine more than 2 million tons of high-quality bituminous coal annually for 21 years, though experts estimate there are enough reserves for an additional 20 years of mining. A work force of roughly 500 people would run the operation, covering more than six square miles in an area now home to grizzlies, wolves and bull trout.

The study board report found that the mine's greatest impact would be on bull trout, large and powerful fish that rely on Cabin and neighboring Howell

creeks for spawning grounds. Increases in sediment and algae, as well as toxic levels of nitrogen compounds borne by the mine, would all but eliminate these fish from the streams, which account for 10 percent of the Flathead Basin's bull trout. An even greater concern noted by the report is the potential failure of a settling or tailing pond, which could have catastrophic effects downstream.

The report, however, has drawn some criticism from environmentalists. Sandy McIntyre, associate director of the Wilderness Society's northern Rockies office, said the report was marred because it was based on Sage Creek's conceptual design.

"It is futile to try to assess with any degree of confidence the environmental impacts of a project of this magnitude without a detailed, specific mine design," McIntyre told the commissioners.

Another criticism voiced by McIntyre and others was that the report's conclusions were derived from inadequate information, something which the board itself repeatedly recognized. While acknowledging that the commission is bound by treaty to limit itself to water issues, McIntyre urged both governments to study a variety of other concerns, ranging from the mine's impacts on endangered species to its effect on air quality.

Montana's Gov. Ted Schwinden called on Sage Creek to look for coal in a less environmentally sensitive area. But if the Cabin Creek coal must be mined, he said, it should be governed by a specific international treaty that would include the power to close the mine if problems arose.

Schwinden also reminded the commission of the special designations placed on the North Fork and Glacier National Park. In 1976, Congress classified the North Fork as a wild and scenic river, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization designated Glacier as a biosphere reserve. Glacier-Waterton has been nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, though Canada has withheld its portion of the nomination pending the completion of the Cabin Creek study.

"We are not merely debating local concerns over just another mining venture adjacent to a pristine northwestern

river. The serious threats in the mine could have a worldwide impact," Schwinden said.

The governor also urged reciprocal cooperation on an issue that's long nettled Canadians: acid rain. "If the integrity of the North Fork area is important enough to recommend the scuttling of a coal mine in a foreign country, the United States must weigh just as seriously Canadian requests to reduce the nitrogen and sulfur compounds emitted from many U.S. coal-fired generating stations," he said.

At this point Sage Creek, a subsidiary of Canada's mining mammoth Rio Algom Mines, is a coal company in name only. It has no employees. A severely depressed coal market may have temporarily shelved the company's plans for Cabin Creek. But if the company gains approval for the mine now, it could forge ahead in better economic times. For that reason, environmentalists, public officials and residents hope to maintain their vigilance in their long fight against the mine.

"In the lower 48, this is the best of what we have left," said Thurman Trosper, the former chairman of the Flathead Coalition, an umbrella group united against the mine. "And we would like to keep it that way."

To resolve the issue, the International Joint Commission has three options. It could deny or approve the mine — and possibly launch a legal battle — or it could call for additional study. The latter seems the most likely, for there are many unanswered questions and issues yet to be addressed.

—Michael Kustudia

BARBS

Running a weapons plant is like opening a Christmas present.

Despite negligent management of the Savannah River Plant that resulted in a halt to the manufacture of nuclear weapons, manager Robert Morgan received \$59,750 in awards for "excellence" from the Energy Department this year. *AP* reports that Energy Secretary John Herrington defended the award, saying, "Government salaries are too low."

Kilowatts zap fish in Columbia River basin

A second year of drought and an uncooperative federal agency combined to make 1988 a bad year for salmon and steelhead in the upper Columbia River basin.

Each year juvenile salmon and steelhead, called smolt, migrate from Idaho's Salmon and Clearwater river drainages downstream through the Snake and Columbia rivers to the Pacific Ocean. Those that make it, and then survive two to four years ranging the ocean, return upstream as adults to spawn the next generation. The two migrating groups — smolt heading to the ocean and adults returning from it — confront eight dams and a series of slackwater reservoirs on their journey.

Idaho fishermen focus on the adults. But fishery managers watch the smolt; their survival rate largely determines the future adult returns.

"1988 was a bad year for smolt survival, no better and probably worse than 1987," says Michelle DeHart of the Fish Passage Center, which oversees fish passage for the Indian tribes and state fish agencies of the Columbia basin. "We don't make specific survival estimates — you have to make too many assumptions — but our judgment is that adult returns in 1990 and 1991 will be low."

The reason was too little water pushing the smolt downstream. "The flows were just so low," DeHart says. "We approached 90,000 cubic feet per second in the lower Snake only one day all year." The tribes and agencies consider 90,000 cfs a minimum in the Snake system from mid-April through June for good smolt passage. This year flows were usually at 40,000 cfs or lower.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which manages key dams in the Snake system, made a bad water year worse. It held on to most of its "power base" storage in Idaho's Dworshak Reservoir through the migration period, releasing it this fall to optimize receipts from hydroelectricity sales. And the Corps refused almost all fish agency/tribe requests to spill water at its dams so that smolt gathered behind those dams could move downstream.

The Corps estimates that 50 percent of the smolt in the Columbia Basin survived the migration. The agencies and tribes scoff at that, especially for Idaho migrants. "About 23 million smolt began in the upper Snake," says Steve Pettit of the Idaho Fish and Game Department. "Due to low flows and other factors, we estimate 50 percent of them didn't even make it to the first dam," which is Lower Granite.

The Corps' estimate is based on the assumed success of its transportation program. This year the Corps collected 9 million smolt behind lower Granite and Little Goose dams, barged or trucked them downstream and dumped them into the Columbia below all the dams. A record 20 million smolt were transported in the entire Columbia basin.

"The Corps assumes something like 99 percent survival of transported smolt," says DeHart. "That just doesn't happen, especially for salmon." Steelhead smolt survive transportation stress far better than salmon.

The vast majority of smolt are hatchery-produced, but DeHart says that survival of the small wild, or naturally-spawned, population is likely even worse. The transport and in-river fish passage system is geared to the mass regularity of hatchery releases. In the few cases when the Corps did spill water, for instance, it was only when big hatchery releases flooded in behind a



Salmon fights its way upstream

dam. Wild fish arrive more uniformly over the season, so most of them don't get help.

The drought's lesson, says DeHart, is that "the 'water budget' does not and cannot provide needed fish flows." But the water budget is the heart of the Northwest Power Planning Council's program to restore salmon and steelhead runs basinwide. It allots fish agencies and tribes some 450,000 acre-feet of water in Snake reservoirs, which is then released on request of the Fish Passage Center.

This year, all that water was used in six days and still only provided a 90,000 cfs flow one of those days: "We just need more water in the Snake to provide reasonable assurance of adequate flow during the 60-day heart of migration," DeHart says. "If the water budget is to ever really ensure fish passage, it's going to need a fishery objective — for instance, protect the middle 75 or 80 percent of the run. Right now, it's just a sidebar on a system managed for hydroelectricity."

So far, the fall has been as dry as the summer, and, with reservoirs at record lows, only a snowpack well above average will keep next year from being even worse. Steve Pettit explains: "There's language in the Power Council's program saying that if we get a third year of drought, then there won't be any water budget. So we may have nothing at all to supplement the natural flows."

For the fish agencies and tribes, the drought is occurring against a background of decreasing support for fish migration among the federal agencies that control Columbia and Snake river management.

Despite a direct congressional order to do so, the Corps refuses to construct fish bypass systems at two dams, Ice Harbor and the Dalles, whose present systems just don't work.

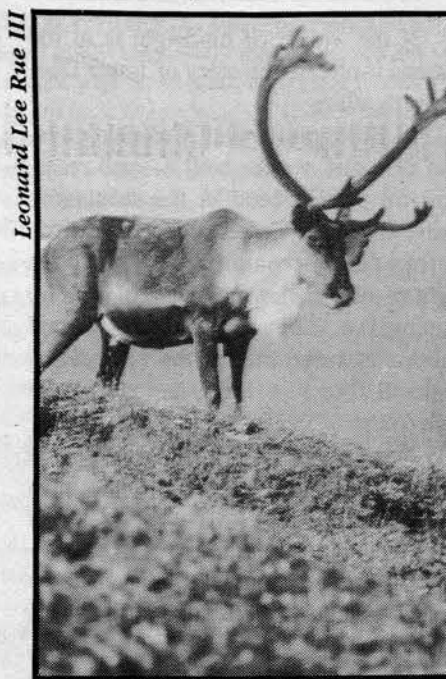
The Corps also recently walked away from negotiations on a long-term spill agreement. Those talks among the fish agencies and tribes, regional utilities and Bonneville Power Administration were begun at the Power Council's request to achieve a lasting framework for assisting fish passage with spilled water when necessary. The talks continue, but the Corps, which runs the key dams involved, says it will not be bound by any outcome.

The disagreement is basic. The agencies and tribes believe good fish passage requires both a trucking/barging program and an in-river program of adequate flows and bypass facilities. The Corps believes trucking and barging should be the whole program. So far, despite order from a presumed higher authority — Congress — the Corps has had its way.

And so far, the Northwest Power Council, whose fish recovery program was openly violated by the Corps this year, has chosen to remain silent. The four-state council was created by Congress to implement energy conservation and fish and wildlife recovery in the Columbia River Basin.

— Pat Ford

HOTLINE



Leonard Lee Rue III

"Adopted" caribou killed

The poaching of a mountain caribou in Washington state has angered federal and local agencies, plus a lot of children. Earlier this fall, the Idaho Fish and Game Association transported 24 of the endangered species — only some 2,000 still exist — from British Columbia to the Selkirk Mountains in northern Idaho. Children became involved when schools from around the state "adopted" a caribou by giving it a name and coloring a radio collar. The children then followed the animals by plotting their movements on maps. On Oct. 25, a radio collar from a caribou named Toodo was found on the ground, and a cut-off, tagged ear was discovered nearby. To locate the poachers, Idaho Fish and Game has already collected over \$2,000 in reward money, and that total is expected to rise to \$5,000 in a few weeks. Rewards are also offered by the National Audubon Society and Defenders of Wildlife. Penalties for poaching an endangered species animal are as high as \$100,000 and a year in jail. Information that might lead to the arrest of the poachers can be given to John Gahl at Idaho Fish and Game, 208/334-3747 or the Washington Game Department, 509/456-4082.

HOTLINE

Civil rights in court

Twenty years after passage of the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, a U.S. Civil Rights Commission says it has uncovered evidence of regular and extensive abuse of Indians' civil and legal rights. The problem is not racial discrimination, however, but intra-tribal politics and biased tribal courts. "We have got to learn that it is important what Indians do to other Indians," commission member Robert Destro recently told *AP*. Destro, a law professor at Catholic University, says much of the problem is caused by lack of enforcement of the Civil Rights Act and neglect by Congress. Over its two-year investigation, the commission heard Indians repeatedly testify that their legal and civil rights were ignored by tribal courts dominated by tribal politicians. Hearings ended last month with investigations of illegal interference by the Navajo Tribal Council in a child welfare case and in tribal court rulings. Although 20 Navajo tribal officials and judges were subpoenaed to testify at the hearings, they refused to attend, saying the commission was an infringement on their treaty rights. A full report of the commission is due to President Reagan this fall. Meanwhile, the Justice Department has sent letters to Congress sug-

gesting an amendment that allows federal courts to review any decisions made in tribal courts that affect an individual's civil rights. Native American leaders have criticized the suggestion as an attack on the tribes' status as limited sovereigns, adding that tribes must solve their own problems.

Who knew what when?

Both Shell Oil Co. and a large Denver law firm are being sued for keeping mum about massive pollution at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal. The lawsuit — unusual because it targets attorneys — was filed by Travelers Insurance Co., which insured Shell's operation at the arsenal between 1952 and 1975, when Shell leased the arsenal to make insecticides and pesticides. Liability questions began in 1983, when the U.S. Army sued Shell to make it pay its share of a \$2 billion Superfund cleanup. Travelers Insurance agreed to pay \$16 million in legal fees to Shell's law firm, Holme Roberts and Owen, to fight the Army's suit, but Travelers now wants its money back plus \$50 million in punitive damages. Travelers says that both Shell and its law firm acted "with malice" by allegedly misrepresenting the amount of contamination at the arsenal. A Holme Roberts spokesman says the lawsuit is "totally without foundation," reports the *Denver Post*.

Texas is chosen

After the Department of Energy declared Texas the winner of the supercollider race, other contending states cried "foul" over the decision. If it is built, the enormous atomic accelerator project will cost over \$4 billion and bring thousands of jobs to its host state (*HCN*, 2/1/1988). Energy Secretary John Herrington said the task force that made the final decision chose Texas because it ranked "outstanding" in four of the six criteria used for picking a site. Some of the six other finalist states for the lucrative project, which included Arizona and Colorado, linked the election of George Bush, a Texas resident, to the decision.



One down at Uravan

Colorado has withdrawn its proposal for a low-level nuclear waste repository for Uravan. The state withdrew its request to the four-state Rocky Mountain Waste Compact (*HCN*, 11/7/1988), saying it will look for another site — one that may be out-of-state. Still pending before the state, however, is Umetco Mineral Corp.'s application to dispose of Denver-area radium soils at Uravan.

Bureaucratic slip allows construction in a wilderness

If the value of hindsight is in the lessons it offers, the story of Jasper Dam is worth telling.

In 1896, pioneers of Colorado's system of water works built a small reservoir on public land in the mountains above Boulder, Colo., which served irrigators downstream. They claimed a right-of-way under provisions of an 1866 mining law. Then Congress designated the lands surrounding the reservoir a national forest in 1907, and an official wilderness in 1978.

Now, the Indian Peaks Wilderness is one of the most popular recreation spots in the nation. Yet last June the Forest Service could do nothing to stop renovation and reconstruction of the dam and a decaying road into the dramatic Devil's Thumb valley.

The saga began when the state engineer declared the dam unsafe. Instead of repairing the structure, the owner, Public Service Co. of Colorado, decided to give the property to the Forest Service. But the Forest Service believed that the dam existed by virtue of nothing more than a special use permit, and it maintained that Public Service was obligated to return the property to its natural state.

In refusing the offer, the agency thought it was saving \$20,000 to \$30,000. Public Service, too, evidently believed it owned no real title to Jasper Dam.

Boulder water lawyer John Wittemyer knew better. For generations his family owned an inholding a short distance from the dam. After Public Service accepted his purchase offer of \$50,000, he told the Forest Service that he had purchased a private property right that pre-dated the national forest and wilderness restrictions.

The agency scrambled to contest his claim but ultimately concluded he was right. Last summer, Wittemyer rebuilt the dam at a cost of \$186,000, thereby maintaining a right to store 326 acre-feet

of water. He now plans to sell the water for over \$1 million to some thirsty Front Range city.

The Sierra Club, which is active in Boulder, pressured the Forest Service to fight Wittemyer. "We wanted (the agency) to say the Wilderness Act supersedes and overshadows the easement. This was the perfect place to flex some muscle," said Tina Arapkiles of the club's Boulder office.

Last summer, she added, "Choppers were flying in there every three minutes. It was grim." Wittemyer housed the construction crew in metal trailers placed in the middle of the valley.

District ranger Michelle Nolde reported that by late September Wittemyer had removed the trailers and applied a Forest Service seed mixture to the road and dam. Eventually, she said, the dam "will look like a pile of rocks with dirt and grass. It will look more natural than before."

Sierra Club volunteer Marty Walters said that despite Wittemyer's attempts to revegetate the road, deep ruts remain in alpine meadows near the Continental Divide.

Because the agency recognized the legal power of a valid right, it did not try to stop the project. It did try to acquire it. They tried to negotiate with Wittemyer "right up until he poured concrete," Nolde said. The Sierra Club tried to assist that process and even brought in the Trust for Public Land. But in the end, Wittemyer's price was too high. (John Wittemyer refused to be interviewed for this article.)

Some conservationists say the Forest Service should have known better. One clue was a clause in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1978 that refers to the right of the owner of Jasper Reservoir to use motor vehicles for maintenance.

Nolde defends her agency, noting, "This was by far the most complex, confusing issue I've ever been involved in."

That 40-acre piece of ground has caused as much trouble as any other on the forest."

She said the dam had been built and rebuilt several times, and in the process its purpose changed from agricultural storage to hydroelectricity. A 1939 Federal Power Commission license should have converted the old easement to a non-transferable, revocable license. The government and power company assumed that had occurred. It took a trip to the National Archives in Washington to show that Jasper Dam was left off of that permit.

Arapkiles and Cheever note that easements based on the 1866 mining law are common throughout the West. Their presence is based on policies encourag-

ing people to use the public domain by giving away private property. Congress has gradually repealed nearly all such laws, but property rights created before repeal still exist. The recent lawsuit over the Burr Trail in Utah involved a nearly identical sort of easement, and conservationists lost a legal battle to invalidate that property right.

Arapkiles thinks the Forest Service should make an effort in its next planning cycle to identify all the remaining private easements and then make efforts to acquire them, especially in wilderness areas. "Sure it would cost a lot of money, but it would be worth it."

—Gary Sprung

HOTLINE

Land swaps benefit public lands in two states

A private conservation group has added 2,852 acres to New Mexico's Organ Mountain preserve. The Nature Conservancy, Bureau of Land Management and the A. B. Cox family recently completed a transaction that will bring environmentally sensitive land in the heart of the Organ Mountains under BLM jurisdiction. The Nature Conservancy paid the family over \$3 million for the Cox Ranch near Las Cruces, N.M., home to at least four endangered plant species and several "mini-riparian" areas. The ranch was then traded to the BLM for parcels of land near several cities in southern New Mexico. These lands will be sold to individuals and businesses to defray the cost of the Cox Ranch purchase. The conservancy's Bill Depuys says it's a "win-win" situation. "The Nature Conservancy sees valuable land protected, the BLM fills out its Organ Mountain holdings and the city of Las Cruces gets a commons for its citizens."

The Bureau of Land Management announced plans to acquire mineral rights to 141,500 acres of land in and around the Grand Canyon in western Arizona. The swap would give Santa Fe Pacific Minerals Corp. of Albuquerque, N.M., mineral rights to a same-sized package of land elsewhere in Arizona. The exchange has delighted environmentalists and the Park Service, as both have wanted to block mining near the canyon for years. "I applaud the BLM on this," Rob Smith of the Sierra Club told the *Arizona Republic*. Since most of the rights are underneath land in 12 areas being studied for wilderness designation by the BLM, the trade could help convince Congress to adopt a new wilderness bill for the state next year, Smith said.

BOOK NOTES

A call to set the West to rights

Big Sky, Fair Land

A.B. Guthrie, Jr. David Petersen, editor. Northland Press, P.O. Box N, Flagstaff, AZ 86002. 1988. 187 pages. \$11.95, paper.

—Review by Michael Kustudia

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was Change."

That epigraph, A.B. Guthrie, Jr.'s twist on the Book of John, opens *Big Sky, Fair Land*, a collection of Guthrie's environmental writings. With a perspective that stretches back over 80 years, Guthrie has seen a good deal of the damage change has brought to the West under the misnomer of progress.

"It is not until age begins to cast back, to remember what was as against what is, that doubts and regrets and degrees of nostalgia set in, that the bright face of change starts to lose its luster," he writes.

This collection of 22 essays, some that date back to the late 1930s, has been compiled by David Petersen, a Colorado writer and senior editor for *Mother Earth News*. Petersen, unabashed in his admiration for Guthrie, provides a biographical sketch that examines Guthrie's

formative years along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. In subsequent chapters Petersen deftly sets the stage by illustrating environmental themes culled from Guthrie's novels. Beginning with *The Big Sky*, published in 1947, Guthrie chronicled the settling of the West, specifically Montana, in a series of six novels. *The Way West*, the second in the series, garnered Guthrie the Pulitzer Prize in 1950.

Underlying Guthrie's literary account of Western history is the theme that growth has inevitably brought destruction to the land and way of life that lured people West. Mountain men lived untrammelled in the wilderness, and yet they decimated the beaver and opened the way for settlement. In the pioneer era, damage came through the innocent, if not ignorant, hunger of an expanding young country.

"And here, sure enough, in our developing years as a nation was a new world made for man, a world rich beyond belief, a world of endless opportunity and promise. So we mined the land, felled the timber and dug the metals, all with extravagance, knowing that over the next hill were virgin acres, stands of timber and likely strikes. And so it was that we pillaged a continent and thrived in the process, forgetting that the earth is

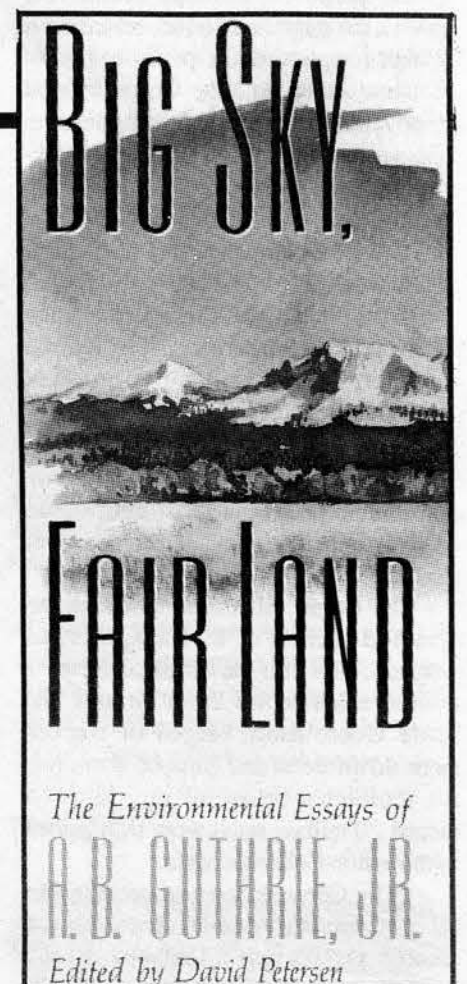
exhaustible," writes Guthrie.

Today we know differently. The limits of the land's yield are well-defined yet the demands placed upon it have not been scaled back accordingly. Anger and frustration ring loudly in Guthrie's writings: "You look at the evidence, and you cry out in grief, in dismay and outrage, and your voice is lost to the winds of money and greed. It is a whisper in the mad clatter of coin and machinery."

Still, Guthrie is hopeful. He calls for a rekindling of the "old, bold American spirit," once used to exploit, but now employed to set straight the damages of the past and to preserve "what remains of the old riches." That, Guthrie says, would be progress.

Although many of the essays center on Montana, they could well apply to all the West with its shared history of settlement and exploitation. Guthrie speaks to us in a down-to-earth voice on an array of subjects ranging from birth control to grizzly bears. Taken together, these essays form a mosaic that reveals the environmental ethic of a man with profound concern for his homeland.

Much like his contemporary and friend Bernard DeVoto, Guthrie speaks a truth that many Westerners, hidebound in the notion that unceasing growth equals progress, may find unpalatable. But for

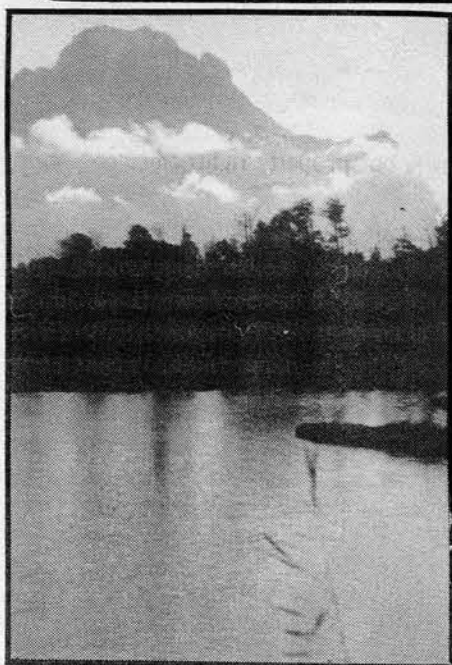


those who share Guthrie's vision of progress, his sense of place and his desire to see it go on, *Big Sky, Fair Land* is a singing affirmation and a heartfelt call for action.

□

Michael Kustudia is a freelance writer in Whitefish, Montana, and former intern at *High Country News*.

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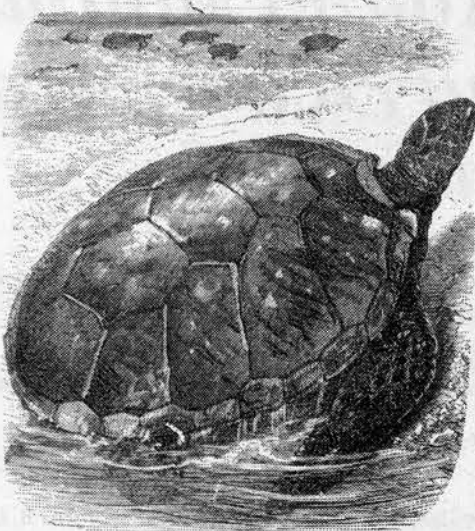


SAVING THE LAND

A new project launched by the Jackson Hole Land Trust matches scenic land in the area with buyers who want to enhance that value. The Land Trust calls it the Conservation Buyer Project, and it contacts people nationwide who might want to buy large tracts of land and protect them through conservation easements. The Land Trust says it has already worked with 15 realtors from eight firms. It has also produced a brochure and short video that describes the aesthetic and wildlife values of the Jackson Hole region. For more information about the project, or to obtain the video or brochure, contact the project director, Story Clark, at the Jackson Hole Land Trust, P.O. Box 2897, Jackson, WY 83001 (307/733-4707).

THEY'RE SIGNING UP

More than 5,000 people in western Colorado have signed a petition opposing a proposal to build a radioactive waste dump at Uravan. It is being circulated by Western Colorado Congress, and it says the proposed repository for radium soil wastes from Denver is unsafe and unwanted. The petition adds that it is not smart to truck radioactive wastes "over crooked mountain roads and waterways." For more information about the petition, contact Western Colorado Congress, P.O. Box 472, Montrose, CO 81402 (303/249-1978).



SAVE THE TURTLES

A teacher at a middle school in Durango, Colo., has written a book for young adults that combines an environmental theme with the drama of a family in crisis. It is called *Changes in Latitudes*, set in Mexico. The conflict and interesting ending concern endangered sea turtles. Will Hobbs writes that he grew up in an Air Force family, mostly in Alaska and Texas, and that he and his wife try to spend as much time on the rivers and in canyons and mountains of the Southwest. Why turtles? "Turtles were one of the reasons I was so fond of Texas. A few months after we arrived, Hurricane Carla's heavy rains flushed the turtles onto the sidewalks, and I knew I was in paradise." Seeing a display of dead sea turtles in an airport — complete with turtle oil products — was another trigger in choosing his subject. As for writing, the teacher says it is much "like hauling rocks — which I enjoy."

Macmillan Publishing, 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. 162 pages. Cloth: \$13.95.

A TRAVELLING ACTIVIST

The Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, which fights the use of dangerous chemicals in the Pacific Northwest, has added a new member to its staff. He is Tom Lamar of Moscow, Idaho, who will travel through Montana, Washington, Idaho and Oregon to coordinate a support group for people opposed to the misuse of pesticides. NCAP says Lamar will lead training sessions, provide technical information about the chemicals and offer advice on organizational strategies. For more information, call NCAP at 503/344-5044 or contact Lamar directly at Box 8801, Moscow, ID 83843 (208/882-9532).

NEW NEW MEXICO MAGAZINE

A new 16-page magazine called *New Mexico Resources*, published by New Mexico State University's College of Agriculture and Home Economics, debuted this fall with a feature story on the nearly extinct Mexican gray wolf. "Wolves on the (missile) range!" discusses the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's controversial plan to reintroduce the Mexican wolf to the White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico. Fewer than 50 wolves remain in the wild in Mexico, and time is running out for the 31 animals in captivity. Wolves need to live in their natural habitat to breed successfully. Reintroduction, however, has met with stiff opposition from the New Mexico livestock industry. Subscriptions to the tri-annual magazine are free from Agricultural Information, New Mexico State University, Box 30003, Dept. 3A1, Las Cruces, NM 88003.

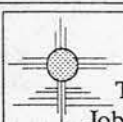


OREGON BALLYHOOS ITS WILDLIFE

From sea lions and cormorants to rattlesnakes and loons, wildlife is abundant in Oregon. To tell travelers where to go to see animals, Oregon created a guide for viewing wildlife at 123 areas. The project's centerpiece is an 80-page, full-color booklet called *Oregon Wildlife Viewing Guide*, and it provides directions to each of the sites and information on tourist facilities near them. The guide caters to everyone interested in seeing animals in their natural habitat, from those who want to stay in a car to those willing to hike miles into Oregon's backcountry. Compiled by environmentalists, business leaders and public officials, the guide has been published by Defenders of Wildlife, a Washington, D.C.-based wildlife conservation organization. To obtain a copy, which costs \$5.50, contact Defenders of Wildlife, 333 S. State Street, Suite 173, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

SHANDOKA

Shandoka, the Ute word for Storm Maker, is the name of a new literary and arts journal that covers the Four Corners area of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Established this year as a quarterly by editors Jeri McAndrews and Catherine Alelyunas, the journal offers southwestern poetry, short stories, art and interviews as a "forum for ecological affirmation." The fall issue fills 33 pages and sells for \$3.50. If you'd like to submit stories, drawings, photos or to subscribe, write *Shandoka*, Box 1103, Telluride, CO 81435.



The WEJ

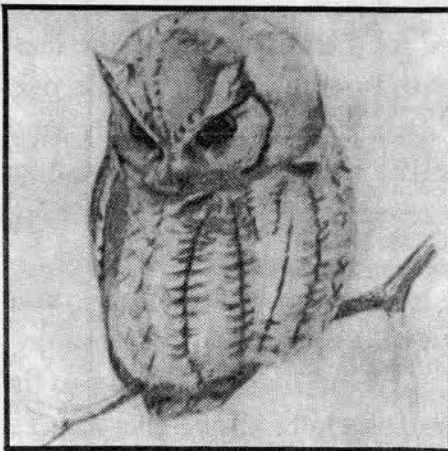
The Western Environmental Jobletter is an environmentalist's employment directory listing jobs found in western North American bioregions. (But it also offers philosophical discourse in support of Grandmother Earth). For a backissue send a 25¢ stamp or for free information on how to subscribe, write:



The WEJ
P.O. Box 800
LaPorte, CO 80535

A GREATER YELLOWSTONE SEMINAR

Papers are being solicited for a symposium on land and resource management in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, sponsored by the University of Wyoming and set for April 13 - 15. The deadline for abstracts is Jan. 15, 1989, and topics can include ecology and future of bears in the greater Yellowstone area, wolf reintroduction, federal, state and private land-use policies, ungulate ecology and overgrazing, fire management and alternative visions for the Yellowstone region. For more information, write Robert B. Keiter, College of Law, or Mark S. Boyce, Zoology and Physiology Dept., University of Wyoming, Laramie, WY 82071, 307/776-5105 or 307/766-5373 respectively.



BRIGHT EYES AND BIRDS

American Indians watched birds and aptly named them for their traits: "Making Big Noise For Its Size" for the wren, or "Lovesick" for the red-tailed hawk. But not until white men began making lists of the birds they observed did the modern bird-watcher evolve. In *A World of Watchers*, former *Life* magazine editor Joseph Kastner tells an "informal history of the American passion for birds." Henry Ford's first memory, for example, was being taken "to see a bird's nest under a big oak." President Theodore Roosevelt was an avid birder and once remarked, "People looking into the White House grounds and seeing me stare into a tree, no doubt thought me insane."

Sierra Club Books, 730 Polk St., San Francisco, CA 94109. Paper: \$10.95. 241 pages. Illustrated from the classic work of Louis Agassiz Fuertes.

HIGH MOUNTAIN HUTS

Six new backcountry cabins high in the mountains near Vail, Colo., have been given the go-ahead by the Forest Service. The huts for cross country skiers will be built in the next few years by the 10th Mountain Trail Association of Aspen, which already owns and operates six cabins in the same region. The new cabins will be built between West Lake Creek trail and Vail, linking up with two cabins that were built between Vail and Tennessee Pass this summer. The 10th Mountain Trail Association of Aspen has completed reconnaissance for the hut sites and trails and will join the San Isabel National Forest in completing the plans. For more information on the trail and huts, contact the 10th Mountain Trail Association, 1280 Ute Avenue, Aspen, CO 81611 (303/925-4554).

ACCESS

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GRIZZLY TRACK — Front paw print of a large Grizzly handsomely cast in stoneware. Hang on wall, set on table, or a great Christmas gift (next day shipping). Call or write for more info. \$21.00 postpaid. Check or Bankcard accepted. Masterpiece Creations — Box 2294, Kalispell, MT 59901 (406/257-0820). (3x21p)

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CLASSIFIED ADS cost 30 cents per word, pre-paid, \$5 minimum. General rates for display are \$8/column inch if camera-ready; \$10/column inch if we make up.

GROUPS

DAKOTA RURAL ACTION, based in Brookings, S.D., is hiring a community organizer to work with farmers, ranchers, church and small business people on agricultural, economic development and natural resource issues. Starting salary is \$13,000 annually, plus benefits. Application deadline is Dec. 5, 1988. Send resume and two writing samples to Dakota Rural Action, Box 549, Brookings, SD 57006 (605/697-5204). (2xb)

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Explore the YELLOWSTONE ECOSYSTEM

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UTAH

Utah rejects anti-tax initiatives; re-elects Bangerter

Utahns voted as expected in the national elections, giving Vice-President George Bush 66 percent of the vote and overwhelmingly re-electing its mostly Republican congressional delegation.

However, the rest of the state's races were neither boring nor normal. Statewide, three tax initiatives went down in flames, changing the outcome of a tightly contested gubernatorial race. In Salt Lake City, numerous environmental, wildlife and outdoor sports groups joined forces to form a new grass-roots political action committee, influencing elections there.

The most radical event happened in Moab and the four counties making up the southeast corner of the state. There environmentalists and Democrats won four key victories, signalling the final demise of the Sagebrush Rebellion and, perhaps, the beginning of a counter-revolution for the Colorado Plateau (See accompanying story).

In the race for the governor's seat, Republican incumbent Norman Bangerter won re-election over Democratic challenger Ted Wilson with only 40 percent of the vote. Wilson, an avid mountain climber and outdoorsman, gave up an early 30 point lead over Bangerter to finish two points behind with 38 percent. Independent candidate Merrill Cook received 21 percent.

Bangerter's come-from-behind-victory was intricately tied to Utah initiatives A, B and C — all amendments to the Utah Constitution that would have capped or cut the state's taxing authority. They were soundly defeated by 61, 62 and 69 percent majorities, in a saga that will be well remembered by Utah politicians.

It started last year when Bangerter put himself in the political hot seat by ordering the largest tax increase in state history. The move was necessary, he said, to replace revenues lost from declines in Utah's minerals economy (HCN, 4/13/87).

The backlash was severe. Two citizens' groups formed to oppose the measure, and they easily succeeded in getting the three tax initiatives on the 1988 ballot. Those went far beyond mere tax caps, instead calling for a total of \$329 million in tax cuts.

It also prompted Ted Wilson, the popular former mayor of Salt Lake City, to scuttle his proclaimed dream of a laid back career in academia and consent to mount a Democratic challenge to Bangerter.

Reflecting widespread reaction to the tax increases, early polls showed Wilson leading Bangerter by 30 points. Those polls also favored the tax initiatives two to one.

Then two things happened. Perennial candidate Merrill Cook joined the governor's race as the darling of the tax protestors, and, unexpectedly, the state's economy began to recover. Cook's presence in the race, as the independent candidate (Independents are Utah's second largest voting group), cut into Wilson's lead, and Bangerter was able to refund half of the tax increase. While the move was viewed by Bangerter's opponents as an ingenious attempt to do the right thing, it gained him votes.

In the meantime the tax initiatives came under heavy fire from all sides, in-

cluding a new group called Taxpayers for Utah, which was co-chaired by former Democratic Govs. Cal Rampton and Scott Matheson, former Republican U.S. Sen. Wallace Bennett, and former Republican President of the state Senate Warren Pugh. They warned that nearly half of the tax cut would be borne by public schools and higher education in a state that already ranks 50th in public school expenditures per child and 43rd in teacher salaries.

Soon after, Bangerter and Wilson held a joint news conference, urging voters to reject both the tax initiatives and Merrill Cook's anti-tax election campaign. Likewise, educators, public officials and public safety officials spoke against the tax protestors, warning of inevitable cuts in social services. Local governments and their associations publicly worried about the huge revenue losses.

The unprecedented, non-partisan show of force quickly took effect, while the tax protestors' arguments degenerated into rhetoric. In an election eve editorial the Salt Lake Tribune reported: "As public opinion polls show rising resistance to initiatives A through C, chief spokesmen for the three ballot measures have grown choleric, characterizing the opposition as swine 'lapping at the public trough,' and in hateful diatribe, calling disagreeing groups and individuals 'crooks,' 'liars' and the ultimate slander, 'Nazis.'"

As support for the tax initiatives waned, so did the opposition to Bangerter, who had learned his lesson on taxes. That left Wilson — who, like Bangerter, had taken stances against wilderness and in favor of paving the Burr Trail — with little platform to stand on. Except for a promise to come to the aid of public education, Wilson's campaign was built mainly on opposition to Bangerter.

In the end, the tax protest, anti-Bangerter vote was split between Wilson and Cook, allowing Bangerter to skate to victory with barely half the Republican vote.

In a state that tends toward extremes, the overwhelming defeat of the tax initiatives can be seen as a big victory for moderates and an unmistakable move toward the center. Bangerter's reprieve was a side effect.

In other races, Utah's only Democrat in Congress, Rep. Wayne Owens, easily won re-election. Owens, who was endorsed by the Sierra Club, received 57 percent of the vote from his urban Salt Lake City district. Republican incumbents Reps. Howard Neilson and James Hansen and Sen. Orrin Hatch were re-elected by even larger majorities.

Republicans gained one seat in the state Senate, but lost one in the House, maintaining that party's control of the Senate by 76 percent and the House by 63 percent.

While there were few changes in personnel in this election, there were indications that environmental issues are slowly gaining importance in the Utah political scene. The biggest change was the formation of an unprecedented coalition of conservationists (including the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society and a number of Utah-based groups), the Utah Wildlife Leaders Coalition (representing 47 groups) and seven sportsman's organizations.

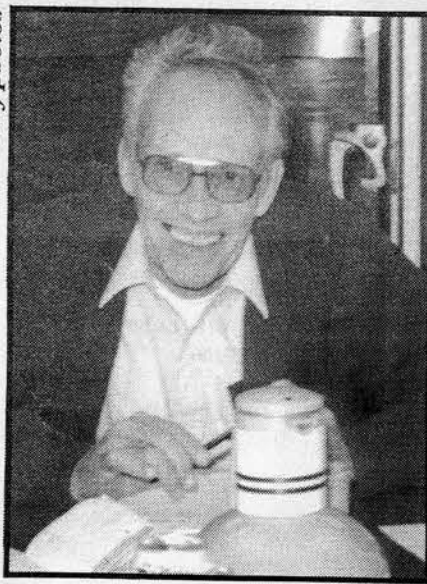
Announcing it was tired of political leaders subverting wildlife concerns to agriculture and extractive industries, the new coalition strongly endorsed Democrats Ted Wilson and Wayne Owens. In full page ads on the sports pages of the Salt Lake newspapers, the coalition cited both candidates' support for fisheries, non-game wildlife, big game, threatened and rare species, and recreational use of public lands, as well

as Owens' strong wilderness proposals. The coalition also piled up 81 endorsements from individuals like Robert Redford and the state's leading conservationists and sportsmen.

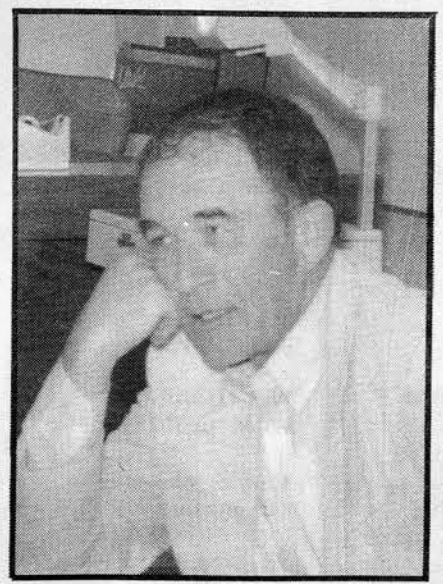
In a similar move, the Utah chapter of the Sierra Club mounted a grass-roots campaign to help 10 candidates running for the state Legislature, winning seven.

—Craig Bigler

Norm Schreusbury photos



Jimmie Walker



Dutch Zimmerman

Cisco incinerator is beat

Traditional politics got stood on its head in southeastern Utah last week.

In what was widely viewed as a plebiscite for the region's economic future, Grand County and Moab residents voted by a 63.5 to 36.5 margin to prohibit construction of a toxic waste incinerator in the abandoned railroad town of Cisco. To ensure that their will won't be undone, voters canned incumbent Republican County Commissioners Jimmie Walker and Dutch Zimmerman, replacing them with Democrats Merv Lawton (by 57 percent) and Ferne Mullen (by 52 percent).

It was a hotly contested election. Incumbent Commissioners Walker and Zimmerman had placed their political careers on the line, envisioning the proposed incinerator as the progenitor of a new industrial base for Grand County. Instead of the overwhelming support they would have won just five years ago, the commissioners got shot down by a new crop of residents striving for "a community to match the scenery."

The political landscape in Grand County now looks profoundly different. Conservationists are no longer a hated

minority, and with a two to one Democratic majority on the County Commission and incumbent Democrats as sheriff and county clerk, Grand County is now one of the more Democratic counties in Utah. Some of the changes may have also rubbed off on nearby San Juan, Emery and Carbon counties.

All four counties went for Democrat Ted Wilson over Republican Norman Bangerter in the gubernatorial elections. In addition the four counties, which make up the state's very conservative southeastern Senate district, rejected Republican Cal Black's bid for the legislature.

Black, who has had a colorful career as a San Juan County Commissioner and is considered one of the founders of the Sagebrush Rebellion, campaigned as "The candidate who knows public land issues and who will stop Wayne Owens, Robert Redford and their cronies from locking up southern Utah." Black will remain a powerful figure, however, as a member of both the State Land Board and the national Bureau of Land Management advisory board.

—Craig Bigler

***** The Cal Black Philosophy *****

"We want to assist with our nation's defense;
We want no more truck with those who straddle the fence;
We need to mine copper!
We need to make steel!!
We need oil wells and gas for our automobiles.
We need jobs in the coal and uranium mines, and cows on the range.
We need good living wages, not minimum change;
We need minerals, and pastures, and mountain access;
Recreation and fishing, good roads and the rest."

Economic Development

We must not arbitrarily rule out any component of economic development. Any single-industry based economy is unhealthy. Tourism alone does not provide a healthy, viable economy.

Local Input

I believe the people who live in any city, county, region or state should have much more to say about what happens or doesn't happen in their "back yard" than people who don't live there.

Reprinted from an ad in the Moab Times-Independent, Oct. 27.

MONTANA

Republicans rout Democrats across state

With George Bush capturing the presidency, Democrats nationwide are consoling themselves with their gains in Congress and in state houses. But that isn't the case in Montana, where the color of the Big Sky has turned decidedly Republican.

The GOP nabbed the governor's chair, put a lock on the state Senate, and in its biggest coup, ousted two-term Sen. John Melcher, giving Montana its first Republican U.S. senator in 36 years.

The Democrats regained control of the state House by a slim four seats, and also returned popular Pat Williams to Congress, but the overall Republican advance worries conservationists, who saw Democrats as their best hope for making environmental gains as the state enters its centennial year.

Conservative Stan Stephens' victory over former-Gov. Tom Judge in the well-fought gubernatorial race came as no surprise. However, his decisive margin of six percent startled most observers. Stephens, a former state senator and radio broadcaster, will be Montana's first Republican governor in 20 years. He succeeds two-term incumbent Ted Schwinden, who is retiring from politics.

The gubernatorial campaign was waged around economic development, with Stephens advocating less government regulation, a slimmed-down government workforce and the handing over of some state services to private business. Conservationists bemoan his environmental voting record in the Legislature. According to Meg Nelson, lobbyist for the Montana Environmental Center, Stephens voted only 10 to 15 percent of the time with environmentalists in the

early 1980s. She adds that his rating went up to 60 percent in 1985, during his last legislative session before he announced his candidacy for governor.

Judge, who served as governor from 1972 to 1980, when he lost a bid for a third term in the primary, called for an active government role in promoting business. He was nagged throughout the election by his inability to explain the disappearance of more than \$90,000 from a past campaign war-chest, and from charges that he was out of touch with the average Montanan.

Stephens will hit the ground running. In January he will confront a split Legislature that will wrestle with a grab-bag of bills focused on turning Montana's economic wheels. The Legislature will also consider a wide array of measures affecting the environment, with the most contentious likely to deal with water issues, forest practices and relaxing environmental regulations.

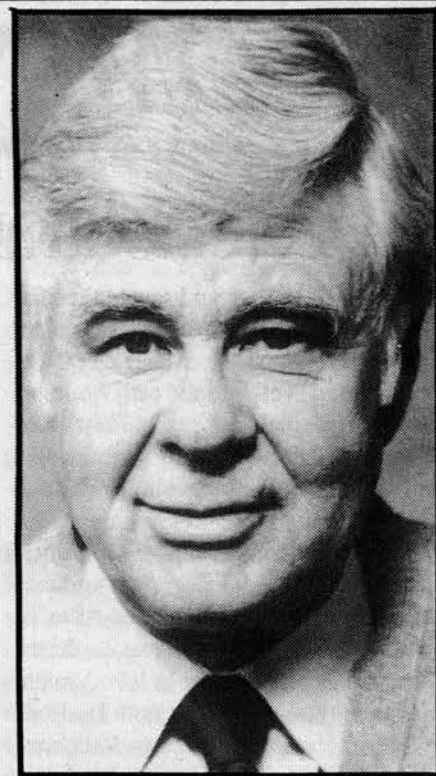
Until recently, most political pundits thought John Melcher would coast into a third term in the U.S. Senate. And even in late October, when polls showed the race tightening, few thought Conrad Burns, a Yellowstone County commissioner with only two years of elective experience, had a chance. But on election night the former farm radio broadcaster pulled off one of the country's most stunning congressional upsets. Burns, who captured 52 percent of the vote, is also the first person to beat an incumbent Montana senator in 36 years.

"Finally the softness of John Melcher caught up with him," says Dan Kemmis, a Democrat and former speaker of the Montana House. Part of that softness may have been Melcher's handling of

the recently vetoed Montana wilderness bill. The senator waited until the last minute before introducing the legislation in mid-October. He then pushed it through the Senate right before lawmakers adjourned, over the objections of many Republicans and the state's timber and mining industries. President Reagan pocket-vetoed the measure at the urging of wilderness opponents, as well as Republican strategists who thought a veto would boost Burns.

Burns, who proposes about half as much wilderness as Melcher, complained to the *Associated Press* before the election that Melcher "just fiddled around too much back there and then tried to gang-bust (the bill) through." The senator-elect is a hard-line conservative who opposes tax increases and supports more defense spending and less government regulation.

Pat Williams, a deputy whip and increasingly influential presence in Congress, retained his 1st Congressional District in western Montana with a whopping victory over relatively unknown Jim Fenlason of Bozeman. Democratic and conservationist hopes in Montana's eastern district were crushed when voters returned Ron Marlenee to Congress for his seventh term. While Marlenee barely beat challenger O'Brien two years ago, the Republican easily outdistanced him this year. National envi-



Sen. John Melcher

ronmental groups call Marlenee one of the environment's worst enemies in Congress.

In ballot initiatives, Montana's voters were generally gracious to education but they were downright hostile to the idea of a bottle bill. That measure, which lost by a four to one margin, would have required a five cent deposit on aluminum and glass beverage containers. Opponents reportedly spent almost \$500,000 to defeat the bill. Most of the money came from out-of-state bottlers. The bill's supporters had planned on spending around \$30,000, much of which was to be in-kind donations.

—Bruce Farling

Reagan pockets wilderness bill

Montana's hard fought wilderness bill, 10 years in negotiations, fell prey Nov. 3rd to election year politics.

Congress sent the carefully crafted bill to President Reagan in late October, but Reagan refused to sign it before the bill automatically expired. Announcing the pocket veto, Reagan said the bill would have injured Montana's economy and "cost jobs and mineral development opportunities." It is only the second wilderness bill Reagan has ever vetoed. The first was refused over an unrelated amendment and later signed.

Montana Democrats — Sens. Max Baucus and John Melcher and Rep. Pat Williams, the three sponsors of the bill — refuted Reagan's charges, saying the bill was important to the state's tourism and recreation economy, and would have freed millions of acres for development. Baucus accused Reagan and the Republicans of "playing petty politics" and said the White House would never had dared a veto with Congress still in session.

The Democrats also accused the Republicans of sacrificing the bill to give some political momentum to Conrad Burns, the Republican opponent to Melcher, and to Montana Rep. Ron Marlenee, who was also up for re-election. Melcher was the bill's principal author, and Republican Marlenee was the only one of the Montana delegation to oppose it.

As proof of the GOP's skullduggery,

the Democrats pointed out that the first announcement of the veto came from Burns' campaign office, not from the White House. Burns denied it was a campaign issue.

However, shortly before election Tuesday Williams said, "The Republicans of Montana have made a massive political mistake here." Williams, who was also up for re-election, promised to work on another bill as soon as Congress convenes in January, and said if the Republicans wanted to make the Montana elections a referendum on wilderness, then he welcomed the challenge.

No one can say if the election really was a referendum on the wilderness bill, as the results are mixed. The measure may have helped Marlenee's decisive victory. It certainly contributed to Melcher's upset, but had little effect on Williams' easy win.

The morning after the elections, Melcher said his handling of the wilderness bill might have been a factor in his loss, but then told a *Missoulian* reporter that "maybe it was just my time to lose."

The wilderness bill would have designated 1.4 million acres of wilderness and another 600,000 acres of national recreation areas and further study areas. It would have released the state's remaining 4 million acres for timbering and development.

—Bruce Farling

ARIZONA

Republicans hold on to state

Even though last spring's impeachment of Arizona Gov. Evan Mecham badly shook the state's Republican party, it appears not to have been fatal.

Since the Mecham fiasco, Arizona's Republican party has been split between those still loyal to the car-dealer turned governor and the Republican old guard. Democrats were expected to drive the wedge home this election, potentially breaking the Republican party's iron grip on the state legislature for the first time in decades. The Democrats failed, making only minor inroads at the Statehouse.

The biggest changes came in the primaries last September, when several key old time Republicans and leading anti-Mecham figures got knocked out of the election. They included Speaker of the House Joe Lane, Senate President Karl Kunasek and Sen. Jack Taylor, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

But last week the Democrats won only two seats in the Senate and two seats in the House, narrowing the Republican Senate majority to 17 seats against the Democrat's 13. The House ratio is now 34 to 26 in favor of the Republicans. The Democrats had hoped to gain 4 seats in each race.

The Legislature's next session will probably see bills concerning air quality and groundwater pollution, but the changes are expected to make little or no difference from previous voting.

In the congressional races Arizona kept the status quo. All five incumbents

were easily re-elected to the House, including 27-year veteran Rep. Morris Udall, the only Democrat.

In the Senate, Dennis DeConcini was re-elected to a third term, beating Republican Keith DeGreen by a 56 to 41 percent margin. DeGreen's campaign, strapped for funding until the national GOP committee injected \$212,000 in October, didn't reach full stride until the final weeks. DeGreen got a lot of momentum by attacking DeConcini for his purchase of a land tract in the path of the Central Arizona Water Project, later re-selling it for over five times what he paid. That tightened up the polls significantly right before the election, but not enough to alter the outcome.

Perhaps the only significant impact Mecham had on this year's election was the so-called "Mecham Amendment." Proposition 105 requires that a runoff election be held if no candidate gets more than 50 percent of the vote for any of the state's top five offices. The proposition is the legacy of the 1986 Gubernatorial election, when Mecham beat the weaker candidates with less than 40 percent of the vote. Another proposition, which squeaked by with 51 to 49 percent victory, made English the official language of Arizona. The amendment will require that all government forms, with few special exceptions, be printed in English. However, Laurie Roberts of the *Arizona Republic* says, "It is expected that this one will land itself in court pretty quickly."

—Tom Mullen

12-High Country News -- November 21, 1988

WYOMING

Wallop ekes out a victory

In Wyoming, a hard fought race for the U.S. Senate turned into a white-knuckled cliff-hanger. The race dragged well into the early hours of Nov. 9, until unofficial results from all of the state's precincts finally gave incumbent Republican Malcolm Wallop a 1,300 vote edge.

Wallop, the West's ardent anti-wilderness, pro-development spokesman, in his quest for a third term in Washington, D.C., came close to defeat at the hands of 38-year-old John Vinich, a bar and restaurant owner from Hudson.

Throughout the campaign Vinich attacked Wallop for saying twelve years ago that no U.S. senator should serve more than two terms. Vinich claimed that Wallop is "out of touch with Wyoming." The southern tier of Wyoming — the towns along the Union Pacific Line — plus Casper, bought that message and went heavily for Vinich.

A state representative and senator from Fremont County (home to the Louisiana-Pacific timber mills in Dubois and Riverton) for the past 14 years,

Vinich recognized that his constituents are ardent advocates of multiple use of the national forests.

Vinich therefore did not make a play for environmental groups, nor were they particularly enthusiastic about his candidacy. He even presented arguments in favor of below cost timber sales on the basis they would create jobs and benefit local communities in the long run. Some environmentalists were dismayed when Vinich suggested there might be a way to allow a "corridor" through Bridger-Teton National Forest Wilderness areas in order to accommodate a long-sought Lander to Jackson snowmobile trail.

But on one environmental issue Vinich repeatedly attacked Wallop — the Wyoming senior senator's vote against the Clean Water Act. And as the Yellowstone fires peaked late in the summer, Vinich chided Wallop for neglecting his duties as a member and one-time chairman of the energy and public lands subcommittee.

In state legislative races Democratic candidates gained some ground. The

state Senate will have the same balance as before — 19 Republicans and 11 Democrats — but in the House, the Democrats picked up three seats. The count there now stands at 39 Republicans and 24 Democrats.

The spectre of Wyoming as a dumping ground for the nation's toxic and hazardous wastes became a campaign theme in areas where companies have recently proposed building new toxic dump sites. In particular, residents of Laramie County, where Cheyenne is located, are worried about a tire dump located east of Cheyenne and plans for an asbestos dump near the town of Burns.

At least one politician lost his re-election bid because he was on the wrong side of the hazardous waste issue. In the small town of Wamsutter — located on Interstate-80, between Rock Springs and Rawlins — voters booted out Mayor Verne Waldner, who had shown interest in having a waste management firm locate an asbestos dump near the town.

But a woman from Natrona County, who had come to symbolize the struggle of citizens against toxic waste contamination, lost her bid for a state Senate seat. Linda Burkhardt has been a vocal critic of state and federal officials for their handling of toxic contamination of groundwater and soil in the Brookhurst subdivision near Casper (HCN, 8/31/87). However, the area's two incumbents — Dan Sullivan and oilman Diemer True — won handily against Burkhardt, who lives in Brookhurst.

Statewide, there was general agreement among candidates that more environmental safeguards are needed, and many indicated an interest in working on state legislation to regulate hazardous waste. Observers say that solid waste regulatory legislation that failed to reach the floor during the 1988 budget session is certain to be introduced early next year.



Sen. Malcolm Wallop

While intentionally ignored in the rest of Wyoming, the environmental movement was the focus of a hotly-contested county commission race in Teton County, the seat of environmental activism in the state.

Republican Paul von Gontard, an Anheuser-Busch heir and 40-year resident of Jackson, sought to convince voters that environmental organizations are anti-worker and anti-growth. His Democratic opponent, Steve Thomas, succeeded in forging a coalition between environmentalists and hard-pressed workers who find it increasingly difficult to feed and house families in Wyoming's glitzy resort town.

Thomas, a former meat-cutter union organizer from Colorado, won by a hefty margin. The three-person governing body will retain its two-to-one Democratic edge in this heavily Republican County. The seat was opened up by Leslie Petersen, an incumbent Democrat and a prominent figure in statewide Democratic circles, who did not seek re-election.

—Katharine Collins

COLORADO

Voters maintain status quo

The coat tails of George Bush could not be found in Colorado on election night. Although the vice president handily defeated Michael Dukakis in the state, local issues determined other races, and Democrats even had some to crow about.

In western Colorado, Rep. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Native American jeweler and rancher, took 78 percent of the vote and won every county in his race against Republican Jim Zartman. Two years ago, Campbell won his first term by only 7,198 votes. Campbell campaigned as an accessible congressman who cared about both water development and expanding a local monument to a national park.

Ticket-splitting continued in other congressional contests, and regardless of party all incumbents were re-elected.

Like Ben Campbell this time around, Democrat David Skaggs won his second term easily against a well-financed Republican opponent. Skaggs ran in the Boulder area that is home to Democratic Sen. Tim Wirth.

Incumbent Republican Rep. Dan Schaefer, a decided non-favorite among environmentalists because of his disinterest in clean air and other conservation issues, turned back a spirited challenge by Democrat Martha Ezzard in a heavily-Republican district.

On balance, Colorado's congressional delegation remains the same: three Republicans and three Democrats, one of whom, Pat Schroeder, coasted once again to victory with 70 percent of the vote.

If there was excitement about this election in Colorado it came mainly from controversy over ballot issues — once voters studied them enough to decipher their cryptic wording.

The result: English is now the state's "official" language, however that may be interpreted; poor women may

still not obtain abortions at public expense; a tax limitation amendment requiring innumerable votes on public spending was soundly defeated; and the Republican-dominated Legislature (now 39-26 in the House and 24-11 in the Senate) may no longer snuff out bills in committee or insist on party unanimity after a bill goes to the floor.

It was in some county races that Bush's coat tails seemed irrelevant. In western Colorado's Mesa County, for instance, the issue was fallout from the massive oil shale bust of the early 1980s. The legacy in Mesa County, after commissioners failed to halt lavish spending, is the highest per-capita debt in Colorado.

Democrats capitalized on the continuing problems that were not solved by Republican leadership, electing two Democratic commissioners and a state legislator.

In Summit County, home to the three major ski areas of Breckenridge, Copper Mountain and Keystone, Democrats apparently unseated one commissioner and took the open seat of another.

In one race the issue was the proposed Two Forks Dam, which Republican incumbent commissioners had approved in a deal with the Denver Water Board. Democrat Joe Sands attacked the arrangement, and as of this writing seems the 2761-2714 winner against Dan Ulmer, the incumbent Republican commissioner.

Democrat Marsha Osborn, who picked up the open commissioner seat in Summit County, focused her winning 3,020-2,356 campaign on the county's tendency to focus on "big business and big bucks," says *Summit Sentinel* reporter Bill Mitchell. She also criticized the Two Forks Dam agreement with Denver.

—Betsy Marston

NORTH DAKOTA

Democrats hold on to state

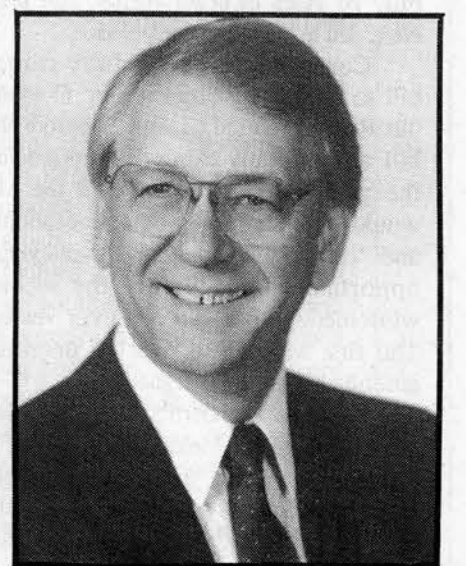
Although North Dakotans supported George Bush for president, the state's voters re-elected Democrats in statewide races. Democratic Sen. Quentin Burdick, a 28-year veteran of the Senate and current Chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee, won another term, easily overcoming Republican challenger Earl Strinden.

Strinden, widely considered North Dakota's ablest state legislator, has been a leader in the North Dakota Statehouse since 1975. His campaign questioned the capabilities of his 80 year old opponent, asking the question: "Where's the Quentin Burdick we used to know?" Burdick performed adequately enough in public debates with Strinden to dispel doubts about his competence. Burdick won 60 percent of the vote.

Incumbent, four-term Congressman Byron Dorgan, another Democrat, also won easily, trouncing Republican Steve Sydnese by a 72 to 28 percent margin, to claim North Dakota's sole House seat. Dorgan, 46 years old, is considered the state's most popular politician.

North Dakota Sierra Club leader, Dexter Perkins, says Dorgan "votes right on all the major environmental issues except water projects." Both Dorgan and Burdick were endorsed by the Sierra Club.

Democratic Governor William Sin-



Gov. William Sinner

ner won re-election with a convincing 60-40 victory over Dickinson businessman Leon Mallberg. Sinner, a Red River Valley farmer, has a bad reputation with environmentalists in his state because of his work against environmental controls on energy development in western North Dakota.

Democrats retained control of the state Senate with a 32 to 20 margin. One race remains undecided. Republicans hold the edge in the Statehouse. With three races too close to call, the margin is 57-46.

—Peter Carrels

IDAHO

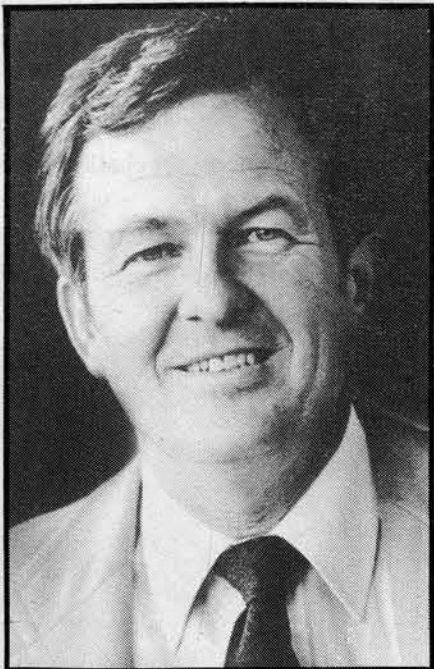
The political winds have shifted

Idaho's 1988 election mixed expected results and surprises. Idaho went heavily for George Bush and re-elected its incumbent congressmen by big margins. But some state legislative upsets give Idaho's Democrats more reason for optimism than they have had in many years.

George Bush won Idaho by 64 percent. Idaho's two congressmen, Republican Larry Craig and Democrat Richard Stallings, won re-election with 65 and 64 percent of the vote, respectively. Stallings' tally was the biggest a Democrat has ever received in his heavily Republican southern Idaho district.

Democrats gained three seats in the Idaho Senate (they are still a minority of 19 - 23), but the impact transcends the numbers. Jim Risch, president pro tem of the Senate and the single most powerful man in the Idaho Legislature for nearly a decade, was soundly beaten in Ada County (Boise) by Democrat Mike Burkett. The Senate's assistant minority leader, Terry Sverdsten, was beaten in Kootenai County (Coeur d'Alene) by

Paul Peck



Rep. Richard Stallings

populist Democrat John Stocks. And the Republican leader in the House, Jack Kenneville, was beaten in Boise by Democrat Jim Hansen.

The message of dissatisfaction with Republican leadership, particularly on education, will not be lost on those who replace them. One by-product will be a better climate for conservation at the Legislature. Sverdsten and another Boise Republican loser, Bill Ringert, were the two most anti-conservation members of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee. Their replacements will almost certainly be friendlier on land and water issues. Ringert's opponent, Brian Donesley, effectively used Ringert's poor water quality and river protection record against him.

Statewide, conservation/outdoor issues played a key role only in the Stallings race. His opponent, Idaho Falls Republican Dane Watkins, hammered on the theme that Stallings was giving away Idaho land and water to "the feds." Watkins' centerpiece was Stallings' support for the American Heritage Trust

Act, a pending bill to rename and strengthen the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Watkins labelled the bill a "federal land grab" that would allow Stallings' "radical environmentalist friends in the Sierra Club" to condemn private land in Idaho. But the attack fell flat, largely because it was patently untrue. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been used in Idaho mostly to develop city parks, swimming pools and urban recreation facilities.

On the other hand, a few of Stallings' conservation initiatives in the last two years helped him substantially. He supported Craters of the Moon National Park, two smaller national park units in south central Idaho and a land exchange improving public access along the South Fork of the Snake River. He carried counties in the areas affected by these initiatives that Democrats simply do not carry.

His huge victory establishes him as a force second only to Cecil Andrus in Idaho's Democratic Party and as a serious contender, if he chooses to run, for a U.S. Senate seat in 1990 or 1992.

— Pat Ford

NORTHWEST

The region gets greener

It was yes to protecting rivers and the cleanup of toxic wastes, and a mixed bag to Congress from the voters of the Pacific Northwest on Nov. 8.

By a 56-to-44 margin, Oregon voters passed a ballot measure which added 500 miles of rivers to their state's Scenic Waterways System. The move, which almost doubles the amount of waterways under the system, restricts development within one-quarter mile of the rivers. It prohibits dams and placer mining (except dredges with hoses under 4 inches), allows irrigation for anyone holding prior water rights, and mandates that roads, logging and other uses maintain as nearly as possible the natural beauty of the area.

Land owners, particularly along central Oregon's John Day River, fought the bill. Now, before they paint any barn within one-quarter mile of the river, they must check with the state to ensure compatible colors — pinks and purples are probably out. But the measure's backers point out that such approval usually involves only a phone call, and in the 18 years of Oregon's Scenic Waterways System, only two requests have been denied.

The measure comes just weeks after the U.S. Congress granted federal protection to 1,700 miles of Oregon's rivers. Areas covered by both bills will now be jointly managed by the state and feds. But the state initiative, unlike the federal bill, specifically protects the section of the Klamath River where the controversial Salt Caves Dam has been proposed. Although the state-wide vote was a clear victory for opponents of that dam, it may not mean the end of it, since final permission for hydroelectric projects like Salt Caves will come from the feds, who are not bound by Oregon voters' wishes.

Also specifically named in the initiative was Walker Creek in Oregon's coast range, where the city of McMinnville wanted to put a reservoir. Because jurisdiction for non-hydro dams does lie with the state, that project apparently is dead.

Moving to the indoor environment, in the state's most expensive contest, Oregon voters handily defeated a measure which would have banned smoking in almost all public buildings. Tobacco companies spent \$3 million to defeat the measure, prompting one commentator to suggest an initiative to ban 4-wheel drives in order to bring auto industry dollars into the state.

Oregon's congressional delegation remained unchanged. Four of the five incumbents handily won re-election. Democrats Peter DeFazio, Les AuCoin and Ron Wyden will be returning to D.C., along with Republican Bob Smith. But, in a race so tight that the results weren't known until absentee ballots were counted three days later, Rep. Denny Smith — who won his seat on Reagan's coat tails in 1980 and has been described as someone who equates environmentalism with anti-Americanism — barely beat 39-year old state Rep. Mike Kopetski, who entered politics as a volunteer for Bobby Kennedy.

North of the Columbia River, Washington voters ended a three-year battle by passing a tough toxic wastes cleanup bill. The initiative imposes a .7 percent tax on the wholesale value of hazardous substances to fund the cleanup of hazardous waste sites. The primary responsibility for such cleanup will lie with the owners or operators of the sites, and failure to comply with state Department of Ecology rules can result in fines of up to \$25,000 a day.

By a 56-to-44 margin — more than

Jim Stiak



Sabalie Falls, Oregon

160,000 votes — Washingtonians chose that citizen-sponsored measure over a legislature-drafted version which became law last year. The Legislature's bill exempted petroleum products to be shipped out of state from the new tax, encouraged voluntary cleanups through incentives such as excusing polluters from future liabilities once the cleanup was complete, and called for much lower fines. The new stringent rules, which cover several hundred sites in the Evergreen State, take effect March 1.

Voters separated that issue from Booth Gardner, who supported both the weaker toxic cleanup initiative and the reopening of Hanford's N-Reactor. Gardner, possibly the most popular governor in the state's history, returns to the statehouse for a second term after a 63 percent to 37 percent win over GOP sacrificial candidate Bob Williams.

Voters also pushed a revolving door for Seattle Republican Slade Gorton, returning him to the U.S. Senate. Gorton, who two years ago lost the state's other Senate seat after just one term, narrowly defeated Congressman Mike Lowry, who

frequently listed the environment, and particularly nuclear waste cleanup, as his highest priority.

Gorton, however, recommends converting a mothballed WPPSS reactor into the production of tritium for nuclear weapons, and he supports reopening of Hanford's N-Reactor. But he also helped ban supertankers from the Puget Sound, and promoted bills to protect Mt. St. Helens and the Columbia Gorge.

Democrat Jolene Unsoeld, one of the sponsors of the successful toxics cleanup measure, won election to Washington's 3rd Congressional District, although by a much narrower margin than predicted. All 6 of Washington's incumbent congressmen easily won reelection, including House Majority Leader Tom Foley and fellow Democrats Norm Dicks and Al Swift, and Republicans Ron Chandler and Sid Morrison, a leading champion of continued military nuclear production at Hanford. In the 7th District seat vacated by Lowry, Democrat Jim McDermott won election by more than a three-to-one margin.

— Jim Stiak

14-High Country News -- November 21, 1988

SOUTH DAKOTA

Two mining initiatives fail

Goliath soundly trounced David at the polls in South Dakota this election.

Goliath was the mining industry and David was a citizens' action group. The fight was over two initiatives that would have forced tougher reclamation and water protection standards on the mining industry and, secondly, raised state taxes on gold mined by heap leaching or in open pits. They were defeated, 59 percent to 41 percent, and 65 percent to 35 percent, respectively.

Gary Heckenlaible, spokesperson for the Surface Mining Initiative Fund — the coalition that led the campaign for passage of the two reform initiatives — attributed their loss to the multi-million dollar advertising campaign mounted by mining interests and the presence of popular former governor Republican William Janklow. Janklow was hired by the mining companies several months before the election to generate criticism against the proposals. He toured the state constantly, held countless press conferences and aggressively debated initiative supporters.

While serving as governor, from 1978 to 1986, Janklow had warned about the possible impacts of strip mining for gold and had battled with gold interests over a higher severance tax. However, during the recent initiative campaign, he called the measures "extreme" and accused the state's environmentalists of lying about the adequacy of South Dakota's current mining laws.

Heckenlaible's badly outspent group worked door-to-door but was unable to

counter claims by mining companies that the initiatives would block economic development and force miners out of jobs. During the bitter campaign, mining companies continued to invest millions of dollars to develop mining facilities, a sign that mining activity would not have ceased if either or both initiatives had passed.

Open pit/heap leach gold mining activity in South Dakota's Black Hills is escalating at a brisk pace. In 1982, only one such operation was functioning. Today, there are five surface mines underway, with more planned. Over 300,000 acres in the Black Hills are being scrutinized by gold mining companies for possible mining development.

Heckenlaible says his group will not give up. "I'm looking forward to continuing the fight for better laws," he said after the election. "This is the first stage, a stepping-stone. A year and a half ago, no one knew about surface mining for gold. Now lots of people know. We got some 40 percent of the votes to support us and we'll go from here."

Heckenlaible said he and others concerned about surface gold mining will continue to monitor the mines, lobby the state Legislature for better laws and will watchdog state regulatory agencies. "Down the line we may do another initiated measure," he says.

However, the state's new Legislature may prove a bit more receptive to environmental proposals. Several legislators considered strident opponents to environmentalists were ousted on November 8. While the Legislature is

still in Republican hands, the Democrats made significant headway in the Senate, long the most difficult chamber for environmental legislation, gaining five seats to cut the difference to 20 to 15. Republicans control the Statehouse by a 45 to 25 margin.

In South Dakota's only statewide race, Democrat Tim Johnson breezed to victory over Republican David Volk in pursuit of his second term as the state's sole U.S. Representative. Volk, who has served 16 consecutive years as State Treasurer, never seriously challenged the

incumbent, and Johnson's 72 percent to 28 percent victory was the most impressive showing any Democrat seeking national office has made in modern times. All of the state's 66 counties supported the 41-year-old lawyer.

Johnson, who has been publicly skeptical about the impacts of North Dakota's Garrison Diversion project on South Dakota's Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge and James River, is viewed as a friend by the state's environmentalists.

—Peter Carrels



Homestake mine in South Dakota

tives who don't like professional environmentalists, I think it would have worked well."

Instead, invective was the biggest campaign issue.

A July fund-raising letter from Schiff warned that Udall had support of "left-wing activist groups" such as the Sierra Club, and his T.V. ads criticized Udall for not paying his college student loans on time.

Udall retaliated with a barrage against Schiff for plea-bargaining two-thirds of the county's felony cases and failing to prosecute a big murder case that was dismissed.

Finally, Schiff mailed 80,000 Democrats brochures accusing Udall of supporting federal control of child day care, having "plea-bargained rape, murder, fraud and bribery cases" as a federal prosecutor and having moved 8 times, living in 8 states and two foreign countries over the past 13 years. Udall said he'd lived in Albuquerque for 8 of the past 13 years and lived in one other country, England, for a year while attending Cambridge University.

Schiff acknowledged some of his ads had minor errors, retreated from his "left-wing" claim about the Sierra Club and asserted he cared as much about environment as Udall.

But he still has a credibility problem with environmental groups, and next year will face the twin challenges of a new wilderness bill for Bureau of Land Management land in New Mexico and helping decide the fate of the troubled Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad.

"He is an open slate," said Chuck Wiggins, president of Albuquerque's Sierra Club chapter. "We need to get in touch with him, give him our information about our top priorities and let him know we are not a bunch of left-wing activists."

In the state's other races, incumbent Democrat Bill Richardson easily won northern New Mexico's 3rd Congress-

sional District, with 72 percent of the vote. Republican Joe Skeen was unopposed in the southern 2nd Congressional District, and in the only statewide race, incumbent Democrat Jeff Bingaman handily won another term in the U.S. Senate.

In state legislative races, Democrats cleaned up. They took four seats to recapture control of the state Senate after Republicans had moved to a 21-21 split in 1986. And, they maintained a 45-25 majority in the state House of Representatives after losing one seat to the Republicans.

The New Mexico Conservation Voters Alliance, an environmental political action group, contributed to that victory. The group endorsed 30 candidates in state legislative races, and 25 won.

The biggest loser in this year's elections was Republican Gov. Garrey Carruthers, who had made a well-publicized, highly unsuccessful effort to unseat several Democrats in both houses. Two Republican state senators who had not sought re-election predicted Carruthers would face rough sledding in the legislature next year.

"This was a case of naivete on his part," said Sen. John Budagher, a conservative Albuquerque Republican. "There was no rational explanation for it."

Outgoing Sen. Joe Carraro of Albuquerque noted some reports had mentioned Carruthers as a possible U.S. Interior Secretary for President-elect Bush. Elected as New Mexico governor in 1986, Carruthers was Interior Secretary James Watt's deputy in the early 1980s.

"If I were in his shoes ... I might go ahead and leave," said Carraro.

The governor would gladly serve on a Bush transition team for the Interior Department, said Carruthers press secretary Don Caviness, but he "thoroughly enjoys being governor and intends to stay governor."

—Tony Davis

NEW MEXICO

A Udall loses close race

The day after New Mexico's elections, Tom Udall was on a plane for a backpacking trip to the Gila Wilderness and Steve Schiff was back in his Bernalillo County District Attorney's office. The distance between the two men was appropriate, given the amount of mud they'd slung at each other in their battle for Congress.

Schiff, a Republican, won a 6,000-vote victory over Democrat Udall out of 150,000 votes cast in a bitter race for New Mexico's 1st Congressional District seat, which includes Albuquerque. His victory keeps in Republican hands a district that had belonged to Republican Rep. Manuel Lujan from 1968 until his retirement this year.

It was a big loss for environmentalists across the U.S. who had pumped much time and money into the Udall campaign. Among the groups who endorsed or worked for Udall were Friends of the Earth, the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters.

At the end, both candidates said they regretted the negative television ads they'd bought during the campaign's last month. But both sides blamed the other for doing it first.

Schiff entered the race as a well-known Bernalillo County district attorney with 8 years experience. "I think that

Schiff was successful in persuading a significant number of middle-aged, Anglo male Democrats to vote for him," said veteran private New Mexico pollster Brian Sanderoff. "They are D.A. kind of guys, Reagan Democrats."

Udall, on the other hand, had never held elected office, although he had served as an assistant U.S. Attorney and chief counsel for the New Mexico Health and Environmental Department. "It was almost like running against an incumbent," said Udall press secretary Dede Feldman.

Son of former U.S. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall and nephew of U.S. House Interior Committee chairman Morris Udall, Tom Udall painted himself as an environmentalist from day one of his campaign. He gave numerous press conferences and churned out frequent press releases on clean air, clean water and nuclear waste.

But in the TV advertising battleground that wins and loses elections these days, Udall said little about the environment during the fall. Some environmentalists wondered if both he and they had failed to drive home their message.

Said pollster Sanderoff, "Had they run an environmentally oriented campaign and stressed that environment means different things to different people, ... and they didn't turn off conserva-

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Bush may appoint moderates at Interior, Energy

by Andrew Melnykovich

WASHINGTON — After a presidential campaign in which telling the truth was an optional activity, it is time for the real George Bush to stand up.

Will the president-elect revert to his Eastern Establishment, moderate Republican roots, giving us the George Bush nurtured at Andover, Yale and Kennebunkport?

Or will President Bush continue to be the Reagan clone we saw on the campaign trail: an ideological chameleon whose beliefs change to conform to the political environment?

The first clues to the 41st president's true identity will be his choices for top posts in government. Early indicators point to a shift away from Reaganism toward moderation.

Bush's naming of James Baker as his Secretary of State was no shock, but his signalling of a wholesale housecleaning of Reagan political appointees surprised nearly everyone. Who replaces the Reaganauts in key natural resource policy posts will have profound implications for the West.

Early speculation on the leading contenders for the top jobs focused mostly on candidates from the East.

Bush's campaign environmental advisers — Nat Reed and Russell Train — have been mentioned as possible choices for Interior Secretary. Both have strong ties to the mainstream conservation community, Reed through the National Audubon Society and Train through the World Wildlife Fund/Conservation Foundation. Reed and Train both have served in the federal government. Either one would be far more sympathetic to conservationists than any of Reagan's appointees.

However, Reed may now be out of the running, sources at Interior say. After committing the unforgivable political gaffe of endorsing a Democrat in the Florida Senate race.

The other contenders for Interior Secretary are a pair of former Republican governors, New Hampshire's Gov. John Sununu and Dan Evans of Washington, who is leaving the Senate in frustration after serving only five years.

Sununu is one of the few Eastern chief executives who has any grasp of Western issues, having worked closely with Western governors on the acid rain problem. A fiscal arch-conservative, Sununu is seen as a moderate on environmental issues. But he would be an unknown quantity on questions such as grazing fees.

Evans is also a fiscal conservative, but enjoys a reputation as a strong environmentalist. He has expressed opposition to government subsidies to resource users.

Both Sununu and Evans have also been mentioned as contenders to succeed the ineffectual John Herrington as Energy Secretary.

If Bush lives up to his campaign commitments to deal with acid rain and other global pollution problems, the energy post, a neglected backwater during the Reagan years, will play a major role in shaping natural resource policy.

Expect both Sununu or Evans to push nuclear power as a way of reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Sununu is a backer of the controversial Seabrook nuclear power plant in his home state. He has been a strong advocate of federal measures to reduce acid rain.

Appointing Sununu or Train to the Interior post would break the tradition of naming Westerners to oversee the federal estate, most of which lies on the far side of the Mississippi from Washington. But the West will not be locked out of the selection process.

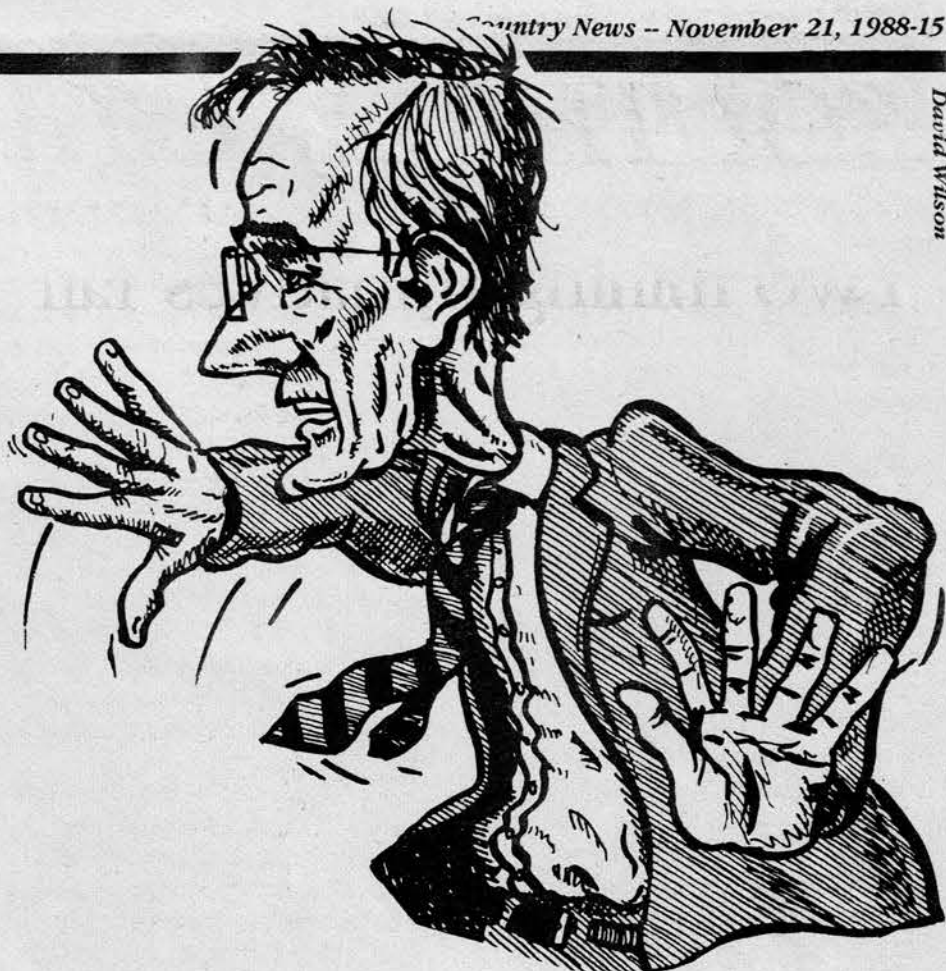
Sen. Alan Simpson, R-Wyo., who is Bush's close friend, has said that Western Republicans in Congress will submit a list of recommendations for upper-level posts important to them.

While the Cabinet-level appointments will draw the most attention, the assistant secretaries and agency heads are often more influential in shaping policy. The decisions on those posts will be determined largely by who fills the top jobs.

Expect changes at most, if not all, of the assistant secretary positions, and at the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One possible holdover is National Park Service Director William Penn Mott, who has strong backing from conservationists. Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson is a career civil servant and will remain.

There has been little speculation about candidates to succeed Robert Burford at BLM and Frank Dunkle at Fish and Wildlife. A name that has surfaced as a possible replacement for Burford is Tom Stroock, an oilman and Wyoming state senator who was Bush's classmate at Yale.

Bush's appointments will send the clearest signal yet of whether he intends to carry through the campaign commitments he made in an effort to capture the conservationist vote. Just as Reagan's appointment of James Watt signalled a pro-development, anti-environmental ap-



proach, Bush could, by appointing Russell Train or someone similar, show that he really does want to patch up the relationship between the GOP and the conservation community.

Likewise, Bush, by naming someone like Evans to be Energy Secretary, could place himself in stark contrast to Reagan, who, rather than working to develop a national energy policy, sought instead to abolish the department.

While the Bush administration cast has not been assembled, there is reason to hope that its dealings with Congress are likely to be far less confrontational than the clashes of the past eight years.

Unlike Reagan, Bush at least recognizes that environmental problems exist. Bush is certain to be more willing to

(Continued on page 16)

NEVADA

Hecht is dumped

Traditionally, Nevada votes Republican, but an ongoing controversy over the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear waste dump loosened up some local races.

Nevadans voted to stay the course nationally, electing Vice-President George Bush by a 60-40 margin, but then crossed party lines and turned over Republican Chic Hecht's Senate seat to Gov. Richard Bryan, a Democrat.

The Democrats also retained their hold on the governorship — and kept one of the state's two congressional seats. The state house remained unchanged, with a three-to-one Democratic Assembly and a marginally Republican Senate.

As in 1986, the major issue in this year's election was the high level nuclear waste repository proposed for the desert 110 miles northwest of Las Vegas. In the Bryan-Hecht Senate race, both candidates campaigned as the leader Nevada needs in Washington, D.C., to keep the nation's radioactive waste out of the state.

Gov. Bryan charged that Hecht's initial support for a Nevada dump and an overall weak showing as a freshman Senator allowed Congress to pass the 1987 and 1988 "Screw Nevada" bills. Those bills designated Yucca Mountain as the only site under consideration for a dump, and then cut funding for independent state studies.

Hecht, in turn, labelled his opponent "Bullfrog Bryan" for his failed attempt to create a new county (Bullfrog County) with the state's highest tax rates at Yucca Mountain. Hecht charged that the fiasco sent Congress the message that Nevada could be bribed into accepting the dump.

On other issues, Bryan, who ran

strongest in the Las Vegas area, supported vehicle registration programs, installation of water meters and toxic waste cleanup. Hecht, whose environmental voting record earned him a spot on the League of Conservation Voters "dirty dozen" list, drew most of his support from rural areas and industry. In the end Bryan slid by Hecht with a four point margin.

In both House districts Nevadans re-elected incumbents. Democrat Jim Bilbray, who won his seat by a narrow margin in 1986, took the 1st District two-to-one over Republican challenger Lucille Lusk. Bilbray's campaign included pro-wilderness and anti-dump stances, and he is considered by Bob Fulkerson of Nevada's Citizen Alert to be "the best voice Nevada has on the hill for the environment." In his first term he proposed a 725,000-acre wilderness bill which passed the House, and supported re-authorization of the Clean Air Act.

Voters in the 2nd Congressional District — all of Nevada outside of Las Vegas — swung the other direction and sent Republican Barbara Vucanovich to the House for a third term. Vucanovich is the last Laxalt protege still alive in Nevada politics, and now the lone Republican on the state's congressional delegation. She dominated the rural areas while her opponent, Sparks Mayor Jim Spoo, ran strong in Reno, Sparks, Carson City and Lake Tahoe.

Vucanovich did not come out against the dump until early this year, when she proposed to send high-level radioactive waste to the Marshall Islands. Spoo ridiculed the suggestion as "a belated and unscientific political fix."

—Cathy Ciarlo

Washington...

(Continued from page 15)

work with Congress to address those problems.

But a more cooperative administration does not necessarily mean quick results. The key will be in ending the factional and regional wrangling that has stymied congressional efforts to address broad problems such as acid rain. The election results, at least in the Senate, are cause for cautious optimism.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee lost one-fifth of its members — one voluntarily (Evans), and three through forced retirement at the polls — Republicans Chic Hecht of Nevada and Lowell Weicker of Connecticut and Democrat John Melcher of Montana. Another Western Republican, Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming, narrowly escaped defeat.

Weicker, though the third-ranking Republican on the panel, has not been an active participant on the committee in recent years. His departure is significant only in the possibility that he could be replaced by a Western Republican, thus shifting the balance on a committee that votes largely on regional rather than partisan lines.

Hecht, widely derided as one of the Senate's least gifted members, is best known for his gift for malapropisms, the most famous of which was his reference to a waste dump for radioactive materials as a "nuclear suppository." Hecht's feeble efforts to keep the dump out of Nevada contributed to his defeat by Gov. Richard Bryan.

Hecht's departure will have little impact on the committee. While Evans was the junior GOP member of the panel, his retirement represents the loss of one of its most thoughtful members.

The biggest change, however, is the defeat of "Doc" Melcher, who was seeking his third term. His replacement will be Republican Conrad Burns, a former farm report broadcaster. Burns was helped by Reagan's veto of the Melcher-sponsored Montana wilderness bill, which Burns had criticized as anti-economic development legislation.

Melcher's long-windedness is legendary, and he does not hesitate to use it as an effective tactic to block legislation. Few people have the patience to hear Melcher out, making him an effective obstructionist.

In 1986, Melcher and then-chairman James McClure, R-Idaho, engaged in a months-long battle in the energy committee over McClure's proposal to lift a federal ban that prohibits railroads or their affiliates from mining federal coal. After 13 committee sessions, Melcher prevailed.

Now that Melcher is out of the way, expect McClure to resubmit the legislation as soon as the 101st Congress convenes.

In addition to battling the railroads on behalf of the coal companies, Melcher, through his role as chairman of the mineral development subcommittee, supported efforts to help the West's struggling energy industries.

Melcher's departure could bring about a substantial reshuffling of subcommittee chairmanships among the committee's Democrats. The situation could be further complicated if Chairman Bennett Johnston of Louisiana is successful in his race to become Senate majority leader.

If he wins, Johnston would cede chairmanship to Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas, unless Bumpers chooses to remain as head of the small business panel. Next in line is Sen. Wendell Ford of

Kentucky, who now chairs the rules committee, a relatively insignificant post he would readily relinquish.

Bumpers is a strong conservationist who has no reluctance to take on the energy industries. He has championed efforts to reform the federal mineral leasing system. Ford, on the other hand, is known as a champion of both Eastern coal and the nuclear industry — a potentially difficult position to be in once Congress takes up measures to deal with acid rain and global warming.

Johnston, whether as majority leader or energy committee chairman, can be expected to continue his push for regulatory and tax relief for the petroleum industry. He will be joined by Bush and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, whose stock has shot up as a result of his vice presidential bid.

The complexion of the energy committee will also be determined by who fills the four vacancies. Bryan would be a logical choice to replace Melcher, while Burns might want to take one of the three open GOP seats. Another possible new Republican face could be Slade Gorton of Washington, who was successful in his comeback bid.

Changes on other committees were not as sweeping as on the energy panel. The environment committee lost ranking Republican

Robert Stafford of Vermont, a conservationist favorite, to retirement. He will be succeeded by a like-minded New Englander, John Chafee of Rhode Island.

Melcher sat on the agriculture committee, chairing its forestry subcommittee. The agriculture committee also lost its junior Republican, David Karnes of Nebraska.

Beyond its potential effect on the energy committee, the Democratic leadership race will do much to determine how the Senate addresses key environmental issues.

Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia has stepped down as Senate majority leader in order to take over the appropriations committee chairmanship vacated by the retirement of John Stennis of Mississippi. The change will not weaken Byrd's hand in protecting high-sulfur Eastern coal from the onslaughts of the acid rain controllers.

Byrd's intransigence on the issue has contributed to the stalemate between those who want to control acid rain through the use of expensive technology that allows the burning of high-sulfur coal and the "free choice" who favor allowing a shift to low-sulfur coal mined in the West.

The chief Senate sponsor of acid rain legislation, George Mitchell of Maine, is also in the leadership race. If he wins, he might be better positioned to continue his push for the measure.

On the other hand, some observers believe that taking on the top job could limit Mitchell's ability to forge compromises. They argue that the best outcome would have Mitchell losing to Johnston, who seems prepared to back acid rain legislation.

Election of the third contender, Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, appears likely to have little effect on the prospects for an acid rain bill or any other major environmental initiative.

While the Senate situation is in flux, little has changed in the House, where 98.7 percent of incumbents won re-election. What changes did occur are not likely to be felt in the West.

The interior committee lost only two of its members, second-ranking Republican Manuel Lujan retired and Oregon Republican Denny Smith narrowly lost his bid for a fifth term. Neither had much impact on the committee.

Wyoming Republican Dick Cheney is moving up to assistant House Republican leader, succeeding Trent Lott, who won his bid to succeed Stennis in the Senate. But Cheney is already the most influential Western Republican in the House, so his promotion will add little to his ability to influence the course of legislation or administration actions affecting the West.

□

NEBRASKA

Voters seat two Democrats

Democrats cracked open big leads in Nebraska Nov. 8, and the result may be good news for conservationists.

Democrat Bob Kerrey, Nebraska's good-looking and charismatic former governor, easily swiped a U.S. Senate seat from Republican incumbent David Karnes by a 57-42 ratio. Even though Karnes was the incumbent and Nebraska is a predominantly Republican state, Kerrey had all the advantages.

Kerrey, a Vietnam war hero who later toured the country to protest the war, has a high profile in Nebraska because

of his term as governor from 1982 through 1986, when he guided the state through tough financial times.

Karnes was a nobody in Nebraska politics until he was appointed by Republican Gov. Kay Orr to fill a Senate seat after the sudden death of Sen. Edward Zorinsky in 1987.

Kerrey has good environmental credentials, including a Sierra Club endorsement. Larry Mehlhaff, coordinator of the Sierra Club's Northern Plains office in Sheridan, Wyo., says as governor, Kerrey was good on soil erosion and groundwater pollution and supported

wild and scenic designation for the Niobrara River. Environmentalists hope that with Kerrey's election they will get their first shot at winning a wild and scenic river for Nebraska.

If Kerrey decides to pursue protection for the Niobrara, he will almost certainly get help from newly elected Democrat Peter Hoagland, who beat a conservative Republican doctor for Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District in Omaha. Hoagland also carried a strong Sierra Club endorsement and favors protection of the Niobrara.

Those two victories give Republican Nebraska a Democratic majority in Washington, with two Democratic senators and one Democrat among its three representatives. The victories also make Nebraska "one of the more environmentally aware states on the Great Plains," says Mehlhaff.

—Steve Hinchman

The West...

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adding one more seat to the Democratic majority in the Senate. That will make Democrats happy, but for conservationists there is also the welcome side-effect of gaining in Kerrey and Bryan two more strong voices for the environment in Washington, D.C.

It is no coincidence that these two Democratic candidates are more environmentally minded than their opponents. In the West, the environment is not a bi-partisan issue, and this year's elections saw a number of ad-hoc coalitions of Democrats and environmentalists working for the same candidates.

Environmentalists, both as individuals and groups, played a key role in Democrat Tom Udall's campaign for New Mexico's 1st Congressional District. Udall, son of former Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall and the adopted favorite of environmentalists around the nation, narrowly lost his race for the Albuquerque seat.

In Republican, but environmentally oriented, Teton County in northwestern Wyoming, a Democrat campaigning as

an environmentalist beat back a strong challenge from a Republican pro-growth candidate in the county commission race.

Likewise, the environmental victories in southeastern Utah and Moab were Democratic — including the defeat of Republican leader of the Sagebrush Rebellion, Cal Black, in the race for the region's state Senate seat.

In South Dakota, two initiatives to reform the hard rock mining industry failed — defeated by a well-financed industry campaign and intensive opposition from South Dakota's Republican ex-Gov., William Janklow.

In the end, the 1988 elections in the

West send no clear signals. However, there are a few common threads. Voters seemed willing to try new leadership and ideas on economic issues but remained conservative on social issues and rejected radical stands, such as the tax limitations.

The West seems to have hugged the middle ground. Districts that voted on the far right during the Reagan years, or which have been traditional Democratic strongholds, moved closer to center this year. The only lesson may be that voters want politicians to run the government rather than run against it.

—Steve Hinchman

'Twas just before Christmas...



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