

news Briefs



AIR QUALITY STILL TOXIC

During LRAPA's 37 years stewarding Lane County's air, the local airshed has improved in some regards and degraded in others (see cover story, 4/21). While the levels of sooty particulates from wood burning have declined dramatically since the '70s, the county's airshed remains among the worst in the nation in terms of several major pollutants.

First and foremost, LRAPA works to keep the county's air in compliance with the EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the six criteria air pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxide, ozone, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter. Particulates — including dust, soot and smoke — are divided into classes based on their diameter size in microns, with the smallest being the most dangerous to human health. PM10 and PM2.5 are small enough to pass into the respiratory sys-

tem, sometimes triggering or exacerbating health conditions such as asthma and chronic respiratory disease.

In the 1980s, the EPA planted a red flag over the Eugene-Springfield area for exceeding national air quality standards for carbon monoxide and PM10. The region's PM10 and carbon monoxide levels have dropped by at least 50 percent in the past 20 years, and in 1994, the EPA declared Eugene-Springfield in attainment for carbon monoxide. But the cities officially remain a nonattainment area for PM10, though average concentrations have been within the federal limits for more than a decade.

While carbon monoxide and PM10 levels have improved, Eugene-Springfield's average PM2.5 and ozone levels have remained relatively stagnant since 1999. In 2003, Eugene-Springfield's peak PM2.5 concentration was higher than in notoriously polluted metropolitan areas such as Cleveland, El Paso, Chicago and Detroit.

According to Scorecard.org an online pollution database compiled by Environmental Defense, Lane County is among the worst 10 percent of U.S. counties in terms of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide, volatile organic compounds, PM2.5, PM10 and known carcinogen emissions. In 1999, Lane County vehicles, residences and small businesses emitted nearly 400,000 tons of criteria pollutants. The American Lung Association reports that the rate of Lane County residents hospitalized for asthma increased from 4.5 per 10,000 in 1999 to 5.3 per 10,000 in 2001.

LRAPA also requires local industries to report their emissions of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs), chemicals that can cause damage to human health or the environment. The EPA has identified 188 HAPs that are correlated with increased risks of cancer and other cardiovascular, nervous, respiratory, developmental and reproductive ailments, but due to a lack of definitive health and monitoring data, the EPA has not established standards for them.

Using conventional risk assessment methods, Scorecard estimates that 2.6 per 10,000 Lane County residents will contract cancer due to exposure to locally emitted HAPs — a rate among the worst in the nation. Scorecard

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



reports that in 1999, Lane County industrial facilities emitted almost half a million pounds of known or suspected carcinogens, 1.6 million pounds of known or suspected developmental toxicants and more than 2 million pounds of suspected neurotoxins, with some pollutants falling into more than one category. Top industrial polluters in the area include Weyerhaeuser, J.H. Baxter, Monaco and Hynix. — Kera Abraham

AGREES ON TREES

The Westmoreland medical facility at 17th and Chambers plans to cut down 31 trees to make room for a 10,000 sq. ft. addition. The city granted a tree cutting permit without a public hearing in March and the Far West Neighborhood Group and nearby residents appealed, trying to save the grove of up to 130-year-old oaks.

The dispute was set for a clash at a hearing on April 27, but then something unusual happened. The neighbors and the Eugene Tree Foundation sat down with the developer to reach a compromise and join in criticizing the city's permitting process.

In an April 12 letter to the city, Oregon West Management and its architect, John Lawless, agreed to give the Tree Foundation \$2,000 for nearby tree plantings to help mitigate the loss of trees, and pay careful attention to landscaping at the site in exchange for the neighbors withdrawing their appeal.

The developer then joined with the Tree Foundation and neighbors in calling for:

- "Greater community participation in the early stages of plan development for tree removal," including better public notice.
- Elevating the importance of tree removal permits and giving them the same rigorous review that goes into building permits.
- Clearer tree removal regulations that define how to assess the scenic and wildlife values of trees and how exactly to mitigate for their loss when permitted.

The joint letter noted that the city's efforts to increase density to avoid urban sprawl increases the need for such clear regulations. "To fail to develop these rules, procedures, and

protocols will lead to irretrievable and unfortunate losses of important natural values in our city. It will also lead to more confusion and delay for developers."

Local environmentalists have been pushing for better tree protection laws ever since the city pepper-sprayed and gassed protesters to cut down 40 of downtown's oldest trees for the Broadway Place development in 1996. Developers have so far largely blocked stricter tree rules, but the new city council now has a more progressive majority.

— Alan Pittman

COLD WAR IN LATIN AMERICA

May 5-7 at UO is a symposium "Smoldering Ashes: Revisiting the Legacy of the Cold War in Central America," organized by the Latin American Studies Program and co-sponsored by nearly a dozen local cultural and educational organizations.

The keynote address at 3:30 pm Thursday in the EMU Ballroom is by Bishop Raul Vera López of Saltillo, Mexico, on "The Mission of the Catholic Church for Human Rights and Justice in Latin America." Friday are panels on "Human Rights in Central America," "From the Cold War to the War on Terror," and "Testimonio and the Politics of Witnessing."

Poet and activist Margaret Randall will give the keynote address at 7 pm Friday at the EMU Ballroom. The entire program can be found at <http://las.uoregon.edu> <<http://las.uoregon.edu>

HOW WOULD JESUS PEE?

A proposed ordinance to allow transgendered people to use the restroom of their choice was shot down three years ago by the Christian right, but it is headed back to the Eugene City Council.

In 2002, Christian conservatives attacked adding protections based on gender identity to the city's anti-discrimination code and then Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey threatened to veto

Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

CINDY INGRAM

When Cindy Ingram was a grade-schooler in Dublin, Calif., her teacher, Ms Olsen, channeled Ingram's excess energy by having her read to younger kids. "She set me on the path to community service," says Ingram, a state volunteer-of-the-year at age 12 for her work with developmentally disabled children. A year out of high school, she moved to Jasper, Ore., and found work with at-risk kids in Harrisburg and Crow-Applegate-Lorane schools. "I found myself wanting to do more than my job description," she notes. Ingram gave birth to a daughter and a son in '98 and '99, started her first non-profit, the Land of Awe Children's Museum (now part of the Science Factory), with friends in '00, and entered LCC in '01. She co-founded Network for Reproductive Options in '03, after Eugene's only abortion clinic closed down. Weeks away from graduation from the UO, Ingram currently has four part-time jobs. She's director of the Non-traditional Student Union and manager of the band Silas, where her partner Stephen Arriola plays bass guitar. "I get 10 percent," she says. She's looking for new work in the fall, when she also starts grad school in public policy.

