

# Local Kids Make Good

UO grads return to combine business with pleasure at PIELC

The UO School of Law's annual environmental conference brings speakers from all over the world to Eugene to talk about grim environmental problems. But in between discussing dire ecological issues and trying to save the world, attendees also loosen their ties and socialize.

Lawyers, agency wonks and activists alike took time for lunch, a drink, or even a little (sometimes awkward) dancing at the WOW Hall Saturday night to the tunes of enviro-songsters Casey Neil and Dana Lyons.

Gabe Scott and Sarah Heaton, both former UO students, came to PIELC to present on their work and also to hang out a little bit. Scott, who studied rhetoric

on the ground."

At his presentation, showing photos of "Alaska's Lost Coast and Copper River Country," and offering a taste of the Alaskan salmon he had brought with him, Scott discussed logging so prevalent he said it's called "the clearcut you can see from space." He said, "It's actually illegal to manage the lands for any reason other than a quick buck."

In addition to images of logging, he showed photos of the Trans Alaska Pipeline, which he said has "a spill every month," including the 2001 Bullet Hole Spill — named for the bullet shot by a drunk man that caused a 285,000 gallon leak of crude oil.

Environmental damages affect not only

in the world, and for the opportunity to come back to Eugene." Despite her current Southern home, she is also working on Alaskan issues.

Heaton is one of the many former activists gone mainstream at the law conference. Once arrested for trying to save Eugene's downtown trees, she now works to create change from a policy perspective. She facilitated the panel "Human Health Assessment in NEPA: Duty, Vision and Collaboration" which featured Dinah Bear, former general counsel for the Council on Environmental Quality; Aaron Wernham, an Alaska-based medical doctor; and Rosemary Ahtuanguak of the Inupiat Tribal Council.

The panel addressed efforts by groups from First Nations communities to federal agencies to strengthen the human health factor in the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA compliance means all federal agencies must incorporate environmental considerations in their planning and decision-making process.

Discussion at the panel focused mainly on the ways oil and gas development have affected the native peoples of Alaska. According to Ahtuanguak, in 1988, one

person in her village used an inhaler for asthma; in 1991, the number had risen to 35; and by 2000, the number was at 75 and rising due to the health impacts of energy exploration and development.

"There's an assumption that if something is in compliance with the Clean Air Act, it won't affect human health," said Heaton. She said her goal in coming to PIELC, aside from revisiting her old UO hangouts, was to "educate on the impacts that land use and development have on human health." **EW**



Gabe Scott and Sarah Heaton at PIELC

## 'I came to the conference to network with people because it's lonely in Alaska.' - Gabe Scott

and communication while at the UO, now works to protect the wild places of Alaska as a field representative for the Cascadia Wildlands Project. Scott said he came to the conference "to network with people because it's lonely in Alaska."

He said PIELC is one of the few times he gets to interact with environmental lawyers and other activists. Working where he does in Cordova, Alaska, a city with fewer than 3,000 people located within the Chugach National Forest, "you don't run into them

Alaska's wild things, but the people who depend on the land and animals for food, Scott said. "Subsistence in Alaska has a different meaning than it does in other places."

One of those other places is hot and muggy Atlanta, Ga., where UO Planning, Public Policy and Management grad Sarah Heaton now makes her home working for the Centers for Disease Control. She came to the conference "because it's the most established environmental law conference

# Don't Save the Humans

Voluntary human extinction is alive and well

During PIELC, various organizations distributed information from tables in the hallways of the UO's William W. Knight Law Center. While most promoted things like protecting rivers and forests, one promoted the extinction of the human species.

Les U. Knight, no relation to the law building's namesake, staffed the table for the Voluntary Human Extinction Movement (VHEMT, pronounced "vehement") and spoke at a Sunday morning panel discussion on "Human Population Density: Patriarchy's Influence, Positive Signs, and Reproductive Freedom." He lives in Portland and has been the editor of These EXIT Times, VHEMT's newsletter, since 1991. Here, he explains his views to the EW.

### How did this organization get started?

It's not really an organization. It's a movement. It started independently in the minds of millions of people. Anyone who thinks it all the way through will come to the conclusion that Earth's biosphere would be far better off without humans, and perhaps the only way it's going to survive is without humans. We are causing extinctions at an alarming rate, at a rate that hasn't been seen in the last 65 million years. It seems to be accelerating rather than being diminished even though we know what's going on. And now global warming is going to be causing even more extinctions because of a lot of species not being able to move quickly enough from one habitat to another — or there's no place to move. In the case of polar bears, they can't go any further north or start coming south again. So one species, Homo sapiens, going extinct will avoid millions of species going extinct.

### So what sort of measures do you propose to limit the human population?

Voluntary non-reproduction, but first we have to have universal reproductive freedom. There are hundreds of millions of couples around the planet who don't want to breed any more than they already have, and they are denied that right because they cannot get access to adequate contraception. It doesn't do any good to promote non-breeding if a couple hasn't the wherewithal not to breed.



### What you advocate is voluntary, but do you think that there's a danger perhaps of some government enacting laws that would interfere with people's personal freedom in this regard?

China's the only country that has done that, and they even have loopholes for their one-child policy, and they do allow one. Every other country I know of has incentives for reproducing, including the United States with a \$1,000 tax credit in addition to the deduction for every child. Many countries are trying to increase the number of people being born by giving economic incentives. We're a very long way from any government even suggesting that people stop breeding. Our economies are basically pyramid schemes, and you need more people coming in, or the pyramid scheme falls apart.

### So what sort of reaction have you gotten to this at the conference?

It's actually been 80 percent extremely positive. People agree with it in principle. Even the ones who don't agree just say, "Well, that's interesting. I'll think about it." People realize that it's pretty unlikely that seven billion people are going to agree to stop breeding. The voluntary human extinction movement has about two chances of being successful: slim and none. But it's still a good idea, and if people start thinking about what it means for our species to go extinct, it might be easier to see what it means for other species to go extinct. If the big thicket hog-nosed skunk goes extinct, who cares? There are other skunks around. But Homo sapiens extinct? Wait a minute, that's serious business. And yet those species have evolved over a period of billions of years into what they are today. Each one of us is the peak of evolution to get to where we are today and can be traced back to the very beginnings of life, and they're gone completely forever.

### At a lot of the panel discussions I've been to, some of the speakers mentioned their children and grandchildren as their motivation to work toward a way of life that's better for the environment. What do you think about arguments like that?

If these people extend their love for younger generations to other species, then that's no problem at all. A lot of people have worked for the continuance of other species — whether they're bear cubs or whatever they are, trying to restore an ecosystem, that should be their grandchildren. We're just too human-centered in our motivations, and it's true, I often hear environmentalists say, "For our children's sake" at the end in order to connect with people and try to relate, but what about all the other life forms? What about their sake? "Preserve wildlife for our children's sake" would be just so they can go for a hike. What about preserving wildlife for wildlife's sake? — Eva Sylwester