

news Briefs

BIG OIL LOSES IN ECUADOR

While the BP oil spill is the most famous recent fossil fuel disaster, the contamination of the Ecuadorian Amazon by oil extraction has caused massive environmental contamination in the once pristine jungle and health problems for nearby Ecuadorians (see *EW* cover story, 8/13/2009).

A judge ruled Feb. 14 in a long running lawsuit filed by Ecuadorian native peoples and villagers that Chevron must pay \$8.6 billion in damages and cleanup costs. A court-appointed expert had recommended \$27.3 billion, and the case is expected to be appealed by both sides.

Pablo Fajardo, the lead attorney in the case, which took place in an Ecuadorian court, is a partner of Eugene-based Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW). Fajardo issued a statement saying he believes the “judgment affirms what the plaintiffs have contended for the past 18 years about Chevron’s intentional and unlawful contamination of Ecuador’s rainforest.”

He says, “The plaintiffs provided the court with a great quantum of scientific and documentary evidence that Chevron deliberately and in violation of all industry norms discharged billions of gallons of toxic waste into the rainforest and into the water supply relied on by

thousands of Ecuadorian citizens.”

Fajardo, a native Ecuadorian, put himself through law school via a six-year correspondence course and became the lead attorney on the case soon after getting his degree. He has been facing Chevron’s well-funded team of attorneys as well as tactics by the oil company such as sending corporate spies to Ecuador to attempt to discredit the attorneys and Ecuadorian officials.

Fajardo came to Eugene through ELAW to study English, and was a keynote speaker at the UO’s Public Interest Environmental Law Conference in 2009. The public interest group, among other things, “provided moral support for a long difficult fight for justice,” ELAW Executive Director Bern Johnson says.

Johnson says many ELAW partners like Fajardo work alone on difficult cases. When the partners were notified of the victory through the ELAW network, Fajardo not only received congratulations from around the world, but his success is also “a source of inspiration for others.”

— Camilla Mortensen

LIBRARY CUTS HUNDREDS OF MAGAZINES

The conservative *National Review* made the cut, but the city canceled *The Village Voice*. The Eugene Public Library has cut almost half of its magazine and newspaper subscriptions to save money.

The downtown library will lose about 46 percent of its subscriptions, while the Bethel and Sheldon branch libraries will lose about 20 percent. In all the city will cancel about 248 subscriptions.

The cancellations will directly save about \$22,500 a year, plus an undisclosed

larger amount in staff-time savings spent processing the materials. Library users may be able to find some of the lost content on the internet or in library databases.

The library may be able to restore some lost subscriptions through increased donations. “However, the Library does not accept donations limited to a specific title, because the choices involved in shaping and updating the collection are made and managed in a big-picture context,” Library Director Connie Bennett said in an email.

Here’s a comparison of some of the titles library officials chose to continue versus cancel at the downtown branch. *Adventure Cyclist* out; *Car and Driver* in. *Ms.* magazine out; *Bitch* in. *GQ* out; *Esquire* in. *Canoe & Kayak* out; *Video Librarian* in. *Guns & Ammo* out; *Knitters* in. *The Onion* out; *MAD* in. *Bon Appetit* out; *Cooking Light* in. *Good Housekeeping* out; *Hip Mama* in. *Sierra* out; *Teen Vogue* in. *Science News* out; *The Skeptical Inquirer* in. *The Journal of Light Construction* is out; *ReadyMade* is in. The complete list of cuts and keeps is at <http://scr.bi/gt4x9U>

The branch libraries will also only get the state’s largest newspaper, *The Oregonian*, on Sundays.

The Eugene City Council cut the library’s \$11 million budget about 4.6 percent for this year, or \$506,000. At the same time, the council voted to spend \$740,000 on hiring seven more police officers; \$220,000 on removing parking meters in part of downtown, and millions of dollars on providing tax exemptions for apartment developers near the UO.

In implementing the city’s library cuts, the library prioritized keeping all three branches open for the same schedule of hours. — Alan Pittman

DEEP GREEN THE MOVIE

Get inspired to live lighter and reduce your carbon footprint with easy solutions you can do at home. *Deep Green*, a documentary film created by UO alumnus Matt Briggs to address the growing problem of man-made climate change, will be shown at 6 pm Thursday, Feb. 24, at the Hult Center.

The film gives examples of how groups in Oregon, as well as international groups, are already using advanced energy saving techniques, and how the public could be using the same practices to conserve energy and reduce its carbon footprint. It gives the public realistic and reasonable solutions to help reduce energy waste from electronics and other products such as light bulbs that are in alignment with many of Eugene’s climate and energy goals.

“We tried to make this a broad introduction for everybody, I think kids 12 and up; men and women; people who are both technically and scientifically together, and people who don’t have that bone in their body can all kind of get it,” Briggs says.

Briggs says that “people who have money can do it on their own, and for those people who have no money at all, there are programs” to help finance energy efficient modifications to their homes.

The filmmaker hopes that this film will act as a conversation starter for people to get interested in the energy-efficiency of their city.

In the lobby outside of the Soreng Theater will be numerous discussion tables available after the film for people to get in on the conversation about Eugene’s goals as a city. People can

Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL



SAM RODERICK ROXAS-CHUA

A Filipino born in Manila, Sam Roderick Roxas-Chua was adopted by a Chinese family that moved to Los Angeles when he was 11. “I went to Catholic school until fifth grade,” he says. “but my grandma taught me Buddhist prayers.” In his late teens, he felt a calling to be a priest, but a pastor told him that his homosexuality meant that he could never enter heaven. After moving to Seattle to finish college, he discovered the Dalai Lama on TV at 3 am: “He was saying, ‘You’re OK, no matter who you are, or how bad you are.’ I’ve practiced Tibetan Buddhism since 1999.” Roxas-Chua met his partner, John Simpson, in Seattle, and in 2002 joined him in Eugene. When his mother died in 2005, he joined a bereavement support group at Sacred Heart. “It normalized the confusion, the loss,” says Roxas-Chua, who trained as a volunteer to facilitate support groups and to give hospice patient care. Since 2008, he has made audio and video recordings of hospice patients telling their life stories. “Being aware of impermanence teaches you how to live,” says Roxas-Chua, who has opened a ceramics studio since taking his first class at Clayspace in 2009. See his Wish People and other works in clay at wonderlandcraftstudio.com

WAR DEAD

In Afghanistan

- 1,468 U.S. troops killed* (1,464)
- 10,308 U.S. troops wounded in action (10,264)
- 709 U.S. contractors killed (709)
- \$377.9 billion cost of war (\$375.9 billion)
- \$107.5 million cost to Eugene taxpayers (\$106.9 million)

In Iraq

- 4,421 U.S. troops killed (4,421)
- 31,938 U.S. troops wounded in action (31,938)
- 185 U.S. military suicides (updates NA)
- 1,521 U.S. contractors killed (1,521)
- 108,864 to 1.2 million civilians killed* (108,782)
- \$774.2 billion cost of war (\$773.0 billion)
- \$220.2 million cost to Eugene taxpayers (\$219.8 million)

Through Feb. 14, 2011; sources: icasualties.org; defense.gov, U.S. Dept. of Labor
* highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate Iraqi civilian deaths as high as 655,000 (Lancet survey, 2006) to 1.2 million (Opinion Research Business survey, 2008)