

danger of losing bat benefits.

Panelists at “White-Nose Syndrome and the Dying of Bats” discussed a newly emergent disease found in bats called white-nose syndrome (WNS), which is causing a mass die-off of bats due to a white fungus on their noses and other parts of their body.

Eggers said bats munch on pesky mosquitoes, pollinate your favorite flowers and provide prized fertilizer, and the U.S. needs to realize the values bats provide and put them on the federal endangered species list

WNS, a fast spreading disease, was first seen in Albany, N.Y., in 2006. Since its discovery, it has been documented in 16 states and two Canadian provinces and has killed over one million bats in the last five years.

The main concern for the panelists, including Pat Ormsbee, bat specialist for the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management; and Mollie Matteson, conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, was the spread of WNS to western states.

Panelists called for prevention efforts from the government and the public to help avoid the advancement of this deadly disease.

Since bats are not the only vector with which WNS can be spread, panelists asked that hikers, climbers and cave explorers stay away from bat roosts, decontaminate equipment (shoes, clothing, and climbing gear) and not to bring equipment used in other states back to the Pacific Northwest.

“We need to do everything we can to try to protect bats, even though there are still a lot of things that we don’t know,” said Matteson.

For more information on WNS and bats, visit www.batcon.org.

— Chelsea Fryhoff

VERY SMALL BUSINESSES EXAMINED

How do you start a small business with very little resources, particularly in a major recession when traditional banks are holding on to their money? Experts on the topic of micro-enterprise are planning a free event from 4:30 to 5:45 pm Friday, March 25, at the Eugene Public Library.

Valerie Plummer, executive director of the Oregon Microenterprise Network, will provide an overview of micro-lending in the U.S., followed by Dan McGraw, loan fund manager of Oregon MicroEnterprise

Network, who will talk about his experience with Mercy Corps and tools for evaluating entrepreneurs and their business plans. Claire Seguin will provide an update about the O.U.R. Credit Union/NEDCO partnership.

Topics for discussion include the benefits of microenterprise as an effective tool for lifting people out of poverty, the factors that influence success, plus the institutions that are available as resources.

Helping organize the event is local peace and social justice activist David Hazen, who can be contacted at innercom@peak.org

HELP SOUGHT FOR VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

In 1941, the U.S. Navy arrived on Vieques, an island-municipality of Puerto Rico, and gave the 11,000 indigenous people living there 48 hours to vacate and move from their coastal homes to the center of the island. The Navy bought the island for \$1.5 million and took over two-thirds of it for a bombing range and testing ground for nearly 60 years.

Although the Navy left Vieques in 2001, according to panelists on “The Occupation of the U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico” panel at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference March 6, the long-term health effects, and environmental and social damages will be felt for decades.

During the military presence, bombs were frequently dropped, both on land and in the sea, damaging the marine wildlife and fishing industry, panelists said. Roads built by the Navy led to erosion and affected the ground water. The panel explained that the fresh water on the island became so polluted that a pipeline was built to bring water from Puerto Rico to Vieques for drinking water.

Children may have been the most adversely affected. There were reports of children finding hand grenades, and low-flying planes forcing schools to constantly close early. When a small child was diagnosed with cancer and developed large tumors on her head, the residents became very concerned about their health. This, coupled with the death of David Sanes Rodríguez, a local Vieques security guard for the Navy who died from a dropped bomb, prompted the first of many uprisings against the Navy’s presence.

The Navy has left behind undetonated bombs all over the island. “Rather than use the glass box for detonating the bombs



more safely and avoid releasing extra chemicals into the environment, the company in charge of the clean-up says it’s cheaper to just detonate them,” said panelist Tania Morales who grew up and currently lives in Vieques.

According to CNN reports, the residents of Vieques now have a 75 percent cancer rate. “The local people don’t have a health clinic on the island; they have to travel by boat to Puerto Rico for their cancer treatment, which is very hard for these sick and weak people,” Morales said.

The land is still federally owned and is managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife. Many areas of the island are still off limits to the local people.

The panel asked for assistance from environmental lawyers and others to help the people of Vieques. Because Puerto Rico is a territory of the U.S. the appellate level of courts are in English and no understanding of international law is necessary. For more information contact: viequesmari@gmail.com

— Heather Cyrus and Chelsea Fryhoff

TOXIC UTILITY POLES

Ever notice that black sticky looking goo on utility poles when you put your sign up for the weekend garage sale? According to the panelists on the “Dioxin from Phone Poles: Poison in Your Back Yard” panel at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference March 6, the last thing you want to do is get a closer look, but a big portion of the West Coast’s nasty stuff on them comes

from right here in Eugene.

Before the World War I, the steel industry began looking for ways to use its waste products, and it provided the public with pentachlorophenol (penta), a wood preservative. Panelist Patricia Clary, a representative from Californians for Alternatives to Toxics, said penta is so toxic that nothing can live in the wood.

Years later, health issues related to penta began to surface, she said. Because it contains dioxin, a known human carcinogen, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned its production in 1987, except for the use on utility poles. Still used today, penta is dissolved into petroleum and forced into the wood of the poles.

A 1994 EPA report said that there is no safe level of exposure to dioxin, which can cause cancer and severe reproductive and developmental problems.

According to the panelists, there are 140 million utility poles treated in the U.S., the majority treated with penta. Additionally, damaged poles are sold to individuals to use in landscaping and garden use.

Heat draws the penta oil mix to the surface of the pole during hot weather so it can easily slip down the pole into the soil, wash down storm drains, and get into water systems, they said.

“The poles lose up to 50 percent of their oils in the first eight to 10 years into the environment,” said Fredric Evenson from the Ecological Rights Foundation. He explains that mixing dioxin with oil makes it travel very quickly through the soil. Penta has been found in groundwater as far as 90 feet below the surface.

“Each of these poles are like mini Superfund sites all across the country. They are in people’s backyards, school yards, near

Wall to Wall City Cycling Gear
 Bicycle packs, racks, baskets, bells, lights, fenders, rain gear, saddles, helmets, locks, reflectives, tires, tubes, mirrors, pumps, storage hooks, tools, Xtracycles...
 One stop urban cycling ease!
 2705 Willamette St • 541.484.5410
 Mon–Fri 11–7, Sat 10–6
arriving by bike™
 Urban Cycling Outfitters

I deserve to know it's GMO.
 Join us for the children
 at The Capitol Building Salem, OR
 March 26
 12 pm
 "The best future for my family does not include foods that have been genetically modified."
Right to Know Rally
 to demand
 GMO labeling!
 They are dangerous to Health and Environment
 March 26, 2011
 WHEN: 12 pm – 3pm Saturday
 WHERE: 900 Court Street NE, Salem, OR
www.facebook.com/rallyfortherighttoknow2011