

# Yellowstone plans to cut snowmobile numbers

The Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — The National Park Service has approved a plan to restrict snowmobiles in Yellowstone National Park to less than half of last winter's limit.

The park announced Thursday that it will allow up to 318 snowmobiles and up to 78 snowcoaches per day in the park for the next two winter seasons.

Over the past five winters, the park has allowed up to 720 snowmobiles a day, but actual use has been far less. Yellowstone spokesman Al Nash said the park had an average of 205 snowmobiles and 29 snowcoaches last winter.

Nash said the Park Service will keep the 318-snowmobile limit in place for Yellowstone over the next two winters as it crafts a permanent winter-use plan.

For years, disagreement over snowmobile usage has pitted the state of Wyoming and some tourist communities near the park against the National Park Service and environmental groups determined to reduce traffic they say can disturb wildlife and the area's tranquility.

Wyoming's congressional delegation issued a joint news release blasting the federal agency's decision.



National Park Service via AP

**Ride in the park:** A guide prepares to lead snowmobilers inside Yellowstone.

"The snowmobile and snowcoach numbers weren't sufficient when the proposed rule came out in July, and they aren't sufficient now," said Sen. Mike Enzi, R-Wyo., the state's senior U.S. senator.

Patricia Dowd, Yellowstone program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association, called the Park Service decision a positive step.

"For the past 10 years, both the Park Service and the EPA have looked at noise and air quality and impacts to wildlife and impacts to other park visitors," Dowd said. "So we want the best experience for both park visitors and natural resources of the park."

# Vines assault East Coast dunes

## Invasive beach vitex, once thought friendly, branches beyond Carolinas

By Oren Dorell  
USA TODAY

A fast-growing vine imported from Korea to stop massive erosion of sand dunes — home to sea turtle hatchlings and such shore birds as plovers — is destroying dunes in the Carolinas and threatens to creep into beaches up and down the East Coast.

The beach vitex, a woody plant with waxy leaves and a pretty purple flower, was planted widely along the Carolina coast after Hurricane Hugo ravaged beaches and dunes in 1989.

States wanted to act fast because, aside from being a nesting site for shore birds, dunes help hold back storm waters.

The vine proliferated, but there were unforeseen consequences. The plant's thickness harms nestlings, and its shallow root system fails to hold dunes together.

"They really flubbed it on this one," said Randy Westbrook, an invasive-species prevention specialist for U.S. Geological Survey.

Beach vitex was promoted by J.C. Raulston, then-director of the North Carolina State University arboretum, because it thrives on nutrient-poor, sandy soils and grows fast. With an average growth rate of 60 feet a year, the vine can completely cover dune systems, said Melanie Doyle, a horticulturist at the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher.

Betsy Brabson, an artist and sea turtle advocate in Georgetown, S.C., said beach vitex with all its vines and runners creates such a tight network that sea turtles can't nest.

"I don't want something like beach vitex to cover the dunes for

miles and miles and then we have no sea turtles," said Brabson, who heads the South Carolina Beach Vitex Task Force.

And, unlike the native sea oats and other grasses that people are used to seeing on dunes, beach vitex doesn't help dunes grow into a high barrier against storm surges, Doyle said.

This year the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services declared the plant a "noxious weed," banning it from being sold or planted.

Crews have fanned out across coastal North and South Carolina to eradicate it, cutting the plants with machetes and dabbing them with a herbicide.

Indications are that the eradication may be tougher than first thought.

Isolated strands of the vine have been found in Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Members of the Beach Vitex Task Force thought they were on the road to victory against the invader until a "real bombshell" was discovered in Maryland, said Lee Rosenberg, environmental services manager for Norfolk, Va.

This month, a U.S. Park Service biologist reported beach vitex in the Maryland side of Assateague Island National Seashore, home to about 300 wild ponies. Westbrook suggests that the plant's seeds are transported by ocean currents.

Rosenberg said he believes migratory birds are behind the propagation.

"That means any area north and south is subject to being colonized by beach vitex just by seeds being brought by birds," Rosenberg said.

Dale Sutor, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologist, said the Assa-

teague discovery rocked the Beach Vitex Task Force. "It hadn't really crossed our minds that it could be that far north," he said.

Based on an evaluation of the plant's native range, along the Pacific Rim, Sutor now thinks beach vitex might take root as far north as Rhode Island.

Instead of focusing on the Carolinas and Virginia's Eastern Shore, the task force will have to send word as far as southern New England "to keep a look out for this thing," Sutor said.

"There's lots of preserves — Fire Island National Seashore, Cape May (Point State Park), Delaware Seashore State Park — we're going to have to figure out a way to get in touch with all of them," he said.

Cape Cod received the news this week. The response: "That would be bad," said Mark Faherty, science coordinator for the Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. s

10/16/09 - USA Today

**Nation**



By Hyunsoo Leo Kim, The (Norfolk, Va.) Virginian-Pilot, via AP

**Grip on ecosystem:** Waller Whittemore and Cheryl Petticrew walk in Virginia Beach near a vine first imported to help storm-ravaged dunes.

updated 3:15 p.m. EDT, Wed October 8, 2008

# Are sonar tests harming whales? The Supreme Court weighs in

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- The U.S. Supreme Court weighs in on whether the Navy's sonar tests are harming whales.
- At issue are rulings restricting the Navy's use of sonar.
- The Pentagon says the training exercises are necessary for national security.
- Others say high levels of sonar can harm whales.

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VIDEO

By Bill Mears  
CNN

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**WASHINGTON (CNN)** -- The Supreme Court appeared conflicted Wednesday as it juggled national security and environmental concerns in a case over whether the U.S. Navy is doing enough to protect whales from underwater sonar tests it conducts.



GETTY IMAGES

The Supreme Court is weighing whether the Navy does enough to protect whales from undersea sonar tests.

At issue is the power of the president to issue executive waivers allowing such tests, and whether federal judges can issue preliminary injunctions blocking them.

Environmentalists successfully sued the Pentagon over the practice, forcing major changes to the Navy's annual offshore training exercises in March. President Bush had issued an emergency waiver to allow the exercises to go on without the filing of an environmental impact study (EIS), but the lower court ruling blocked the use of sonar.

Military officials are asking the justices to intervene, arguing the restriction could hamper military readiness in time of war, since new sonar technology is needed to detect increasingly sophisticated enemy submarines.

Justice David Souter expressed repeated skepticism that an emergency existed allowing the president to try to bypass normal environmental reviews. "There was no 'emergency' here except one which was created by the Navy's apparently deliberate inattention" to file an EIS in a timely fashion, trying "in effect to sort of neutralize by keeping everybody in the dark until the last moment," he said.

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But Justice Samuel Alito worried the executive constitutional authority is being eroded. "Isn't it incredibly odd about a single [federal] district court judge making a determination [limiting exercises] that is contrary to the determination that the Navy has made?"

That federal judge, in ruling against the government last March, said it was "constitutionally suspect" for Bush to issue the national security exemption to allow skipping the EIS.

One of the environmental organizations that sued the Defense Department told the justices that the exercises

had been planned in advance and that the Navy was required under law to conduct more extensive environmental tests than it had. Richard Kendall of the Natural Resources Defense Council also said the military appears to be able to work under the restrictions, since eight of 14 planned exercises have been carried out since the restrictions went into effect.

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The Navy says the courts are protecting sea creatures rather than people.

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"In ordering additional mitigation to reduce the risk to marine mammals, the order shifts the risk to sailors and Marines," Navy spokesman Capt. Scott Gureck told CNN in March.

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Representing the military and the White House, Solicitor General Gregory Garre told the high court that the tests are "vitaly important to the survival of our naval strike groups deployed around the world and therefore critical to the nation's security."

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The waters of Southern California are home to dozens of [species](#) of whales, dolphins, seals, and sea lions, nine of them federally listed as endangered or threatened. Federal courts have cited scientific studies and the Navy's own conclusions that high levels of sonar can cause hearing loss and disorientation in the animals.

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The [U.S. Navy](#) demonstrated for CNN in February its on-board procedures for turning down mid-frequency sonar when whales come within 1,000 meters, and shutting it off completely when they approach 200 meters.

mc

 [Watch how a Navy ship reacts when it encounters a whale »](#)



The sonar sounds like a "ping, ping" noise, and it can be reduced as necessary, officers said.

But environmentalists say the sonar can hurt whales much further than 1,000 meters away. Kendall said the noise created by the sonar "was like having a jet engine in the [Supreme Court](#) multiplied 2,000 times, compensating for water."

In 2000, 16 whales beached themselves in the Bahamas, and the Navy concluded too many sonar ships had been operating in a narrow underwater channel.

The service says it is funding \$16 million in independent research to minimize sonar's effect on marine mammals.

Justice Stephen Breyer seemed divided between the two sides, and his vote could prove crucial. He agreed with several of his colleagues that the whole point of an environmental impact study is to assess potential harm before exercises begin. "You have an EIS for the reason that the agency itself, once it reads it, might decide to do something else. That's the whole point of an EIS."

But the 70-year-old justice also noted the sonar tests are necessary to train crews to find enemy subs. "I see an admiral come along with an affidavit that says you've got to train people," he said "or there will be subs hiding there with all kinds of terrible weapons."

He added, "I am nervous about it."

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The case is Winter v. Natural Resources Defense Council (07-1239). A ruling is expected in a few months.

CNN Senior Pentagon Correspondent [Jamie McIntyre](#) contributed to this report. [E-mail to a friend](#)  | [Mixx it](#) | [Share](#)

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updated 3:09 p.m. EDT, Tue September 16, 2008

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Grizzly bear rebounds from extinction in Montana

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Grizzly bear was threatened with extinction for a third of a century
\$4.8 million, five-year study of grizzly bear DNA shows 765 bears in Montana
Number is largest population of grizzly bears documented in 30 years
Republican presidential candidate John McCain called the study "a waste of money"

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TEXT SIZE

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The majestic grizzly bear, once king of the Western wilderness but threatened with extinction for a third of a century, has roared back in Montana.



A grizzly bear rears up on his hind legs in Glacier National Park in Montana.

The finding, from a \$4.8 million, five-year study of grizzly bear DNA criticized by Republican presidential candidate John McCain as pork barrel spending, could help ease restrictions on oil and gas drilling, logging and other development.

Researchers with the U.S. Geological Survey announced Tuesday that there are approximately 765 bears in northwestern Montana. That's the largest population of grizzly bears documented there in more than 30 years, and a sign that the species could be at long last rebounding.

The first-ever scientific census shattered earlier estimates that said there were at least 250-350 bears roaming the area. More recent data placed the minimum population at around 563 bears.

"There has never been any baseline information on population size," said Katherine Kendall, the lead researcher, who said the results speak for themselves. "There has been huge investments of time and money to recover (the grizzly bear) but they don't know whether their actions have been successful."

McCain, in stump speeches and in an advertisement earlier this year, erroneously said the study cost \$3 million, adding "I don't know if it was a paternity issue or criminal, but it was a waste of money."

The study was backed by Montana ranchers, farmers and Republican leaders as a step toward taking the species off the endangered species list. Since 1975, the bear has been threatened in the lower 48 states, a status that bars hunting and restricts any kind of development that could diminish the bear's population.

"If it is going to remove it from the list, it is money well spent," said former Montana Gov. Judy Martz, a Republican, McCain supporter, and backer of the research. When asked about McCain's stance, Martz said "unless you live among these issues it is pretty hard to understand what is going on."

Former Sen. Conrad Burns, the chairman of McCain's campaign in Montana, helped secure the funding. It was paid in part through add-ons to the U.S. Geological Survey budget, and a \$1.1 million earmark for the Forest Service in 2004.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is in charge of regulating endangered species, is currently reviewing the bears' status in Montana as part of a five-year review required by the Endangered Species Act. The study's results will help biologists determine whether the bear still needs federal protection, a conclusion due out early next year.

Chris Servheen, the Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator for the service said the study "was an investment in the recovery of an icon of the American West, which is the grizzly bear."

"All the things people have been doing are making a difference," he said of the findings. "This gives us some feedback that the bears are doing really well." E-mail to a friend | Mixx it | Share

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## The Oregonian

### Wind whips up health fears

**Hundreds of giant turbines in the Oregon desert will bring power, but residents nearby raise concerns about health effects and an end to their quiet way of life**

Sunday, August 10, 2008

**RICHARD COCKLE**

**The Oregonian Staff**

BOARDMAN -- Sherry Eaton pulled into the driveway of her rural, high-desert home to see one of several giant wind turbines being assembled a half-mile away.

"I started to cry," Eaton, 57, recalled of her first sight of the Willow Creek Wind Project in late July. "They're going to be hanging over the back of our house, and now there's the medical thing."

"The medical thing" is new research suggesting that living close to wind turbines, as Eaton and her 60-year old husband, Mike, soon will be doing, can cause sleep disorders, difficulty with equilibrium, headaches, childhood "night terrors" and other health problems.

Dozens of wind turbines are taking shape along Oregon 74, a designated Oregon Scenic Byway, near the home the Eatons have shared for 19 years.

Dr. Nina Pierpont of Malone, N.Y., coined the phrase "wind turbine syndrome" for what she says happens to some people living near wind energy farms. She has made the phrase part of the title of a book she's written called "Wind Turbine Syndrome: A Report on the Natural Experiment." It is scheduled for publication next month by K-Selected Press, of Santa Fe, N.M.

In contrast to those who consider wind turbines clean, green and an ideal source of renewable energy, Pierpont says living or working too close to them has a downside. Her research says wind turbines should never be built closer than two miles from homes.

Pierpont, 53, is a 1991 graduate of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and has a doctorate in population biology from Princeton University. Her interest was piqued by a wind farm being built near her upstate New York home, and she studied 10 families living near wind turbines built since 2004 in Canada, England, Ireland, Italy and the United States.

#### Effect on inner ear

Pierpont's findings suggest that low-frequency noise and vibration generated by wind machines can have an effect on the inner ear, triggering headaches; difficulty sleeping; tinnitus, or ringing in the ears; learning and mood disorders; panic attacks; irritability; disruption of equilibrium, concentration and memory; and childhood behavior problems.

Concerns also are coming out of Europe about low-frequency noise from newly built wind turbines. For example, British physician Amanda Harry, in a February 2007 article titled "Wind Turbines, Noise and Health," wrote of 39 people, including residents of New Zealand and Australia, who suffered from the sounds emitted by wind turbines.

According to Pierpont, eight of the 10 families in her study moved out of their homes.

"All these problems were resolved as soon as these people got away from the turbines, got in the car and drove away from the house," she said.

Mike Logsdon, director of development for Invenergy, developer of the 48 wind turbines under construction in the Willow Creek Wind Project, said he's heard of Pierpont's findings, but his 5-year-old company doesn't find them credible.

"We've had a number of other wind farms over the country and residents living by them and never had any problems," Logsdon said.

Invenergy has built and operates wind farms in Canada and Poland and in 12 states in the United States, Logsdon said. The company has 1,200 megawatts in production and is building 600 megawatts this year. The 72-megawatt Willow Creek Wind Project near the Eatons' home is scheduled to start producing electricity Jan. 1.

If Pierpont's theories gain acceptance, decisions on where future wind energy farms are built could be affected. Last year, more than one-third of all new power capacity in the United States, roughly 5,000 megawatts, was generated by wind turbines, said Joseph Beamon, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Energy in Washington, D.C.

### **Demand will grow**

Meanwhile, a U.S. Department of Energy report said demand for electricity is likely to grow 40 percent in the next 22 years in the United States alone, with 20 percent of the nation's power generated by wind turbines, he said.

The Eatons and their neighbors have more to worry about than the Willow Creek Project. Approval was given July 25 by the Oregon Facilities Siting Council for construction of as many as 400 more wind turbines in the nearby Shepherds Flat Wind Project spanning parts of Gilliam and Morrow counties. The planned 909-megawatt project by Caithness Energy of Chicago is expected to be the largest wind farm on Earth, generating enough peak energy to power 225,000 homes.

"Man, this whole country is going to be windmills," said a dismayed Denny Wade, 59, a railroad worker and neighbor of the Eatons.

He and his wife, Lorrie, a 53-year-old schoolteacher in Hermiston, live three-quarters of a mile from one of Willow Creek's turbines. The Wades had planned to sell the home where they've lived for four years and build a retirement home on a knoll 200 yards away with a view of Mount Hood.

"Now, the view that it had is all windmills," Wade said. "I didn't move out there to view windmills."

But Denny Wade's larger concern is his vulnerability to migraine headaches. Although not everyone living near wind turbines experienced headaches, Pierpont's research suggests "everyone with pre-existing migraines" developed headaches by living near the wind generators.

The Wades scrapped plans to build a new home and hope to sell their 42 acres and move, they said.

### **Issues never raised**

Morrow County planner Carla McLane said potential health issues never were raised during the planning process in her county, and the opportunity to appeal has passed. The potential effects of turbines on the scenic values of Oregon 74 never were brought up in hearings he attended, said Terry Tallman, Morrow County Commission chairman.

Generally, wind energy farms have been welcomed in this sparsely settled corner of the state, Tallman said. Tax revenues from the wind farms will be distributed to the counties, public schools, park and recreation districts and fire departments, he said.

"Everybody that I've talked to has been very happy," he said, adding that some on whose property the turbines are being built intend to retire on the income they receive.

"I think it's a good thing," Ron Wycaver, 40, a neighbor of the Eatons and Wades, said of the wind turbines.

Caithness first proposed a 105-megawatt Shepherds Flat Project in 2002, then applied to the state for the larger project two years ago, McLane said. The project was so large it went to the Energy Facilities Siting Council, where it received the go-ahead to start construction.

Potential medial problems aside, wind turbines will wreck the tranquility that Mike and Sherry Eaton came to this remote place to find, Sherry Eaton said. She drives 90 miles a day to and from her job in Hermiston so they can live in the high-desert setting.

"When you come home from work, everything drains away from you because it's so quiet and peaceful," she said, adding that's about to end.

"Now we are going to have to listen to those windmills: Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!" she said.

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## Meet the women who won't have babies - because they're not eco friendly

By NATASHA COURTENAY-SMITH and MORAG TURNER - [More by this author »](#) Last updated at 22:05pm on 21st November 2007

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Had Toni Vernelli gone ahead with her pregnancy ten years ago, she would know at first hand what it is like to cradle her own baby, to have a pair of innocent eyes gazing up at her with unconditional love, to feel a little hand slipping into hers - and a voice calling her Mummy.

But the very thought makes her shudder with horror.

Because when Toni terminated her pregnancy, she did so in the firm belief she was helping to save the planet.

**Scroll down for more...**



Desperate measures: Toni Vernelli was sterilised at age 27 to reduce her carbon footprint

Incredibly, so determined was she that the terrible "mistake" of pregnancy should never happen again, that she begged the doctor who performed the abortion to sterilise her at the same time.

He refused, but Toni - who works for an environmental charity - "relentlessly hunted down a doctor who would perform the irreversible surgery.

Finally, eight years ago, Toni got her way.

At the age of 27 this young woman at the height of her reproductive years was sterilised to "protect the planet".

Incredibly, instead of mourning the loss of a family that never was, her boyfriend (now husband) presented her with a congratulations card.

While some might think it strange to celebrate the reversal of nature and denial of motherhood, Toni relishes her decision with an almost religious zeal.

"Having children is selfish. It's all about maintaining your genetic line at the expense of the planet," says Toni, 35.

"Every person who is born uses more food, more water, more land, more fossil fuels, more trees and produces more rubbish, more pollution, more greenhouse gases, and adds to the problem of over-population."

While most parents view their children as the ultimate miracle of nature, Toni seems to see them as a sinister threat to the future.

It's an extreme stance which one might imagine is born from an unhappy childhood or an upbringing among parents who share similar, strong beliefs.

But nothing in Toni's safe, middle-class upbringing gave any clues as to the views which would shape her adult life. The eldest of three daughters, she enjoyed a loving, close-knit family life.

She excelled at her Roman Catholic school, and her doting parents fully expected her to grow up, settle down and start a family of her own.

"When I finished school, I got a job in retail and at 19, I met my first husband," says Toni.

"No sooner had we finished our wedding cake than all our relatives started to ask when they could expect a new addition to the family.

"I always told them that would never happen, but no one listened.

"When I was a child, I loved bird-watching, and in my teens that developed into a passion for the environment as well as the welfare of animals - I became a vegetarian when I was 15.

"Even my parents used to smile and say: 'You'll change your mind one day about babies.'

"The only person who understood how I felt was my first husband, who didn't want children either.

"We both passionately wanted to save the planet - not produce a new life which would only add to the problem."

So, instead of mapping out plans for a family, Toni and her husband began discussing medical options to ensure they would never reproduce.

Toni, from Taunton, Somerset, says: "When I was 21, I considered sterilisation for the first time.

"I'd been on the Pill for five years and didn't want to take hormone-based contraception indefinitely.

"I went to my GP, but she wouldn't even consider the idea.

"She said I was far too young and told me I could 'absolutely not' be sterilised, and that I was bound to change my mind one day.

"I found her attitude frustrating.

"We decided my husband would have a vasectomy instead. He was 25, just a few years older than me, but the GP allowed him to go ahead.

"I found it insulting that she thought that, just because I was a woman, I'd reach a point where an urge to breed would overcome all rational thought."

When Toni was 23, her marriage ended. She says: "We married very young and grew apart."

Toni found herself young, single and with a new life in London, working for an environmental charity.

But while other young women dream of marriage and babies, Toni was convinced it was her duty not to have a child.

She claims she was far from alone.

"Through my job I made many friends who, like me, were more interested in campaigning, trying to change society and save the planet rather than having families of our own.

"We used to say that if ever we did want children, we'd adopt, as there are so many children in need of a loving family.

"At least then, we'd be doing something positive for the world, rather than something negative."

Toni was happy, at last, with fellow environmentalists who shared her philosophy. But when she was 25, disaster struck.

"I discovered that despite taking the Pill, I'd accidentally fallen pregnant by my boyfriend.

"I was horrified. I knew straight away there was no option of having the baby.

"I went to my doctor about having a termination, and asked if I could be sterilised at the same time.

"This time it was a male doctor. I remember saying to him: 'I want to make sure this never happens again.'

"He said: 'You may not want a child, but one day you may meet a man who does'. He refused to consider it.

"I didn't like having a termination, but it would have been immoral to give birth to a child that I felt strongly would only be a burden to the world.

"I've never felt a twinge of guilt about what I did, and have honestly never wondered what might have been.

"After my abortion, I was more determined than ever to pursue sterilisation.

"By then, I had my mother's support - she realised I wasn't going to grow out of my beliefs, and was proud of my campaigning work."

At the age of 27, Toni moved to Brighton, where her dream of medical intervention was realised.

Toni says: "My new GP was more forward-thinking and referred me to hospital. I couldn't wait for the operation."

As Toni awaited the surgery which would destroy her fertility, she met her future husband, Ed, 38, an IT consultant.

"A week before my sterilisation, I went to an animal rights demonstration and met Ed.

"I liked him immediately, and I told him what I was doing straight away - because if he wanted children then he needed to know I wasn't the woman for him," she says.

"But Ed was relieved when I told him how I felt and said he didn't want children for the same reasons."

On the morning of surgery, Ed gave Toni a card saying "Congratulations".

Toni says: "After the operation, which is irreversible, I didn't feel emotional - just relieved.

"I've never doubted that I made the right decision. Ed and I married in September 2002, and have a much nicer lifestyle as a result of not having children.

"We love walking and hiking, and we often go away for weekends.

"Every year, we also take a nice holiday - we've just come back from South Africa.

"We feel we can have one long-haul flight a year, as we are vegan and childless, thereby greatly reducing our carbon footprint and combating over-population.

"My only frustration is that other people are unable to accept my decision.

"When I tell people why I don't want children, they look at me as if I was planning to commit murder.

"A woman who does not have maternal-feelings is seen as some sort of anomaly.

"And a woman like me, who is not having children in order to save the planet, is considered barking mad.

"What I consider mad are those women who ferry their children short distances in gas-guzzling cars."

But Toni is far from alone.

When Sarah Irving, 31, was a teenager she sat down and wrote a wish-list for the future.

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Sarah Irving and Mark Hudson were adamant they would live the greenest possible lives

Most young girls dream of marriage and babies. But Sarah dreamed of helping the environment - and as she agonised over the perils of climate change, the loss of animal species and destruction of wilderness, she came to the extraordinary decision never to have a child.

"I realised then that a baby would pollute the planet - and that never having a child was the most environmentally friendly thing I could do."

Sarah's boyfriends have been less understanding than Toni's, with the breakdown of several relationships.

"I've had boyfriends who wanted children, so I knew I couldn't be with them long term,' says Sarah.

"I've had to break up with a couple of boyfriends because I didn't think it was fair to waste their time.

"In my early 20s I had a boyfriend who I really liked, but he wanted to start a family as soon as possible.

"I was tempted to stay with him and hope he would change his mind, but I knew I couldn't provide him with what he wanted so I walked away."

Sarah started work for the Ethical Consumer magazine, and seven years ago she met her fiancÈ Mark Hudson, a 37-year- old health- care worker.

When they started dating in 2003, they immediately discussed their views on children.

"To my relief, Mark was as adamant as me that he didn't want a family. After a year of dating, we started talking about sterilisation," says Sarah.

"I didn't want to have an 'accident' if contraception didn't work - we would be faced with the dilemma of whether to keep the baby."

While other young couples sit down and discuss mortgages, Sarah and Mark discussed the medical options for one or the other to be sterilised.

"We realised it was a much more straightforward procedure, safer and easier, for a man to be sterilised through a vasectomy than a woman to be sterilised," says Sarah.

"In January 2005, Mark had a vasectomy and we both felt incredibly relieved there was no chance of us having a baby."

Ironically, the couple who have decided to deny themselves children for the sake of the planet, actively enjoy the company of young children.

Sarah says: "We both have nieces who we love dearly and I consider myself a caring, nurturing person.

"My sister recently had a little girl, and that has taken the pressure off me because my parents wanted to be grandparents.

"At first, they were surprised by my decision, but they have never criticised us.

"I'd never dream of preaching to others about having a family. It's a very personal choice. What I do like to do is make people aware of the facts.

"When I see a mother with a large family, I don't resent her, but I do hope she's thought through the implications."

Mark adds: "Sarah and I live as green a life as possible. We don't have a car, cycle everywhere instead, and we never fly.

"We recycle, use low-energy light bulbs and eat only organic, locally produced food.

"In short, we do everything we can to reduce our carbon footprint. But all this would be undone if we had a child.

"That's why I had a vasectomy. It would be morally wrong for me to add to climate change and the destruction of Earth.

"Sarah and I don't need children to feel complete. What makes us happy is knowing that we are doing our bit to save our precious planet."

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9/16/07

# Drilling poses GOP dilemma

By Karl Vick  
The Washington Post

GRAND JUNCTION, COLO. | The Bush administration's aggressive drive to promote oil and gas drilling on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains has sparked growing anger here among traditional Republican constituents who say that the stepped-up push for energy development is sully-

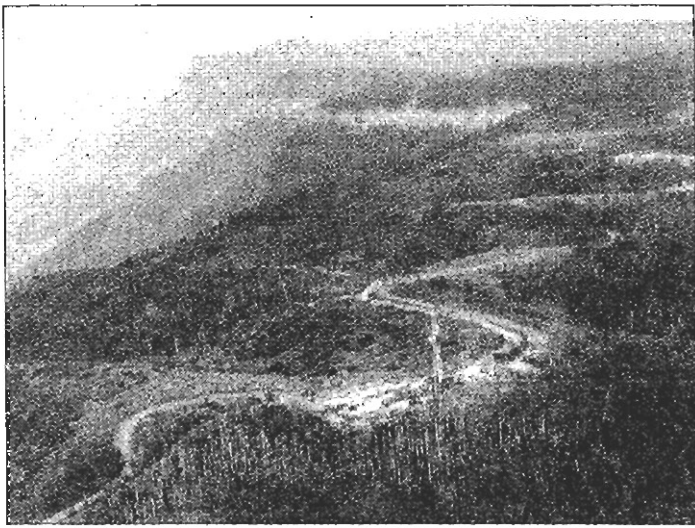
ing some of the country's most majestic landscape. The emerging backlash from ranchers and sportsmen, which is occurring despite an economic boom driven by drilling, is threatening GOP primacy in at least one corner of what has been a solidly Republican West. Long the most reliably conservative expanse of a state that has gone red in six of the past seven presidential contests, Colorado's western third shows evidence of the "purpling" that has made Colorado look increasingly like a swing state.

Support from the western slope was seen as pivotal in the elections of Democrats Bill Ritter as governor last year and Sen. Ken Salazar in 2004, the same year Salazar's older brother, John Salazar, was elected to Congress from a western Colorado district that had given 66 percent of its vote to the Republican candidate four years earlier. All three Democrats found support in GOP enclaves while calling for "balance" in energy extraction.

"I can only speak for myself and I'm a registered Republican, but last year I voted a straight Democratic ticket. First time in my life," said Bob Elderkin, 68, who heads the town of Rifle's chapter of the Colorado Mule Deer Association, a hunting group that has made common cause with environmentalists against drilling. "The Republicans have kind of lost touch with reality."

At the behest of the White House, which made accelerated oil and gas leasing the top priority of the Bureau of Land Management, the gas industry has in the past five years transformed huge tracts of an iconic Western landscape into something resembling an industrial zone. As Coloradoans struggle to adjust to the changes—a steady flow of heavy rigs on back roads, powerful odors from evaporation ponds and a small army of rough-necks gobbling methamphetamine to work 12-hour shifts—disquiet grows over federal plans to open the spigot wider yet.

The state has 32,000 active gas



THE WASHINGTON POST | KARL VICK

**The gas industry has in the past five years transformed huge tracts of iconic Western landscape into something resembling an industrial zone. Shown here is Colorado's Roan Plateau, where drilling is under way.**

and oil wells, and plans call for at least 40,000 more in the next decade. A new Wilderness Society forecast sees 125,000 new wells across the region.

"They are creating problems by the magnitude," said Joan Savage, who welcomed the 146 gas wells on her family's 6,000-acre ranch but shakes her head at federal plans to drill atop the majestic Roan Plateau, which towers over it.

"They just want the money," Savage said.

The money is good. High school graduates can slide into jobs paying \$70,000 a year. In Mesa County, on the Utah border, welfare rolls

and unemployment are at record lows. "By and large, I think the community here is really enjoying this prosperous economy," said Steven Acquafresca, R, a county commissioner in Grand Junction.

Yet concern about the downside of drilling has helped define the terms of political debate even in deep-red Wyoming, where Sen. John Barrasso, the Republican appointed to the seat of the late Craig Thomas, this summer suggested buying back leases from gas companies to protect the range.

In Colorado, the backlash has emboldened officeholders who are accustomed to walking

a tightrope between the state's conservative rangeland and suburbs and the heavily Democratic ski and union enclaves. Ken Salazar placed a hold on the appointment of a new Bureau of Land Management head to pressure the Interior Department to delay drilling atop the Roan, framed by Savage's office window.

Ritter's campaign improved the Democratic return in five western slope counties by 14 to 46 percentage points over the past cycle. In his standard stump speech, he noted complaints about air quality in majestic Glenwood Canyon. He carried Garfield County, which houses the canyon, with 57 percent of the vote, compared with 33 percent for the previous Democratic candidate for governor.

Not all the swing toward the Democrats is the result of anger over the Bush administration's stance on drilling. Other factors, such as candidate appeal and the Iraq war weigh heavily. But politicians on the western slope say that drilling is a major local issue.

"We're seeing a lot more liberal voting in this area, and I think a lot of it has to do with energy development," said Tresi Houpt, a Garfield County commissioner who was reelected last year.

"I had 61 percent of the vote. I'm a Democrat. People want people in office who are willing to fight to protect their health, their property values and the lifestyle they moved to Colorado to enjoy."



## Buy-Buy Summer, Hello Savings!

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## The new public enemy Number 1: bottled water

Aug 15 08:45 AM US/Eastern



It's a hugely beneficial liquid in a slim cylinder of plastic, but for US environmentalists, it is the new public enemy number one: bottled water.

With US bottled water sales growing nearly 10 percent annually -- and the trash from tossed containers climbing just as quickly -- calls for Americans to go back to drinking tap water have surged since the beginning of summer.

"This country has some of the best public water supplies in the world," the New York Times said in an editorial earlier this month.

"Instead of consuming four billion gallons (15 billion liters) of water a year in individual-sized bottles, we need to start thinking about what all those bottles are doing to the planet's health."

As was pointed out at World Water Week in Stockholm on Monday, US personal consumption per capita, including water from all sources, hits 400 liters (106 gallons) each day -- compared to 10 liters (2.6 gallons) a person in developing countries.

And US consumers are drinking more bottled water by the day. According to the Beverage Marketing Corporation, growth in bottled water sales last year was 9.7 percent, making the total market worth about 11 billion dollars.

Bottled water in the United States does not mean mineral water, even if Americans grumble more and more about paying a high price to drink water with little to distinguish it.

At the end of July beverage giant PepsiCo was forced by public pressure to explain on its Aquafina bottled water that the contents inside come from ... the tap.

Pepsi's response "is an important first step," said Gigi Kellett, director of the "Think Outside the Bottle" campaign.

"Concerns about the bottled water industry, and increasing corporate control of water, are growing across the country," she said.

From mineral springs or from public pipes, water once in a bottle is expensive. The New York Times estimated that for some consumers the bill could hit 1,400 dollars a year -- for an amount that, taken from a home faucet, might cost less than half a dollar.

And it is not always better.

"Bottled water sold in the United States is not necessarily cleaner or safer than most tap water, according to a four-year scientific study," the National Resources Defense Council recently reported. It also said regulation has not guaranteed more pure water in bottles.

Another point of attack is the packaging waste, which Earth Policy Institute tied to an issue of US security policy: oil imports.

According to the institute, it costs the United States 1.5 million barrels of oil a year to produce the plastic bottles used for water.

And if one adds the energy required to transport it -- especially premium water imported all the way from France, Italy and even the Fiji islands -- the negative impact on the environment rises quickly.

The anti-bottled water campaign has gotten political support: the mayor of San Francisco has stopped supplying water in containers to his staff, telling them to drink what comes out of the faucet.

And New York has launched a campaign to persuade its inhabitants to stick to public sources to quench their thirst.

Feeling they were at the center of the target, bottled water producers went on the defense last week, in part arguing that bottled water helps liberate consumers from calorie-heavy sweet sodas.

"The bottled water industry has recently been the target of misguided and confusing criticism by activist groups and a handful of mayors who have presented misinformation and subjective criticism as facts," the International Bottled Water Association said.

Association president Joseph Doss said they were being unfairly singled out.

"If the debate is about the impact of plastic packaging on the environment, a narrow focus on bottled water spotlights only a small portion of the packaged beverage category and an even smaller sliver of the universe of packaged products," he said.

"Any efforts to reduce the resources necessary to produce and distribute packaged goods -- and increase recycling rates -- must focus on all packaging," he said.

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