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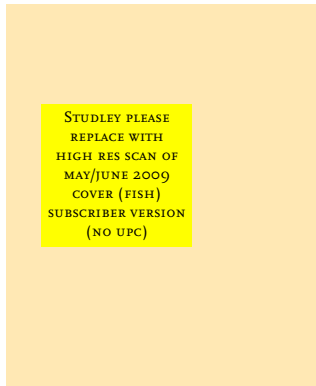
Ginger Strand's article "The Poetry of Power," (May/June 2009) brought back fond memories of my time spent working at Holden Village, a remote retreat center in Washington State, back in the early 1990s. No roads or other infrastructure reach

the village, a former copper mining operation in the heart of the Glacier Peak Wilderness, so it is entirely reliant on its small hydro plant and diversion dam for power year-round.

In the winter we'd turn off the baseboard electric heaters, fire up the wood furnaces and boilers, and enjoy one another's company in the brightly-lit community center rather than with the many bulbs in our individual spaces.

These days, when I flick a switch or fire up my computer here in Portland, I think about Bonneville Dam on the Columbia river and the Boardman coal-fired power plant on the east side of the state. I still traipse around the house and turn off excess lights in the mornings and evenings. And, like many of those featured in the article, I ask, talk, and think about what it would take to create a local energy source in our community, where the values of sharing and sustainability are the norm.

MARK DOUGLASS
Portland, Oregon



As an "elder statesman of hydro," I found Ginger Strand's story about small-scale hydro and dams insightful and compelling. A follower of American Friends Service, I believe in moderation, tolerance, and compromise as the

foundation for diplomacy. As such, I believe that some dams should be removed, and I have been instrumental in promoting the removal of three dams on the Shasheen River in Andover, Massachusetts. The folks at American Rivers have been very supportive of this effort. When the removals are completed, striped bass, shad, and bluefish will be running from the Atlantic Ocean through the center of Andover for the first time in 275 years. This is as exciting to me as any hydro station I have ever built.

WILLIAM K. FAY
East Ware, Massachusetts

I was disappointed in the recent article by Ginger Strand, which highlights the benefits of small hydro dams without adequately examining the reasons why in the Northeast many nonprofit groups and state and federal agencies are working with communities to remove select small dams and other obstructions from our rivers and streams. Strand fails to go

into any detail about the fisheries and other ecological issues underlying the need for dam removal on many streams and rivers.

To reduce the impetus for the removal of the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River to people's desire to see a free-flowing river is preposterous. Fish passage and ecological restoration issues drove the removal of the Edwards Dam, and ten years later it is a tremendous success. Water quality in the former impoundment improved overnight, and today the Kennebec supports a significantly more diverse and abundant array of aquatic insects, the base of the riverine food chain. Natural function and ecological processes have been restored, allowing for natural exchange of nutrients and sediments.

On the fisheries front, the Kennebec shines. This year's alewife run approached two million fish, a drastic change from the low thousands that returned to the river when the dam was in place, and enough to sustain a commercial fishery. American shad have recovered to the point of supporting a burgeoning recreational fishery. Striped bass fishing has moved upriver, with large stripers being angled all the way up to Waterville, Maine, sixty miles from the ocean. Wild Atlantic salmon are now accessing historic habitats where they have not been seen in two centuries. Where people once saw an occasional

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eagle or osprey on the Augusta waterfront, it is now possible to see eight or more eagles, and as many osprey and great blue herons, fishing side by side.

The Edwards Dam removal also set the stage for the Penobscot River Restoration Project, and I assume it would give Strand hope to see the way multiple interests came together to balance hydropower production and fisheries restoration on the largest river in Maine.

JOHN J. BURROWS
*President, Maine Rivers
 Kennebunk, Maine*

Derrick Jensen's discussion of "what's wrong with the simplicity movement" in "The World at Gunpoint" (May/June 2009) hit the nail right on the head. It's a question I've asked myself many times—not necessarily "How do I lead my life?" but "What do I do now?"

Twenty-five years ago I decided to check out of this culture and its harmful practices. I moved to the country to live a "simple lifestyle," and although I've learned that, far from simple, it's a lot of work, my spouse and I have cut our resource usage to one-tenth of the average American's. That's a good start. I used my rearranged priorities to rethink my situation, and became involved in my community—launching a tutoring program for disadvantaged kids and leading nonviolence training in the nearby town.

But in the quiet moments my conscience still asks, "What more can I do?" I can't escape the feeling that I should become active in halting the damage, maybe even throw a little sand in the gears of industry. One thing driving me is the lot of those to follow; I already grieve for my grandchildren and the world that they will inherit from us. As Jensen says, the first step is to ask the right question.

GEOFF HUGGINS
Winchester, Virginia

I am intrigued to see where Derrick Jensen's new column takes the magazine. This first submission seems, well, incredibly dark. Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions, but we are not in any danger of killing the planet. If the worst of global climate change occurs and humans (along with thousands of other species) vanish tomorrow, the planet will still be here. It will harbor life again, despite the worst effects of our current practices.

What we should be afraid of is creating a toxic environment that no longer supports human life, one where we have no clean air to breathe, no fish to eat, and no grain to grow. Yes, we want to save and conserve the species with whom we share our world—the "nonhuman people," as Jensen puts it—but we must do so out of a deep recognition that saving fellow species serves to stabilize the ecosystems that make human life possible.

SARAH LARDIZABAL
Orlando, Florida

I read with bated breath to get to the place where Derrick Jensen, after reducing all personal efforts for change to naught, would say what he thought we should do. It was not clear to me. While I am a supporter of going for the visceral, I am not in favor of the pop nihilism that permeates our media.

PATRICIA SAVAGE
Northwood, New Hampshire

Curtis White's recognition of "the beautiful" in "The Barbaric Heart" (May/June 2009) reminds me of Gaston Bachelard's writings about water lilies. Art appreciation is akin to nature appreciation: both value the unquantifiable. Comprehending beauty requires imagination; imagination is requisite for compassion and empathy. Maybe, along the lines of what Derrick Jensen suggests in the same issue ("The World at Gunpoint," May/June 2009), if we bring our attention to serving the land,

Orion Notes & Miscellany

Thomas Berry's work appeared in *Orion* only twice (Autumn 1998 and Spring 2002), but his ideas were enormously influential to the writers, educators, activists, and readers that make up the community that surrounds *Orion*. His death on June 1 leaves a substantial void, and he will be missed.

The twenty-second annual **Wildbranch Writing Workshop**, cosponsored by *Orion* and Sterling College, took place in early June. This year's faculty consisted of Alison Hawthorne Deming, Erik Reece, and Ginger Strand, along with *Orion* editors Chip Blake and Jennifer Sahn. Next year's Wildbranch will take place June 6–12.

Amy Irvine's *Trespass*, which won the 2009 Orion Book Award, has also won the Colorado Book Award and the 2009 Ellen Meloy Fund Desert Writers Award. The 2010 Orion Book Award process has begun; Executive Editor Hal Clifford will represent the *Orion* staff on the selection committee.

ABOUT ORION'S PAPER This paper is made by Mohawk Fine Papers of New York and Ohio. It contains 50 percent postconsumer fiber, is FSC-certified, and is process chlorine-free. It is also carbon-neutral; since 2007 Mohawk has offset all of its energy use with a combination of wind energy purchases (for electricity) and verified emission reduction credits to cover the thermal power used in the paper production. By using this paper made with Mohawk's production processes, *Orion* avoids the emission of roughly eighty tons of greenhouse-gas equivalents annually.

Staff Travels, Staff Changes

Editor-in-Chief **Chip Blake** appeared on a panel devoted to "new media" at the biannual conference of the **Association for the Study of Literature and Environment** in Victoria, BC, in June. Andrew Revkin of the *New York Times* and Daniel Slager of Milkweed Editions were copresenters.

Picture Editor **Jason Houston** performed portfolio reviews in May for PhotoLucida in Portland, Oregon, and at Review Santa Fe in New Mexico in June.

Taj Forer has joined *Orion* as Photography Consultant. Taj is the cofounder and coeditor of the photography magazine *Daylight*.

Jamie Goldenberg is our new Design Associate.

And we welcome our new Editorial Intern, **Erica Dorpalen**.

Erica recently received a master's degree in publishing and writing from Emerson College.

we will save it. Service occurs whenever we choose beauty over mediocrity and when we allow ourselves to feel wonder. Individual aesthetics vary. However, the skills to appreciate beauty—the ability to listen, visualize, analyze, and make connections—can be acquired through art. Artists, like naturalists, help us to see.

ALEXA Mergen
Sacramento, California

I was poised on the brink of not resubscribing, when I got the latest issue with Curtis White's article. That's what I've been waiting for—a *new* way of looking at an old problem. Loved it. I miss the old *CoEvolution Quarterly/Whole Earth Review* for its truly avant garde nature, its edginess. "The Barbaric Heart" brought that back for me.

GUY KING AMES
Fayetteville, Arkansas

I'm saddened by the pain, anguish, and trauma that Dirk was left with after his heroic service to the public for so many years (Craig Childs, "An Oracle in the Desert," May/June 2009). I'm also heartened by the ability of nature to help heal deep wounds.

Maybe all those who serve should be given the opportunity to "decompress" in a nature-based program after their years of service. I'm convinced that such a program could help reduce the suicide rate and heal wounds. It seems like the least we could do for the men and women who put their lives on the line for us every day.

MIKE GUNDLACH
Portland, Oregon

In the online interview accompanying her article "3 Bets" (May/June 2009), Sandra Steingraber cites comfort with the familiar as one reason we are not more

alarmed about the life-threatening toxins that are still on the market. While this may be true, it seems the bigger elephant in the room is that few people know how to fight the Goliaths of big business and industrial farming. Most of us have been taught not to question capitalism as the best economic system for providing us with all the stuff we have, even if the "stuff" ends up killing us.

Perhaps during this time of eco-crisis, (both ecologic and economic), folks will have the time and the desire to connect the dots and take action.

KATHRYN SCHMIDT
Au Gres, Michigan

Orion welcomes your thoughts and responses. Please send your letters to us at 187 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA 01230 or letters@orionsociety.org. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.