

**The Capital Times**



The bells in Bethlehem.

### Striving to find peace in Bethlehem

The association of Christmas with peace goes back centuries, yet it is as fresh and vibrant as the millennium that officially — dawned a week from tonight.

The connection, rooted in religious tradition, has become a once spiritual and secular. And rightly so. No matter one's faith tradition, or lack thereof, there remains a need for a time in each year when it is possible to imagine a world without violence.

For most Americans, indeed for a substantial portion of humanity, this is that time.

Yet this Christmas, the promise of peace seems remote. Especially in Bethlehem, the Palestinian city to which Christmas traces the holiday's beginnings.

No, Christmas has not been canceled in Bethlehem in this year of horrific violence on the West Bank — which has seen the killing by Israeli soldiers of close to 200 Palestinians, including 19 from the Bethlehem area since Israel's right-wing opposition leader Ariel Sharon sparked the current violence in September. Palestinians and Israelis have seen their faith in the prospect of peace surely challenged. And in this millennium moment, when Bethlehem was to be the center of the world's celebration of a bold stride toward the future, there is little to celebrate.

The warfare on the West Bank has frightened away even the most adventurous voyagers. The sound of gunfire is almost as familiar as the sound of the bells near the Church of the Nativity. And as the pages of this year's advent calendar were turned, Bethlehem's Manager Square was virtually empty.

It is not unreasonable to take the violence that has wracked Bethlehem this year as a symbol of how far this old planet is from realizing the promise of peace that Christmas offers.

Nor is it unreasonable to argue that the best way to secure the United States — news Bethlehem, and the promise of peace it represents, more than has been offered in the year 2000.

President Clinton deserves credit for his personal efforts to broker a peace, and incoming President George W. Bush would be wise to ask Clinton to carry the endeavor on as a special envoy. Some will laugh at the notion of Bush employing Clinton in this capacity. But such laughter bespeaks an ignorance of the reality that the delicate process of restoring relations between Israel and Palestine is a vital American mission — too vital to allow politicians and pundits to force the sacrifice of Clinton's unique relations with all the players.

The circumstance of Bethlehem this Christmas begs a great leap forward on the part of all the players. Let it begin with a bipartisan commitment on the part of America's leaders. And let us hope, passimantly, that Christmas 2001 will see a peace in Bethlehem so rich and good that the spirit will spread across the planet.

This piece is a special anniversary special by The Capital Times, Green County's afternoon newspaper.

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## Three views on the Fox River cleanup

### Settlement is fair, equitable

By George E. Meyer

Last Sunday's Wisconsin State Journal story, headlined "Fox River settlement," contrasted a lawsuit settlement proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with one negotiated by the state Department of Natural Resources and the state attorney general's office.

Fish and Wildlife is proposing a figure of the range of \$20 million to \$300 million for damages to the Fox River's ecosystem from the operations of various companies located along the river's corridor. The state has a proposed settlement with one of the river's Fox River companies for \$7 million.

The Dec. 17 story presented some general arguments for both sides that show the DNR attorney general's settlement as the correct and appropriate one.

● In 1995, in a similar situation, Fish and Wildlife reached a settlement with General Motors on the Saginaw River in Michigan for \$17.6 million using the same approach that was used in this case.

● In 1999, in another similar situation, Fish and Wildlife reached a \$13 million settlement with General Motors on the Wisconsin River in Massachusetts for a PCB problem almost identical to the one on the Fox River.

● The economic theory used by Fish and Wildlife in this case was struck down by a federal court in California in a case involving Montrose Chemical Co. The Fish and Wildlife settlement on the Fox River is with just one of seven companies and is for the largest environmental settlement in the history of Wisconsin. Previous high settlements were \$17 million and \$1 million.

● The economic theory used by Fish and Wildlife in this case has been severely criticized by economist David McFadden, the 2000 Nobel Prize winner in economics.

● Finally, when presented with Fish and Wildlife's practice of proposing extremely high claim amounts and then settling for 10 cents on the dollar, David Allen, the coordinator of the Fox River project said, "That's a wild charge."

The bottom line is that the seven Wisconsin companies in this matter should pay for past damages to the Fox River from their former discharges. However, should those Wisconsin companies pay 20 times what General Motors paid in Michigan or 20 times what General Electric paid in Massachusetts? That is the tough question that the Wisconsin State Journal did not ask.

The Dec. 17 story contained several allegations that the state's settlement was entered into by the DNR as an example of a cozy relationship between Governor Thompson's administration and business. These allegations are false. The damage determination and settlement between the company and the state was negotiated by career public employees of the DNR in full partnership with three excellent lawyers from Attorney General La Follette's Department of Justice. There were no quips here, just a fair and equitable environmental settlement.

Meyer is secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

### 'Should those Wisconsin employers pay 20 times what General Motors paid in Michigan...'

GEORGE MEYER, DNR secretary



George Meyer, DNR secretary.

### 'It is even more damaging to watch the DNR change its role from protector of the environment to protector of polluters...'

JENNIFER FEYERHERM, Sierra Club



Jennifer Feyerherm, Sierra Club.

### Fish & Wildlife estimate based on solid research

By Charles Woolley

Wisconsin and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have joined forces many times on common resource management issues. Now, Fish and Wildlife, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the state of Michigan and the Guisla, Menominee and Little Traverse Bay tribes want to join forces with Wisconsin again on restoration of Green Bay.

After years of intensive work by dozens of national experts in a process that was joined and endorsed by many local and state agencies and that was open to the public and scientific community, we arrived at conclusions regarding what is needed for a fair restoration of the Lower Fox River and Green Bay.

Understandably, we have not yet reached a consensus with Wisconsin. Our conclusions, which are based on the best available scientific information, Resource Damage Assessments that have been conducted of square miles of Green Bay have been and will be fully restorable to Wisconsin and Fort James Corp.

Why is significant restoration needed? Because most of the PCBs have already escaped the Fox River culvert they could have been cleaned up and the natural treasures throughout thousands of square miles of Green Bay have been and will be fully restorable for decades.

Fish and Wildlife want to forge a partnership with Wisconsin to further our shared cause — ecological restoration of the Fox River and Green Bay.

Fish and Wildlife's approach has been characterized as proposing extremely high and inflated claims and then settling for a fraction of that amount.

However, it is inappropriate to suggest that our damage assessment claims for Green Bay or elsewhere are artificially inflated to achieve a "better" settlement. We have conducted a comprehensive and detailed evaluation that is subject to public scrutiny and technical peer review. This evaluation was detailed in the report published "Restoration and Compensation Determination Plan" (www.fws.gov/greenbay), which lays out the technical basis for our restoration proposal and damage estimates.

It is true that government agencies are not known for long-term full cost estimates of damages. Indeed, this is the essence of a "settlement." However, negotiation strength increases with knowledge of the facts under discussion.

Fish and Wildlife and its partners have conducted one of the most comprehensive, detailed assessments ever performed in the United States. We believe our analysis is technically sound and thoroughly defensible. Our goal is a fair and equitable settlement.

Rather than attempting to decide issues unilaterally with the companies and leaving the public to suffer through widely differing damage estimates, the goal of Fish and Wildlife is to unify the public's damage assessment claims. Fish and Wildlife is committed to rebuilding our efforts to develop a unified position with Wisconsin.

Woolley is the assistant regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Ft. Snelling, Minn.

## DNR sells state short by cutting a secret deal

By Jennifer Feyerherm

When I was going to cooperate in the efforts to compensate the public for PCB damage, he should sign something that would make the efforts of other involved agencies and tribes and instead drove his energy to a comprehensive river cleanup.

The DNR's settlement with the Fox River Corp. flagrantly undermines the public interest. Behind closed doors, DNR and the company reached an agreement that is supposed to compensate the public for past and future damages from PCB pollution. How can the DNR possibly know the extent to which our environment will continue to endure the ravages of PCB pollution before a cleanup plan is out?

Why would the DNR turn its back on the public, not only refusing public scrutiny of their settlement but also blatantly ignoring public comments that already have been made?

Ninety-five percent of the people who commented on the restoration and compensation plan recently released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported the much larger settlement proposed by Fish and Wildlife. In fact, many noted that the assessed damages were not enough to compensate for the years of destruction we have and will continue to suffer. And almost all supported spending the money to preserve and restore natural areas, as opposed to developing recreational facilities.

The DNR blatantly ignored three public agencies, three tribal governments, and the will of the public where it settled for a woefully small sum that will be spent primarily on parking lots and other recreational facilities.

Unfortunately, this denial of the public's best interests means that in the first deal the DNR made on the Fox River.

In 1997, the DNR agreed to give the paper mills access to the DNR's damage assessment process. It eventually allowed the industries to conduct their own damage assessment and to do work designed to support the clean-up itself, including risk assessment. This allows the paper companies to develop and control the information that will ultimately be used against them. Obviously, they cannot be unbiased in this task, and thus the agreement clearly serves industry and not the public.

What we are seeing today is the result of giving industry access to and control over the assessment process. Clearly in this case the DNR is placing the rights of the public under the rights of the polluter.

Three days researching documents from the trading events where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service archives all documents pertaining to the Fox River revealed at least four letters from the DNR and the USFWS, to review the DNR and the USFWS had a 52-day comment period with five public meetings throughout the assessment area. The DNR did not attend any of the public meetings.

We are disappointed that the DNR passed up these many opportunities to limit common ground and have instead chosen to sit at the differences in the press.

Each day that settlements are negotiated behind closed doors and economic studies are being debated in the press, more PCBs move into Lake Michigan where their effects will be felt for generations. It is time to quit the backroom and finish the clean-up plan by early spring so that work can begin on ice gone out on the river. The public has dealt with enough delays. We must move ahead so that our children and grandchildren will have a chance to know the joys of fishing and the glory of a clean Green Bay.

Feyerherm, of Madison, is associate national representative of the Sierra Club's Great Lakes Program.

### Ethanol uses more energy than it yields

Regarding the State Journal's Dec. 10 story ethanol plants: Gov. Tommy Thompson may be able to sign a law providing \$3 million a year in tax breaks (subsidies) for ethanol plants, but unfortunately he can't so easily sign a bill repealing the laws of thermodynamics.

Producing a gallon of ethanol consumes more energy than the gallon contains, and subsidizing ethanol production holds only a false promise of easing our coming energy problems.

The net energy balance of corn ethanol has been studied extensively over the last decade, with published studies showing it takes 80,000 to 90,000 British Thermal Units (BTU) to produce a gallon of ethanol, while that same gallon returns only 26,000 BTU.

The energy is used to make and apply fertilizer and pesticides for fuel to plant, cultivate, harvest, and transport the corn, and finally for more fuel to ferment and distill the corn and transport the ethanol to a user.

That means everytime we make a gallon of ethanol, society's overall energy debt increases.

The laws of thermodynamics — which politicians, lobbyists and farmers seem to be blissfully unaware of — say it makes little sense to expect corn ethanol to become an economical or realistic solution to our energy problems, and that corn ethanol will be profitable only as long as taxpayer money subsidizes its production.

— Gary Dikkers, Madison

### TODAY'S MAIL

#### Some mascot ideas for the Fox River controversy

So, in exchange for financing a few boat landings and parking lots along the river they polio-dosed, Georgia Pacific is left off the hook by our senseless Department of Natural Resources. We should the public who enjoy using these new facilities to catch steelhead fish that can't eat or land waste for new species of mutant coho.

Memo to Georgia Pacific: Backs the defuncted commitment should be your corporate mascot.

Oh, I forgot, you already have one: the George Meyer puppet, whose strings are pulled by the Tommy Thompson puppet, whose strings are pulled by you. — Jerry Reich, Madison

### PLEASE STAY IN TOUCH

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