

Book Summary

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Poisons, which are deadly for hundreds of millions of years, will only be safeguarded for ten thousand years. Sites for safeguarding are in the most earthquake prone areas, like Yucca Mountain. Yucca Mountain is also near a dormant volcano.

In terms of radioactive waste leaks, the nuclear industry has already been thousands of times less reliable than they must be, to protect us.

Every nuclear plant, and shipment of wastes, is a terrorist's dream come true.

Sources researched for *Asleep* include government reports, testimony by top scientists, and elementary principles of physics, engineering, common sense, and decency.

Some industry and government lies are brazen. They violate fundamental principles. For example, the industry has concocted a new law of physics. When you have a nuclear catastrophe, the wind stops blowing. Evacuation for a thousand-mile contamination is limited to ten miles. How claims conflict with elementary principles of the law of conservation of energy, and a basic thermodynamic principle are explained simply.

The book poses the question, "Is Murphy's Law legal?" You will need to read it to find out.

The book is available from Amazon.com, from the publisher, Blue Dolphin Publishing, Inc. (800-643-0765), and from your local bookshop. Discounts are available for quantity orders and for non-profit organizations. ♪

(We are honored to have a book summarized by its own author! Sid Goodman [sjgdesin@mindspring.com] was for many years the Chapter's Energy Issues Coordinator.)

Book Review

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they're part of a rebellious identity, cf. living next to waste sites, which is ascribed low status.

And that's a big part of the problem. In *Squeezing out Sparks*, Graham Parker sang, "It's not the knife in your heart that tears you apart, it's the thought of someone sticking it in." I can't say when or what factors prompted Americans to adopt this mindset, but Parker's right: people don't want to be victims or chumps. The townspeople's resistance to the storage facility despite the attendant financial reward manifests that the desire to avoid chumpdom trumps even a potential tax reduction. The problem of risk assessment is especially acute in the radiation realm. The media has delivered many messages about how bad radiation and corporations are, from headlines, to pictures of real radiation victims from Chernobyl and wartime Japan, to movies like *Atomic Cafe*, *Silkwood* and *The China Syndrome*. (Sheesh, Erin Brokovich/Julia Roberts were practically canonized). Is this society too cancerphobic and star-struck and the world too complicated to expect people to rationally sort what's dangerous from what's not?

Mistrust of government is another key theme. Perhaps the most interesting statistic in the book is that only 25% of people polled would tend to believe a government pronouncement that a given environmental condition posed a threat to the public. In contrast, over 75% would tend to disbelieve a government assurance that a perceived environmental threat had been successfully addressed. That alone made sitting an uphill battle. Evoking Edmund Burke, Weingart also observes that subjecting radiation to so much regulation creates more concern about radiation than is justified by actual science. This observation may be generalized to other contexts. For example, does the threat of medical malpractice suits cause doctors to overtest, overtest and, therefore, overspend? Do excessive security measures create a world in which people feel less secure? And so on.

The author notes that collectivist appeals did not advance the search for a waste storage site. Yet, the notion that a small group of people might willingly accept the burdens of a larger group is not supported by what I see. Excepting JFK's inaugural address, the major social movements and political rhetoric of both major American political parties during my lifetime have focused more on benefiting individuals, less on advancing the welfare of the larger society. Asking individuals to accept the burdens of the group is a hard sell, even if we are told that we all somehow benefit by processes that created low level rad-waste. How does the search turn out? If I told you I'd deprive you of some of the author's other interesting insights and clever wisecracks.

But wasn't that a low-level radioactive waste truck I just saw heading for South Carolina? ♪



Group News FROM AROUND THE STATE

Northwest Jersey Group

(Sussex and Warren Counties, approximately)

Web site: <http://pepin.home.att.net>. We are also accessible from the NJ Chapter Web site.

OFFICERS:

Chair:	Ellen Pepin	973-252-5137
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Publicity Chair:	Claire Cifelli	973-726-8606
Outings Chair:	Vacant	

Attention: Northwestern New Jersey needs a strong Sierra Club presence to protect its environment from the challenges of increasing over development. We need to have the commitment and talents of all of our members. We have a need for people to help us in our conservation efforts and we also need the help of people who are willing to serve as outings leaders. We would also like to see more people attend our monthly meetings. Come and meet your fellow Sierra Club members.

LOCAL ISSUES:

One issue we have been involved with is the proposed plan to widen Rte. 15 from Wharton to its terminus at Rte. 206. The widening of Rte. 15 will not only disturb the central part of the highlands, but will only lead to more sprawl development and more congestion. Since Gov. McGreevey and the DEP have come out with their anti-sprawl plans and the "Big Map" it may be a little easier to block those plans.

A second issue concerns the air quality in parts of Warren County. This is greatly affected by power plants across the river in Pennsylvania, one in Martins Creek and the other in Portland. Both these plants have expansion plans that do not include improvements to the older coal fired units. We think that this should take place before these plants are allowed to expand. We need local help to become more involved with this issue.

We have also helped a small number of families in Washington Twp. (Warren Co.) whose wells are polluted with the chemical MBTE. We provided support in appealing to local authorities and DEP for immediate help. They have gotten some assistance, but it is an ongoing issue.

We are pleased to announce that a sale agreement has finally been reached between the State and the Intrawest Corporation. The State will buy 400 acres of land on the top of Hamburg Mountain for approximately \$7million dollars. Intrawest will then donate approximately 1400 acres more to the state. The DEP will administer the property and the State will allow some expansion of the ski operation subject to proper approvals. To celebrate this agreement the Northwest Group is planning on having an Earth Day hike on May 4. We will try to hike on the top of the mountain, but that may have to change if there is no access.

Even though it is not really the Northwest's territory, we have been attending the planning board hearings in Mine Hill. Canfield Associates (Kushner) is planning to build 760 two and three bedroom town home and rental units on steeply sloping land that was extensively mined in the 18th and early 19th centuries. There are at least five old mines on the property. To make matters worse, the site contains the headwaters of the Black River, a C1 stream. Downstream is the Almatong Well Field, which supplies water to a good part of western Morris County. Some of the board members seem to be opposed to this proposal, but they are not asking the right questions of the "experts". There were quite a few residents at the first meeting. Subsequent meetings have produced a varied turnout. We need to let the board know that the residents are against this plan. Any help would be appreciated.

Sussex County officials seem to be trying to head off any state control of the Highlands region, which is a good deal of the county. There have been meetings of a new Open Space Committee and the County Strategic Growth Advisory Committee. Also, the Freeholders have passed a resolution stating that local officials should make up the majority of any agency that oversees development in the county. Their goals are not matched to the goals of the Big Map. We would like to hear from

HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR GROUP (BY COUNTY)

Northwest Jersey Group: Sussex & Warren
Hunterdon County Group: Hunterdon
North Jersey Group: Passaic & most of Bergen
Raritan Valley Group: Somerset & Middlesex
West Jersey Group: Gloucester, Camden & Burlington
South Jersey Group: Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland & Salem
Essex County Group: Essex
Hudson-Meadowlands Group: Hudson & SE Bergen
Loantaka Group: Morris & Union
Jersey Shore Group: Monmouth & Ocean
Central Jersey Group: Mercer

These designations are approximate: members are welcome to participate in whichever Group(s) they find convenient

people who would be willing to attend meetings of the Freeholders and/or the Strategic Advisory Committee.

MEETINGS:

Our general meetings take place in Sparta. Please call for the meeting place.

Apr 9: 6:30 pm. Pot luck supper and discussion of local issues. Please call Ellen Pepin for details.

June 8: 1pm. This meeting will be a little different. We are going to combine a program and a walk. Please join us at one of the state's newest parks, Kittatinny Valley State Park, for a slide presentation on the park and its many attractions. A walk will follow the program. This program will be suitable for families.

OUTING:

May 4: 10am Meet at the AT parking lot on Rte. 94. We will attempt to hike on the top of Hamburg Mountain. This will be a victory hike as this area was recently purchased by the State from the Intrawest Corporation. The purchase means no development will take place on the top of the mountain. The location of the hike may be changed, so please call Joseph or Ellen Pepin to be sure.

Hunterdon County Group

OFFICERS:

Chair:	Ruth Prince	908-284-9103
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Political Chair:	Arnold Kushnick	
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Co-Treasurers:	Jeannie Geremia	
	jeannieg@ptd.net	
	and Arnold Kushnick	
	apkushn@eclipse.net	

For meeting times and locations, please contact Ruth Prince.

ACTIVITIES:

We are involved with the development of the Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan, an effort that has been funded by the state DCA. This is a multi-year process (as all planning is!) beginning with defining the broad goals followed by the specifics for the county, as well as environmental indicators, looking at build-out analyses, etc. Since municipal representatives will be involved throughout this process, we are hoping that this plan will actually be followed. Our group reviewed the goals, and then attended the first Land Use Committee meeting led by Hunterdon County Planning Board members. We were the only representatives of an environmental advocacy group present! This will continue throughout the year as monthly meetings and additional workshops, etc. We have also joined the County Planning Board's Environmental Toolbox Subcommittee spearheaded by one of our freeholders. This group will review draft ordinances designed to be environmentally protective and legally defensible, which our municipalities can then use as needed.

All proposed developments that we have been working on are now mostly in litigation or in some decision-making process.

This spring, we will also be working on environmental outreach to kids in the county; we are currently considering elementary through high school. The upper grades have school-run environmental clubs that we will try to get involved in. Our own children will be our first test subjects!

A New Jersey volunteer is needed to help lobby Congress on Utah Wilderness issues. Please contact Barbara.Hayes@NJWild.org