



## Riding the wave

Cast-off electronics yield cascading rewards for institute alum

BY TOM SINCLAIR

He's too modest to admit it, but Neil Peters-Michaud was a good 10 years ahead of the curve. Long before most businesses jumped on the "going green" bandwagon, Peters-Michaud and wife Jessica launched their own electronics recycling company on Madison's East Side.

The year was 1999. They had only one employee but plenty of commitment and a seemingly infinite source of raw mate-

rial: *yesterday's* technology.

Today, their company, Cascade Asset Management, employs more than 85 people in eight locations around the country. Not earth-shaking numbers yet, but *Inc.* Magazine has cited Cascade as one of the nation's fastest growing firms.

"We've been growing at about 40 percent per year for the past four or five years," says CEO Peters-Michaud. "And we are poised to grow even faster just with some of the accounts that we have landed recently."

Consider this: Over a span of 18 months, Cascade will help one of its newest customers recycle items from 12,000 locations in 49 states. In the process it will find homes for thousands of pieces of still-usable equipment, keep tons of toxic waste out of landfills, save the client money and effort, and make a tidy profit.

Fifteen years after graduating from UW-Madison with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and an environmental studies certificate from the Nelson Institute, the 37-year-old Peters-Michaud says he didn't set out to become an

See RIDING, page 2

### Coming soon: Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary

It's still more than a year away, but put it on your calendar now.

The Nelson Institute will celebrate its own 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary *and* the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day with a symposium April 20-21, 2010, at Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison.

*Wisconsin's Environmental and Conservation Legacy: Where We've Come From, Where We're Going* is the tentative theme. Day one will explore the rich history of Wisconsin's conservation and environmental movement, including UW-Madison's central roles in ethics, research, policy development, and other contributions at the state and national levels. Day two will focus on the state of Wisconsin's environment.

As part of the symposium, we're planning the first full-scale alumni gathering since the Nelson Institute's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary symposium in 1995. Watch for details in future issues of *In Common* and on the Web at [nelson.wisc.edu](http://nelson.wisc.edu).

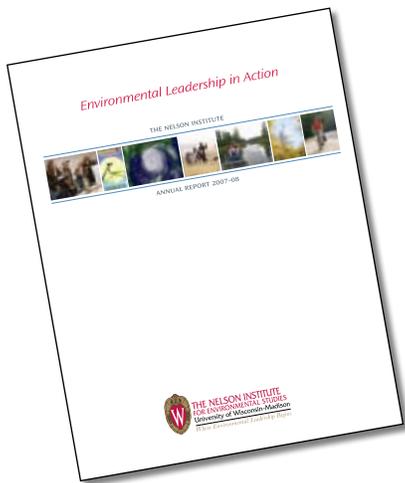


THE NELSON INSTITUTE  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
*Where Environmental Leadership Begins*



BOB RASHID

Neil Peters-Michaud



## Read all about us

If you find *In Common* interesting, take a look at the Nelson Institute's 2007–08 annual report. Aptly titled *Environmental Leadership in Action*, the report highlights the institute's most notable activities and accomplishments of the last fiscal year. It's full of colorful photos from the year, too. You'll find the annual report online at [nelson.wisc.edu/about/diroffice/anrep07-08.pdf](http://nelson.wisc.edu/about/diroffice/anrep07-08.pdf).

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*RIDING*, from page 1

entrepreneur. But his undergraduate days and early post-college experiences led him to a career in which, as the expression goes, he has done well by doing good. Lots of good.

“Last time I checked,” he says, “we’d handled more than 45 million pounds of material. When we step back, we’re pretty proud of that.”

## Partly a fluke

Peters-Michaud's introduction to environmental work as a college freshman “was partly a fluke,” he recalls. “I was looking for my first job and went to the student job board. I didn't see anything that really looked interesting except working for Greenpeace as a canvasser. I didn't know much about what that would entail. But at the beginning of every shift, we spent 30 to 45 minutes listening and reading news off the wire. I learned so much about environmental policy initiatives.

“I disliked going door to door asking for money, but the education and interaction with people across Wisconsin was great. I didn't make much money but I stuck with it my whole freshman year, and it gave me a real crash course in environmental issues.”

He enrolled in the Environmental Studies Certificate Program his sophomore year and became more involved with a student environmental group that worked successfully with University Housing to expand and promote recycling in campus residence and dining halls.

After graduation, Peters-Michaud landed a job with the National Wildlife Federation helping other Midwestern college campuses develop similar environmental programs. He later returned to UW–Madison to manage the university's surplus materials recycling operation, SWAP.



“We tried to find homes for all the surplus equipment, but it was becoming more and more difficult to get rid of computers. I remember when we would throw away 100 to 150 monitors a week because we couldn't market them,” he says.

The unwanted equipment ended up in the Dane County landfill. Nobody involved realized that it contained lead. Today, such disposal is prohibited. But at the time, there was no alternative — which gave Peters-Michaud his idea for a business.

He applied to the Wisconsin School of Business' MBA program and was accepted “with this idea in the back of my head,” he says. He entered the school's entrepreneurship program, taking courses in operations, marketing, and accounting. Along the way, he won a grant from the UW System to study the feasibility of recycling cathode ray tube monitors in Wisconsin. The findings were encouraging.

Finally, with help from the entrepreneurship program, he secured financing to start Cascade Asset Management. At one point, the state Recycling Market Development Board rejected his application for a low-interest loan, but Peters-Michaud persuaded the board to reverse its decision.

“The irony is that the people who represented the DNR (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources) voted against us but all the business people voted for us,” he says with a grin. “And now the DNR features us in its annual report!”

## Planned obsolescence

With major processing facilities in Madison and suburban Indianapolis and new satellite operations in



CASCADE ASSET MANAGEMENT

*A Cascade employee disassembles a piece of electronic equipment to remove hazardous materials and recover reusable components and commodities.*

Delaware, Florida, Texas, California, Colorado, and Washington state, Cascade has become a leader in the electronics recycling industry. It serves Fortune 500 companies, municipalities, and more than 900 other regional businesses nationwide.

The firm accepts anything with a plug or a battery that's not an appliance. Large bins brimming with cast-off computers, printers, modems, TVs, radios, medical equipment, other electronic gear and its myriad components are stacked four high in the warehouse of the company's 42,000-square-foot headquarters.

"Planned obsolescence," says Peters-Michaud, gazing across the cavernous room. But no longer the end of the road. "One of our taglines is, 'cascading IT equipment to its next best use,'" he adds. Hence, the company's name.

Cascade practices a "zero landfill" policy; none of the electronics it collects ends up in a dump.

Employees painstakingly "demanufacture" electronic items that cannot

be reused intact, recovering 55 different categories of material, from precious metals like gold and palladium to common stuff like glass, cardboard, and plastic. These are shipped to firms that "remanufacture" them into something new.

Increasingly, the company refurbishes and resells equipment in bulk quantities. Much of it already has waiting buyers.

"Our best fit is with clients that sell new computers to customers and promote what's called life-cycle management services," says Peters-Michaud. "They sell the computers and service and support them, which extends their life. And then, on a certain date, they replace them with new computers. If we know three years out when this is going to happen, we can get that equipment to somebody else right away before it sits in a closet for two years and loses value."

Cascade also sells used equipment on eBay and through its own online store.

"On the environmental side, we provide two benefits to our customers. One is guaranteeing their compliance with environmental regulations. They can't simply throw these things away any more," says Peters-Michaud.

"Second, we've seen a lot of interest in the last three to four years in the idea of sustainability. There have been exposés on the dumping of computers in third world countries that don't have the capacity and infrastructure to handle them properly. Companies can lose their reputations over this because you see their names on these items in third world dumps. That's a real problem for them."

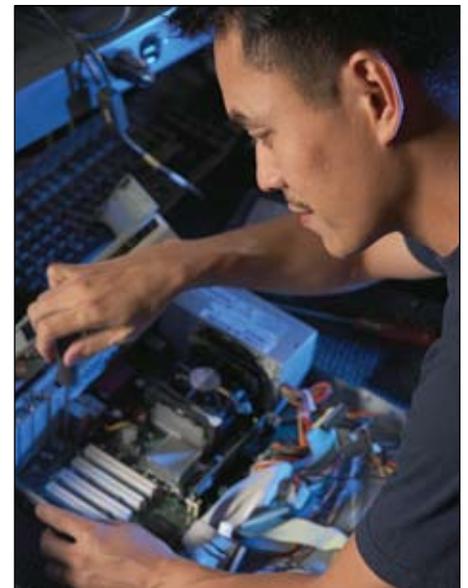
Cascade ensures that its clients avoid such hazards by scrupulously tracking where all discarded materials end up. It also guarantees their security by thoroughly wiping data from every computer it recycles.

## Sustainability and value

Peters-Michaud says the electronics recycling industry is growing 17 percent a year despite the shaky economy. Rising income from Cascade's recovery of commodities like gold, copper, and steel have offset the increased costs of fuel, one of its major expenses. The weak dollar also has helped the company reach markets overseas. Indeed, coping with rapid growth while "riding the wave" within his industry, as he puts it, is the company's number one challenge. But its strong sense of purpose is a steady influence in turbulent times.

"We started from day one with seven values principles," says Peters-Michaud. "One is that we will promote environmental sustainability and justice in all that we do and leave the community better off than we found it. Another is that we will always look to run a profitable business but never to sacrifice long-term value. We don't seek to maximize short-term profits and cut costs at the expense of everything else."

*See RIDING, page 4*



CASCADE ASSET MANAGEMENT

*All used computers are inspected for data storage components, which are electronically wiped or physically shredded to guarantee clients' data security.*

## 'Green hero'

**Madison Magazine** last April declared the Nelson Institute one of the area's "savviest, smartest, boldest, well-intentioned and hardest working stewards of justice, humanity and the environment." In an article titled, "Green Heroes," the magazine also cited Nelson Institute professors **Jonathan Patz** and **Dan Anderson** and lecturer **Tom Eggert** individually.

## 1,000 metric tons

The Nelson Institute contributes the equivalent of roughly 1,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere each year.

That's the estimate of graduate students **Jeannette Leboyer** and **Damon Clark**, who spent last spring gathering data and crunching numbers for a capstone project in our Energy Analysis and Policy Program.

Two-thirds of the Nelson Institute's carbon footprint comes from the production of steam used to heat our facilities. Another 30 percent results from the generation of electricity for those facilities, while faculty and staff travel produces another four percent.

Calculating carbon footprints is complicated, say Leboyer and Clark, because so many factors are involved.

*RIDING, from page 3*

"I think that sustainability and long-term value go hand in hand. You're not short-changing yourself or your customers or your employees. And that seems to have worked for us."

The notion of sustainability is woven through the fabric of the company. Its three-year-old facility on Madison's northeast side was sited near employees' homes and an interstate highway to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. It takes full advantage of natural light and ventilation. Many of its building materials came from local sources. Interior furnishings like carpet squares and even the conference room table are made of recycled materials.

Cascade also makes a habit of "doing good" as an employer. The company goes out of its way to hire veterans and refugees. It offers

English-as-a second-language classes on site, organizes social activities like soccer games and picnics, and actively promotes staff input.

*Madison Magazine* and WISC-TV earlier this year recognized the firm as one of the city's best places to work. The Society for Human Resource Management and the Great Place to Work Institute cited it among the top 50 small and medium-sized employee-friendly companies in America.

Peters-Michaud says he didn't anticipate this when he started out, but the "people" part of his job is the most rewarding.

"We've got a great team," he says. "I think when people are here, they are *on*, and really moving, and focused on their work. I love seeing how so many of them are so motivated by what we do and inspired by the impact that we have."

Much of his own motivation and inspiration dates back to his years at UW-Madison, as he explained to the Wisconsin Alumni Association in an essay last spring when chosen to receive one of WAA's Forward Under 40 Awards.

"My classes taught me how to be inquisitive and caring; combining rational thought with compassion," he wrote. "The UW experience provided me the confidence to lead, but the humility to recognize I always have more to learn."

*For more information about Cascade Asset Management, visit [cascade-assets.com](http://cascade-assets.com)*

CASCADE ASSET MANAGEMENT



*Cascade resells many refurbished items on eBay and bulk wholesale through its own online store.*

# 'I felt like the whole world opened up for me'

Crossing academic disciplines reveals the inseparability of science and culture

BY MADELINE FISHER

As a University of Washington graduate student in the late 1980s, **Nancy Langston** traveled to a national park in Zimbabwe to study an endangered bird. She came back with a resolve to know more about people.

During her time in the park, a flood of refugees from neighboring Zambia had stirred fears about poaching, recalls Langston, now a UW–Madison professor in the Nelson Institute and Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology.

As a result, authorities enacted a brutal conservation strategy: Any African found inside the park would be shot on sight. At the same time, the Zimbabwean government was under intense pressure to open parklands to farming and settlement. With the country's prime agricultural lands committed to commodity crops, such as sugar, many people had little means of feeding themselves.

As she learned of these tensions, Langston found herself reflecting less on birds and more on people. What was driving them into the area? Who had access to land? And, most of all: Why, after people arrived in a landscape, did so many striking changes follow? The young ecologist-in-training soon became convinced that understanding — and ultimately reversing — environmental decline meant paying much closer attention to human communities.

"I came back to America and decided I wanted to look at the intersection of history, culture, and conservation," says Langston.



Nancy Langston

## Nascent niche

The niche she found was environmental history, the study of the shared history of people and the land. Started by a small group of historians and ecologists a decade before Langston went to Zimbabwe, the field rests on the idea that long-term changes in the landscape have as much to do with human culture as with natural processes. Ecologists and historians were already studying human impacts in parallel, but it was the pioneers of environmental history who got them talking about "how the two fields could add to one another," says Langston.

One of those early leaders was UW–Madison history and environmental studies professor **William Cronon**. Another was University of Washington historian Richard White, who became Langston's mentor when she decided to switch tracks.

"So I got integrated into this group of people who were trying to do this new field," she says. "And I felt like the whole world opened up for me."

In the years since, Langston has examined the historic roots of the

forest health crisis in the western United States as well as conflicts over management of riparian areas, the zones where land and water meet. And a current project is documenting the history of the hormone-mimicking chemicals known as endocrine disruptors, which have become ubiquitous in the environment and, consequently, in us.

In each study, Langston combines the quantitative data of scientists with information gleaned from historical documents and interviews in the tradition of historians. Working across disciplines isn't easy, says forest and wildlife ecology/environmental studies professor **David Mladenoff**, who is Langston's frequent collaborator. But her background helps span the differences in language and assumptions that normally make interdisciplinary work so challenging.

"What's interesting about Nancy is [since] she had almost completed a Ph.D. in ecology before she switched, as an environmental historian she's also extremely scientifically literate; I would say she's a good ecologist. Not that ecologists are somehow better," Mladenoff says with a laugh. "But it really does make communication easier."

## Immersed in the Blues

It was in a time and place where communication wasn't easy, where people's views had become too polarized to bridge, that Langston found her first chance to do environmental history. During her time at the University of Washington, she often visited a

See *WHOLE WORLD*, page 6

## Climate conference viewable

Didn't get to the Nelson Institute's 2008 Earth Day conference in Madison last April? No problem. All presentations are viewable online on the multimedia pages at [nelson.wisc.edu/outreach/climate\\_change](http://nelson.wisc.edu/outreach/climate_change).

"Sustaining Wisconsin's Environment & Economy: Responding to Climate Change" was the conference theme. More than 40 speakers representing government, academia, business, and the nonprofit sector were among the nearly 400 people from throughout the state who attended the daylong event.

Global warming mitigation and adaptation strategies shared the spotlight as Governor Jim Doyle told the gathering, "It is important that we move forward ... In Wisconsin, we want to do our part — even *more* than our part — to alleviate global warming."



UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

*WHOLE WORLD, from page 5*

friend who worked for the U.S. Forest Service in northeastern Oregon. And there, Langston learned about the plight of the Blue Mountains.

The Blues were once dominated by park-like stands of sun-loving, fire-resistant (and commercially valuable) ponderosa pine. With logging and other management practices, however, these trees had been replaced during 80 years by fir forests that were extremely fire-prone and riddled with insects. Foresters and environmentalists were both blaming each other for the calamity and arguing furiously over how to fix it. Yet, nobody really knew the history of how the changes had occurred — giving Langston her opportunity.

"I thought that before we try to come to terms with each other and resolve some of these conflicts," she says, "it would be helpful to have some idea of what happened: what people did, why they did it, and what the ecological consequences were."

As she unraveled the story, Langston came to terms with her own view of foresters. Her training in ecology and sympathy for environmental causes had led her to see them as people who cared little for the land beyond the resources it provided, she says. This quickly changed, though,

once she began interviewing some of the older, retired forest service rangers and foresters who still hung around the Blues.

"As soon as I started spending time with them, I realized how diverse their perspectives were, how much they loved the places where they worked, and how puzzled they were by the changes that were going on," she says. "In other words, although forest management — and mismanagement — had certainly contributed to the tragedy, there were no villains. Rather, ordinary people had made decisions based on their cultural beliefs and assumptions about forests; decisions that only in retrospect seemed unsound."

Langston documented this tale of the Blues in her first book, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (University of Washington Press, 1995). She believes such lessons about the power of our assumptions and ideals are critical, especially for scientists.

"I think it's very important for us to understand the history of ideas about forests or about water," she says, "to help scientists realize that scientific ideas are never completely free of the culture or political era in which they're being developed."

## Tasteful gift

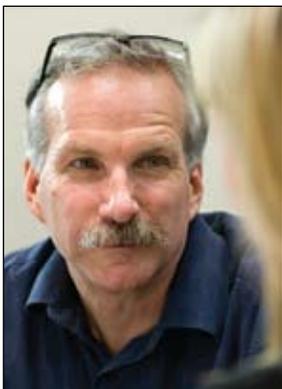
Students in our Environmental Studies Certificate Program will benefit from a generous gift to the Nelson Institute earlier this year.

Kikkoman Foods Foundation, Inc., donated \$100,000 to provide environmental studies scholarships to undergraduates. The foundation is the charitable arm of Kikkoman Corporation, a Japanese company that produces soy sauce in Walworth, Wisconsin.



Kikkoman CEO Yuzaburo Mogi announced the gift at a Milwaukee conference on balancing economic growth and environmental protection. The gift coincided with the company's announcement of plans to open a fermentation research and development laboratory at the University Research Park in Madison.

# Around the Nelson Institute



UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

## Mitman takes the helm

UW–Madison science historian **Gregg Mitman** became interim director of the Nelson Institute in mid–September.

In announcing the appointment, Provost Patrick Farrell said Mitman “will help lead the articulation of the Nelson Institute’s vision and mission to meet the goals of a new university-wide strategic plan and to address the environmental challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

The William Coleman Professor of History of Science, Mitman also is a professor of medical history, science and technology studies, and environmental studies. Farrell cited his interdisciplinary experience, knowledge of the university, and “deep commitment to the mission of the institute” as assets in his new position.

“The Nelson Institute has been an incubator, laboratory, and model of interdisciplinary research, teaching, and service across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities at the University of Wisconsin,” said Mitman. “It is a tradition we can be proud of, and one we can build upon as we chart a course of openness and cooperation in facilitating environmental initiatives across campus.”

Mitman earned his master’s and doctoral degrees in history of science at UW–Madison. He joined the faculty in 2001, bringing an eclectic mix of interests in the history of ecology, nature

films, and environmental health.

He spearheaded the recent establishment of the Nelson Institute’s Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) and a corresponding graduate-level certificate program. He also organized Tales from Planet Earth, a highly successful environmental film festival last November in downtown Madison. A sequel is planned for November 2009.

Farrell explained that although Mitman’s two-year appointment is temporary, “it’s not a caretaker role.” He said Mitman will lead “a new phase in the evolution of the Nelson Institute.”

**Lewis Gilbert** had guided the institute since the resignation last year of its previous director, **Frances Westley**. A subsequent national search failed to produce a permanent replacement. Gilbert has resumed his normal role as associate director, managing the institute’s operations and programs.

**William Cronon**, the Frederick Jackson Turner and Vilas Research Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies, has succeeded Mitman as director of CHE.



PAT BEHLING

## Reid Bryson remembered

Family, friends, and colleagues gathered in Madison in late summer to pay tribute to the late **Reid Bryson**, who died in June at age 88.

Bryson helped establish the Nelson Institute in 1970 and served as its first director until his retirement in 1985. He also founded the institute’s Center for Climatic Research (CCR) in 1963.

A pioneer in climatology and interdisciplinary environmental studies, Bryson was among the first scientists to explore the influence of climate on humans and human culture and, in turn, some of the human impacts on climate. He was an early developer of simple computer models to study the causes of past climate change, comparing those simulations with records of paleoclimate and human culture. He gained fame for his theories of past and future climate and for his studies of the relationships between climate and the biosphere as well as climate and human societies.

Bryson’s scholarly pursuits ranged from archaeology and geography to geology and limnology, which he tied together through an abiding interest in weather and climate.

His first appointment at UW–Madison in 1946 was in geology. Two years later he founded the university’s meteorology department, now known as the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, and became its first faculty member and chair. Bryson and the late Verner Suomi, another pioneering Wisconsin meteorologist, built the department into one of the largest and most prestigious in the country.

An innovative researcher and influential teacher, Bryson excelled at work in the field, studying climate on every continent. In his retirement, he traveled the famed Silk Road to sate his many interests in history, human cultures, and places.

Bryson was prescient in grasping the depth and breadth of the many connections between climate, the

*See AROUND, page 8*

## News and events

For more news from the Nelson Institute and details of upcoming events, visit our home page: [nelson.wisc.edu](http://nelson.wisc.edu)

## Did you know?

The Wisconsin Alumni Association offers a free on-line service to help locate UW–Madison graduates. Visit [uwalumni.com](http://uwalumni.com) and click on “Alumni Directory.”

## Address or job change?

If you’re a graduate of the Nelson Institute who has moved or changed jobs lately, please let us know. Visit [nelson.wisc.edu/alumni](http://nelson.wisc.edu/alumni), click on “Update Your Information,” and complete the form or send an e-mail. Updating your information assures that you keep receiving *In Common*.



UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

## More alumni networking options

*Get plugged in!*

A new site at [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com) gives Nelson Institute alumni an online venue for social networking, while a new site at [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com) hosted by one of our graduates, **Jason Broehm** (M.S., LR '99) has created opportunities for professional networking.

To join either of these sites, visit [nelson.wisc.edu/alumni](http://nelson.wisc.edu/alumni) and look for the appropriate links.

*AROUND, from page 7*

environment, and human society, according to emeritus professor **John Kutzbach**, one of Bryson’s students and his successor as director of CCR. “His interdisciplinary interests and knowledge of these topics allowed him to see connections that others missed and to initiate studies that are still at the cutting edge of climate research,” says Kutzbach.

Born in Detroit, Bryson earned a bachelor’s degree in geology from Denison University in 1941 and a doctorate in meteorology from the University of Chicago in 1948. During World War II, he was a major in the Weather Service of the U.S. Army Air Corps, making forecasts from Guam for B–29 air crews on the first high-altitude bombing missions over Tokyo.

At UW–Madison, Bryson, who was also a published poet and a weaver, indulged his many scholarly interests and forged a model of interdisciplinary research that was decades ahead of a trend now firmly established in higher education.

“Now, interdisciplinary studies is almost like a mantra,” explains Jonathan Martin, the current chair of the department Bryson founded. “Reid Bryson was almost 40 years ahead of the curve. It came organically, out of his own curiosity and many interests.”

Bryson analyzed ancient tree rings to deduce past climate and studied fossil pollen to learn that arid parts of India were once much wetter environments. He went on to devise a system of land use to help reduce the overgrazing that had made the Indian landscape drier.

“Through field studies and travels to all the continents, he developed a unique understanding of the relationship between ‘climata’ and ‘biota’ — the complex array of variables that link the diverse climates of the planet

to its equally diverse ecosystems,” according to Kutzbach.

A thoughtful critic of the use of complex computer models to estimate future climate, Bryson himself employed their early use in climate science. With his models he isolated single factors — volcanic eruptions, the slow wobble of the Earth on its axis — to see if and how they influenced past climates and how climate might act in the future.

“He was a masterful synthesizer and communicator of information,” recalls John A. Young, a UW–Madison professor of atmospheric and oceanic sciences and a Bryson colleague. “He very effectively took climatologic knowledge and applied it to human history. He was a Renaissance man of our science. He was unique.”

## CHE certificate

About six years ago, history of science professor (and now Nelson Institute interim director) **Gregg Mitman**, along with faculty colleagues **William Cronon**, **Nancy Langston** and **Arthur McEvoy**, started a lunchtime colloquium on environmental history to facilitate conversations with colleagues scattered across different departments around campus. As it quickly grew, Mitman realized the demand on campus for an interdisciplinary forum on the topic.

“UW–Madison has faculty from many different disciplines really engaged in questions around the relationships between environmental and cultural change through the full sweep of human history,” he says. “It’s very intellectually stimulating, but it creates its own set of challenges.”

Last year, he helped create the Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE) within the Nelson Institute. The interdisciplin-



Students learn the history of the Kickapoo Reserve during a place-based culture, history, and environment workshop last spring in southwestern Wisconsin.

*“It’s really the students who have driven this [certificate],” Mitman says. “They’ve been doing it on their own already, but this helps channel ideas and bring them visibility.”*

any center formally brings together members of the campus community interested in the history of interactions between people and their environment.

This fall, the Nelson Institute launched a new certificate program, available to UW–Madison master’s and Ph.D. students from any related discipline, to help students take advantage of the myriad courses and faculty expertise in environmental history on campus.

Students choose a thematic area, such as environmental literature or environment and health, and build their own program from three elective courses drawn from at least two of the humanities, social sciences,

and natural sciences. The certificate program also requires an interdisciplinary class in environmental history research methods developed specifically for the program.

“It gives graduate students exposure to the many different ways of thinking about environmental history — through anthropology, through history, through history of science, though rural sociology” to name a few, Mitman says.

Students also participate in “place-based” workshops, which examine specific locations — such as the Apostle Islands region or Chicago — through the different disciplinary lenses that feed into environmental history, to understand the numerous human–environment interactions that have shaped the regions over time.

“It’s really the students who have driven this [certificate],” Mitman says. “They’ve been doing it on their own already, but this helps channel ideas and bring them visibility.”

## Consider a gift

Gifts are a crucial source of financial support for the Nelson Institute.

Private contributions enable us to provide more scholarships, fellowships, internships, and travel opportunities for students; create special professorships to attract and retain outstanding faculty members; launch new research initiatives; offer public lectures and educational programs; and much more.

Please support the Nelson Institute. You can contribute through the University of Wisconsin Foundation, the official fund-raising organization for UW–Madison. Contributions are tax deductible, as allowed by law. For more information or to give online, visit our Web site at [nelson.wisc.edu](http://nelson.wisc.edu) and click on “Information for Donors.”



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# Alumni Notes

What's new in your career and life? Write us at [incommon@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:incommon@mailplus.wisc.edu) or at *In Common*, c/o Tom Sinclair, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, 122E Science Hall, 550 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706-1491.

**Carolyn Betz** (M.S., LR '83) left the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) after more than two decades earlier this year to become a science writer for UW-Madison's Aquatic Science Institute. Betz and retired Nelson Institute graduate program advisor **Barbara Borns** both received Waters Champion Awards in June from the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission. Betz was cited for her work at the DNR on the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed Project; Borns, for her volunteer work with the nonprofit Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, of which she has been president since 2003.

**Josh Blumenfeld** (M.S., LR '92) is the weekend and daytime meteorologist at WKBT-TV in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Since leaving UW-Madison he earned another master's degree, in journalism, at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where he was connected with the Center for Environmental Journalism. He also worked as a reporter for the *Durango (Colorado) Herald*, as a meteorology intern at KMGH-TV in Denver, and as the weekend

meteorologist at KAUZ-TV in Wichita Falls, Texas.

**Mike Carlson** (M.S., ER '08) is policy and program coordinator for Gathering Waters Conservancy, a statewide nonprofit land trust organization in Madison. He builds support for state, federal, and local policies that benefit land trusts and helps coordinate and implement the Yahara Lakes Legacy Project. While at UW-Madison, Carlson earned a dual degree in environment and resources and law.

**Ben Crain** (ES '00) recently graduated from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, with an M.A. in biology. His master's thesis focused on the conservation of rare plant taxa in Napa County, California. After exploring parks in Africa and Central America, respectively, he hopes to begin work on a Ph.D.

**Jeff Gersh** (M.S., LR '88) is founder and president of NarrativeLab, Inc., a marketing communications firm that focuses on "strategic storytelling" in film, print, and multimedia for nonprofits, foundations, and progressive businesses, mostly in the area of conserva-



*Dolly Ledin examines a flower with children at the Cloud Forest School in Monteverde, Costa Rica.*

tion. Jeff just completed a one-hour documentary for National Geographic Television about the removal of Marmot Dam in Oregon. He lives in Portland with his wife and their five-year-old daughter.

**Jeff Green** (WRM '83) has been the regional groundwater specialist since 1990 for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Waters in Rochester, where he provides technical assistance to local governments, DNR staff, and other state agencies. Specializing in karst hydrology, karst mapping, and carbonate hydrogeology, he has led the development of karst landscape unit mapping methodology being applied in Minnesota and helped design and execute more than 150 dye traces for springshed mapping and aquifer characterization. He also has assessed water supplies in Kenya and Bolivia via short-term trips through his church.

**Brack Hale** (Ph.D., LR '04) is an assistant professor at Franklin College Switzerland in Lugano, Switzerland. He helped establish and now runs the college's new environmental studies major. He also has established a volunteer restoration project for students

at a local nature reserve in conjunction with a Swiss nonprofit.

**MaryLee Haughwout** and **David Bylsma** (both WRM '07) are among 48 people nationwide to receive 2008 Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowships from the national Sea Grant College Program. They are putting their training to the test for a year at the National Ocean Service in Washington, D.C. Haughwout staffs the agency's Ocean Council and helps review testimony and develop briefing materials for agency administrators. Bylsma supports water quality and nutrient working groups of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, a partnership of state agencies, universities, and federal agencies that protect and improve the gulf's marine and coastal resources.

**Dan Jaffee** (M.S., LR '96; Ph.D. LR '06) received the C. Wright Mills Book Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems for his 2007 book, *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability and Survival*, published by the University of California Press. The book is a revised version of his Land Resources dissertation. Jaffee is



*Carolyn Betz, left, and Barbara Borns received Waters Champion Awards this year from the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission.*

an assistant professor of sociology at Washington State University-Vancouver.

**Fumie Kuroko** (M.S., LR '96) recently moved to Tokyo, where she is a climate and energy campaigner for Greenpeace Japan. She reports that Japanese utilities have tripled their use of coal-fired power plants in recent years, increasing their output of carbon dioxide emissions significantly. Greenpeace is campaigning simultaneously for reductions in coal use and increases in renewable energy.

**Steven Lawry** (Ph.D., LR '88) joined Harvard University's Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations as a senior research fellow early this year. Lawry is co-principal investigator for a research project on transnational philanthropy and poverty reduction. The project is examining the scope and financing of poverty reduction projects undertaken by non-profit, non-governmental organizations over the past ten years in Brazil, South Africa, and India, seeking to understand the distinctive contributions of transnational philanthropies to this work. Lawry is a former president of Antioch College and, before that, worked in various capacities for the Ford Foundation for 14 years.

**Dolly Ledin** (M.S., LR '88) is spending the current academic year as the environmental education coordinator at the Cloud Forest School, a K-11th grade environment-focused school, in Monteverde, Costa Rica. Her 16-year-old daughter Grace is attending the school. Ledin is on leave from her job as a program director at UW-Madison's Center for Biology Education.

**Robert Lovely** (M.S., LR '89) spent nearly two weeks last spring aboard the research vessel Gordon Gunter in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the National Oceanic and



*Robert Lovely pitches in on the deck of the research vessel Gordon Gunter while participating in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Teacher at Sea program.*

Atmospheric Administration's Teacher at Sea program. There, he got a firsthand look at how NOAA scientists are documenting fish and coral interactions in deepwater reefs near the Florida Keys. (Read his illustrated logs of the experience on the Web at [teacheratsea.noaa.gov/2008/lovely](http://teacheratsea.noaa.gov/2008/lovely).) Lovely teaches ecology, conservation biology, and environmental sciences at Madison Area Technical College, which granted him a sabbatical to explore interests in marine ecology.

**Bill O'Connor** (WRM '77) received a Stewardship Award from Dane County's Natural Heritage Land Trust last spring for his role in founding the organization as well as Gathering Waters Conservancy and the overall land trust movement in Wisconsin. O'Connor is a lawyer in private practice in Madison.

**Madeline Ostrander** (M.S., LR '00) in 2007 became senior editor of *YES!*, an independent national magazine that features stories of people working to create a more just, sustainable,

and compassionate world. Based on Bainbridge Island, Washington, *YES!* has won the *Utne Reader's* Alternate Press Award for best cultural coverage. Ostrander also has been a writer, activist, and researcher on environmental policy for the Sightline Institute and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. She taught writing and environmental science at a rural university in Uganda and led a two-year

project in eastern South Dakota to help tribal community members become involved in decision-making about the future of the Big Sioux River. Earlier this year Illinois State University recognized her as its 2008 Outstanding Young Alumna.

**Julia Solomon** (CBSD '05) is an aquatic invasives education specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Previously, she worked as a program coordinator for Gathering Waters Conservancy, a state-wide nonprofit land trust organization in Madison.

*ES = Environmental Studies Undergraduate Certificate Program; CBSD = Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development Graduate Program; ER = Environment and Resources Graduate Program (after 2007); LR = Land Resources Graduate Program (through 2007); WRM = Water Resources Management Graduate Program*

For more alumni notes or to leave a note of your own, visit the new Nelson Institute alumni Facebook site. Look for the Facebook link at [nelson.wisc.edu/alumni](http://nelson.wisc.edu/alumni).

## In Memoriam: Margaret Bender

**Margaret Bender**, an emeritus senior scientist in the Nelson Institute, died in Madison last spring at age 91. Bender directed the Radiocarbon Laboratory in the institute's Center for Climatic Research from 1963 until her retirement in 1981. She was a leader in the field of radiocarbon dating and was widely known for her recognition of two distinct photosynthetic pathways through which carbon is utilized in tropical and prairie grasses.

Bender earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Mount Holyoke College and a Ph.D. in organic chemistry in 1941 from Yale University. She taught at Connecticut College for Women and held a post-doctoral appointment at Yale before accepting a similar position at UW-Madison in 1943. Many years later, UW-Madison's Oral History Project captured her thoughts and impressions on being an early role model for women in science in a lengthy interview preserved in the University Archives.



Tracey Holloway

## SAGE changes

**Tracey Holloway** is the new director of the Nelson Institute's Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE). She succeeds the center's first director, **Jonathan Foley**, who left Wisconsin in August to lead the University of Minnesota's new Institute on the Environment.

Holloway has been associated with SAGE since 2003, when she arrived at UW-Madison as an assistant professor of environmental studies and atmospheric and oceanic sciences. She also is affiliated with the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the La Follette School of Public Affairs.

"This is an exciting opportunity," says Holloway, "SAGE has built a reputation for excellent research, teaching, and public outreach. I am enthusiastic to continue this legacy and help the center grow in new directions."

Holloway earned her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 2001 and was a post-doctoral fellow with the Earth Institute of Columbia University from 2001 to 2003. Her research focuses on air pollution chemistry and transport at regional and global scales, including links between air quality and climate, energy, land use, health, and public policy.



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