

## J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON

# Environmental challenges, opportunities face us in '93



We face enormous environmental challenges: pollution, overpopulation, global warming, preservation of endangered species, wetlands conservation, pollution and disposal of solid waste, to name a few. But, along with challenges come opportunities. Wetlands preservation and energy conservation are definitely two areas where there are opportunities for positive change during 1993.

### WETLANDS

The departure of the Bush administration should put an end to attempts to unscientifically define wetlands. In 1993, we can look forward to a wetland definition scheme developed by wetland experts, and a wetland policy that will protect wetlands without penalizing farmers whose land might be technically considered a wetland, but has been under cultivation for years.

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is an innovative project in which farmers can volunteer to protect existing wetlands on their land. The WRP compensates farmers who protect these wetlands and provides money to restore wetlands that have been damaged. The pilot stage of this program is complete and has been a great success. However, Congress has eliminated funding for the Wet-

lands Reserve Program.

Ann Robinson, an agricultural specialist for the Izaak Walton League, a national conservation organization, says, "At a time when America is destroying more than 250,000 acres of wetlands a year, the WRP offered real hope for a national strategy to offset this loss and to help both farmers and the environment. It was a cost-effective approach that let everyone win."

The WRP is a great opportunity to curb wetland loss. Write to your newly re-elected congressmen and ask them to support full funding of WRP. Write to Rep. Harold Volkmer at the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 20515. You can reach Sen. Kit Bond and Sen. Jack Danforth at the U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510.

The Missouri Wetland Advisory Council recently released its recommendations for long- and short-term goals for Missouri's wetland policy. The short-term goal is to "achieve no overall net loss of the state's remaining wetlands resource base by the year 1995." The long-term goal is to "increase the quantity and quality of Missouri's wetland resource base considering acreage, functions and values by the year 2000."

The advisory council interprets "no overall net loss" to mean that Missouri's wetland losses should not exceed the gains in wetlands. For example, the wetlands being constructed by the city of Columbia and the Missouri Department of Conservation at Eagle Bluffs will add 1,390 acres to the plus side of Missouri's wetlands balance sheet. This system of "wetlands banking" will not work in all situations, because constructed wetlands cannot support the same diversity of plant and animal life found in natural wetlands. But it is a start in the right direction.

Hopefully, our leaders in Jefferson City will write policy and legislation during 1993 that will implement the Wetland Advisory Council's recommendations. To receive a copy of the council's report write to: Jane Epperon, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geology and Land Survey, PO Box 250, Rolla, Mo., 65401.

### ENERGY CONSERVATION

Conserving energy reduces the emission of greenhouse gases, reduces our dependency on foreign oil and nuclear power, lessens acid rain and reduces smog. And during President-elect Bill Clinton's recent economic conference, we heard several business leaders explain that increasing energy efficiency is also economically beneficial.

As president, Clinton can fight for legislation that will provide incentives for industry to increase energy efficiency. To demonstrate his sup-

port of alternative energy sources, he can install solar collectors on the White House roof. He can also install energy-efficient lights in the White House.

Missouri imports most of its energy. If we can increase our energy efficiency, we can reduce the amount of money leaving the state, making it available for use in other areas of Missouri's economy (for example, education).

As the next governor, Mel Carnahan can do a lot to increase Missouri's energy efficiency. He can start by issuing an executive order for all state vehicles to be converted to alternative fuels — compressed natural gas, electricity and ethanol. He can also issue an executive order for immediate replacement of the incandescent lights in state buildings with compact fluorescent lighting.

We can all face up to the challenge of increasing energy efficiency. For information on how you can conserve energy, request the "Energy Publications" brochure from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, PO Box 176, Jefferson City, Mo., 65102-0176. Or call the Columbia Water and Light Department at 874-7325.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.