



ashoka's

environmental innovations initiative

news & views



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Fellow News

■ Polish Fellow **Jadwiga Lopata** gave a presentation at the European Conference "GMO Free Regions, Biodiversity and Rural Development" in Berlin on January 22-23 which highlighted the highly destructive effect GMO's will have on the rich biodiversity of the Polish countryside, family farms, and the quality of Polish foods if they are allowed to become established. Her organization, the Int'l Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside (ICPPC) has been leading a campaign to establish GMO Free Zones in Poland since July 2004. Info: www.icppc.pl

■ Brazilian Fellow **Silvia Ziller** visited the Arlington Ashoka office in February. She gave a fantastic presentation highlighting her efforts to curb the invasion of nonnative species in southern Brazil. She has created a vegetation management plan that incorporates income generating activities, financial sustainability, and new employment opportunities. For example, one project is a forest



Silvia Ziller

plantation model that utilizes native species and creates short- and long-term community incentives and environmental outcomes. After effectively implementing her sustainability plans in open grasslands, Silvia plans to apply her methods in other areas of the region and abroad.

■ Egyptian Fellow **Lynn Freiji's** Wadi Environmental Science Centre (WESC) hosted a Solar Energy Rock Concert for students. It was a successful day-long program where students had the opportunity to learn about, and engage themselves in, meaningful activities about how solar energy works.



Lynn Freiji

■ Nepalese Fellows **Rajendra Suwal** and **Anil Chitraker** helped organize the first Ashoka Family and Kids Day Out at the Park Village Resort in Nepal for 11 Fellows, their spouses, and 15 children. The Ashoka family felt like "cousins meeting for the first time!" The January event

was held to expand the children's awareness of contributions by Ashoka Fellows (including their parents) to society, to share talents, and to stimulate interaction with nature.

■ Thai Fellow **Pisit Chansanoh** won a 2004 Rolex Award for Enterprise in honor of his work with the Yadfon Association to save the dugong, or the sea cow, from extinction. The decline of the dugong and the hardships of the fishing villages are symptoms of the same problem: the destruction of the coastal ecosystem. By improving the dugong's habitat and protecting this endangered species, the people are also improving their own habitat and their own well-being.

EII Happenings

Hello! My name is Shelley Smart and I am the EII intern for the spring and summer. I am extremely excited to be at Ashoka and look forward to working with you all. Please direct any correspondence to ssmart@ashoka.org. Additionally, David Strelneck, the acting interim director of EII, can be contacted at dstrelneck@ashoka.org. Thank you!

Spotlight on a Fellow: Orri Vigfússon

Honored as a “modern day hero” in a 2004 Time Magazine special report, Icelandic Senior Fellow **Orri Vigfússon** has been orchestrating a successful international effort to conserve and restore the endangered wild Atlantic salmon for the past fifteen years. Orri’s actions have played a primary role in bringing the salmon back from the brink of extinction. They’ve done so by highlighting and leveraging the economic value of preserving rather than destroying the fish. By lobbying for and building on existing regulatory structures in the countries bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, Orri creates financial and other incentives for fishermen whose livelihoods depend on the salmon. To date, it is estimated that Orri’s work has saved four to five million wild salmon without undermining the economic needs of fishermen. In some areas his conservation work has actually increased economic productivity.

The wild Atlantic salmon population declined significantly over the past 50 years due largely to over fishing and to its sensitivity to environmental changes. These conditions are exacerbated by the salmon’s migratory nature. They spawn in fresh water and spend most of their life in the international and difficult-to-regulate waters of the open sea.

In the last fifteen years, pressure from Orri and the organization he founded (The North Atlantic Salmon Fund, or NASF), along with collaboration from like-minded organizations, has led several governments to restructure and clarify commercial salmon fishing regulations. Some countries in the North Atlantic have privatized the fishery through the institution of tradable quotas allocated to individual fishermen or companies. This method of regulation sets an overall ceiling on the amount of fish that can be caught, divides up that overall amount between a fixed number of quotas, and then lets the fishermen or anyone else in the private sector buy or sell those quotas, which are essentially permits to catch a certain quantity of fish, and use them however they wish.

With this system in place, Orri and NASF have then raised funds to buy and hold, rather than use, the fishing quotas from the commercial fishermen. The fishermen are thus compensated at a rate they determine to be fair (else they wouldn’t sell their quotas), and the fish are conserved because the right to catch them using the quotes is never exercised.

In addition to the initial financial compensation, another necessary component of success was creating alternative employment opportunities for salmon fishermen. Some shifted focus to sustainable fisheries such as lump-fish or snow crabs while others took advantage of the emergent catch and release sport fishing tourism. As the salmon began to return, the truth in Orri’s often repeated message “a salmon is worth more alive

than dead” became evident and documented. A commercially netted salmon sold to market yields a maximum of \$25. The same salmon has the potential to bring in at least \$500 to the community through catch and release generated tourism if protected; the influx of recreational anglers generates revenue through permits, accommodation, equipment rental, provisions, and the hiring of local guides. Encouraging fishing communities to adopt more sustainable methods of fishing with both short- and long-term environmental benefits created sustainable livelihoods and mutual benefits between salmon and humans.



Orri Vigfússon

Orri initially became concerned about the declining Atlantic salmon stock as a fisherman and member of the Laxá River fishing club in Iceland. It was clear fewer and fewer salmon returned to spawn each year. As a result, he first spearheaded a campaign to end mixed-stock fishing off the Icelandic coast by buying all of the country’s existing quotas from commercial fishermen. While the campaign succeeded locally, overall results were less than satisfactory. Even though Iceland provided safe waters for the salmon, they were eventually lost at sea to commercial fishermen from neighboring countries. Orri realized that a national effort to restore wild salmon stocks would not be effective even though it did appeal to the commercial fishing industry, individual fishermen, and the government. A successful approach would have to create strong incentives for fishermen in all of the key North Atlantic countries where fishermen’s livelihoods depended on the salmon.

Orri knew the incentives could not just be defined in terms of ecological devastation and loss of biological diversity; it had to also demonstrate that salmon protection and restoration could yield greater economic benefits to the community. Adopting a staged action plan, Orri began by mentoring and aligning relevant stakeholders (river conservators, anglers’ associations, landowners along rivers, and other local and regional citizen organizations) to a common mission. Together, this international coalition was then able to promote awareness, garner political support through lobbying, raise private funds, and secure matching financial support from governments and others.

Through this work, quota systems have been established and almost all quotas in the North Atlantic have been bought. Orri has also been able to broker environmental agreements with most commercial fisheries in the region. The exceptions are Ireland and Norway, which are currently being worked with, and which are essential in securing the sea-run salmon stocks from

all countries that pass through international waters.

The decline of wild Atlantic salmon stocks in the Northern Atlantic Ocean began as a complex social and environmental problem with no foreseeable solution. Orri addressed concerns and enlisted support from all vested stakeholders across several countries, one at a time, to craft and realize a common goal – the protection and restoration of wild Atlantic salmon and the provision of empowering economic incentives for fishermen. Orri's dedication and work demonstrate a powerful solution that embraces both economic prosperity and conservation of threatened resources.

Prizes and Awards

Please email ssmart@ashoka.org if you would like to be nominated or would like EII's assistance in putting together an application. Good luck!

Right Livelihood Award (RLA)

Nomination deadline: April 10, 2005

RLA has no categories. In striving to meet the human challenges of today's world, the most inspiring and remarkable work often defies any standard classification. This award of 2,000,000 Swedish kronor (approx. US\$230,000) is usually shared by four recipients. Self-nominations are not accepted.

Website: <http://www.rightlivelihood.org/nominate.htm>

UNEP Sasakawa Environmental Prize

Nomination deadline: April 30

\$200,000 prize be awarded solely to "individuals who have made outstanding global contributions to the management and protection of the environment". The Prize aims to encourage environmental achievement in any field of the environment.

Website: <http://www.unep.org>

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise

Nomination deadline: May 31 for entries from Asia, the Pacific and North, Central and South America; September 30 for entries from Europe, the Middle East, Africa

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise give support and recognition to turn innovative ideas into practical working projects. Applications may be submitted in the areas of: science and medicine; technology and innovation; exploration and discovery; the environment; and cultural heritage. Website: <http://www.rolexawards.com>

Goldman Environmental Prize

Nomination deadline: May 31

The Goldman Environmental Prize is given each year to six environmental heroes - one from each of six continental regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Island Nations, North America and South/Central America. The goals of the prize are to highlight the international nature of environmental problems, to create public aware-

ness of critically important global issues, to reward individuals for outstanding grassroots initiatives, and to inspire others to follow the examples set by prize recipients. Website: <http://www.goldmanprize.org>

Rufford Small Grants

Deadline: July 31, 2005, January 31, 2006

These grants of up to £5,000 are awarded twice per year and are aimed at small conservation projects and pilot programs. Applicants from non-First World countries are strongly encouraged to apply.

Contact: Josh Cole - josh@rufford.org

Website: <http://www.rufford.org>

The Tech Museum of Innovation

Nomination deadline: Ongoing

The Tech Museum of Innovation is seeking nominations for an awards program that will draw global attention to individuals, companies, and organizations using technology to transform the way we live. The awards categories are health, education, environment, equity, and economic development. One finalist per category will receive \$50,000 at the Awards Gala.

Website: <http://techawards.thetech.org/about.cfm>

Civil Society Organisations Partnership Program Call for Short Case Studies - \$1500 for 1500 Words

Deadline: Ongoing

As part of a new program, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is looking for short case studies on the topic of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Evidence and Policy Influence. The case studies should be simple stories, based on existing knowledge, which describe episodes where CSOs have engaged with policy processes, the nature of the impact they have had (if any), the reasons why and the relative role of research-based evidence in the process. The priority is for cases from authors in developing countries.

Contact: Enrique Mendizabal - e.mendizabal@odi.org.uk

Website: <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA0104/Index.html>

Please contact Shelley Smart ssmart@ashoka.org with questions, comments, and ideas for future newsletters. Thank you!
