

# SCHOOL YARD BULLIES

## **The Harassment of Conservationists in the Flathead**

Report Issued by:  
Montana Human Rights Network  
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Helena, MT 59624

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## Introduction

“Violence does not and can not exist by itself; it is invariably intertwined with *the lie*.”

-Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nobel Lecture, 1972

Most Montanans believe we are in tough economic times. Our economy is undergoing radical change. Our traditional economic base of resource extractive industry is clearly in decline while a new kind of economy is emerging. Flathead County is a perfect example. Ask anyone on the street how the community is doing economically and you will likely hear a tale of woe. Columbia Falls Aluminum has shut down, timber jobs are in decline, etc. That does not reconcile with the fact that Flathead County's total personal income over the last ten years has grown at an average rate of 6.4%, which is more than the national average of 5.4%.

But there are winners and losers in the current economic environment. Equally important, the uncertainty leads to fear, frustration and anger. Too many people would rather find easy targets for their anger than take time to understand the changes taking place in their community. That is where the lie becomes important. The lie simplifies and directs. Unhappy with your life? Blame “them!” Whether it is the international Jewish banking conspiracy or conservationists in the Flathead, the lie is always with us.

In the Flathead, the lie is that conservationists are responsible for our problems. The microphone that repeats, refines and amplifies the lie is found at KGEZ radio and its owner John Stokes. On any given day, you can listen as he blames conservationists for everything from the World Trade Center attack to

the deaths of four firefighters in Oregon. Of course, all of this is simply free speech at its best, but sometimes a line is crossed. People are targeted and intimidation begins. When that line is crossed, we are called to act. Our obligation is to shine the light on the propagandists and to make sure the larger community is aware of the problem in their midst. That is the purpose of this report.

Beginning in late spring of 2001, the Montana Human Rights Network began hearing from local people who were involved in conservation efforts and were being harassed and intimidated. As is often the case, the allegations were often vague, “he-said, she-said” reports. But the rumors were persistent and MHRN decided to check out the rumors to determine how much actual intimidation was occurring in the community. This report details our findings.

The incidents listed in this report are simply recitations of how we received them with minor editing for clarity and substituting pseudonyms for actual names. In some cases, it is quite clear what motivated the incidents. In others it is not. Some of the incidents constitute illegal behavior. Some are behavior which crosses commonly accepted social boundaries. What emerges in total is a pattern of incidents directed at conservationists with the clear intent to intimidate people because of their political ideas. In a democracy, that is a serious problem.

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The following are the incident reports compiled by the Montana Human Rights Network. People identified only by a first name are being represented by a pseudonym.

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Details:

An older Ford Bronco was parked 200 feet from a conservation group’s field office. The driver appeared to be watching the office. The Bronco had a blue body, a black top, and was of the older “blocky” design.

- Conservation Group Staffer
- Trespassing/Intimidation
- Kalispell
- Sept. 27, 2001
- Reported to Flathead County Sheriff

The Bronco eventually left, and the parking spot was occupied by a blue Camaro sports car (late 1980s or early 1990s vintage.) The group’s staffer, “Al,” had the office door open, and the Camaro’s driver walked into the office.

The driver, “Brett,” identified himself. Brett walked into the office and immediately began asking how Al could live with himself. Brett blamed Al for the loss of jobs at the closed American Timber sawmill and the death of firefighters in Washington State.

Brett also said Al and a fellow conservationist were environmental terrorists.

Al tried to engage Brett in a conversation about logging that Al’s group supported. Brett said Al and the other conservationist were “on a list” and “would be taken care of.” Al asked Brett to clarify that statement, and Brett said the FBI would “let him know what that meant.”

After 10-15 minutes, Al twice asked Brett to leave the office. Brett refused. Al then called 911. He left the phone off the hook (as advised by the dispatcher) for the three-to-five minutes it took for the deputies to arrive.

Three deputies arrived from the Flathead County Sheriff’s Office. The first to arrive told Brett to leave, and Brett said he didn’t want to leave and only wanted to ask questions. When two other deputies arrived, Brett reluctantly left the office. Once outside, Brett asked deputies where he could legally protest the office.

The deputies privately told Al they could arrest Brett for disturbing the peace; however, they suggested that doing so would exacerbate the situation. Al declined to have Brett arrested but said he wanted Brett away from the office. One deputy said he would admonish Brett to stay away from the office or face arrest. The deputy also said he would write a report to keep on file about the incident.

Al took this opportunity to inform the deputy about the spit on his window (left from September 17, 2001.) The deputy took notice of that, as well. The deputy remained at the organization’s field office until Brett had left.

The next morning, John Stokes of Kalispell’s KGEZ radio reported the incident during a talk show. The local newspaper also called Al to inquire about the incident, suggesting it might run an article about it.

Al offered the following observations on the encounter:

1. The organization’s field office was under surveillance for at least 1/2 hour preceding the incident.
2. Visitors to the field office usually pull into the parking space in front of or adjacent to the office. There was open parking on either side of Al’s car in front of the office 10-20 minutes

before the incident.

3. The Bronco left shortly before the Camaro came in and took its place. Brett walked straight to the office.
4. Brett’s conversation continually oscillated from questioning to accusation and, every time he referenced Al, he mentioned another conservationist.
5. Brett repeated the charge several times that Al and the other conservationist were eco-terrorists and that they were on a list and would be “taken care of.” One time, Brett said the FBI would take care of them.
6. Brett stated that Al and the other conservationist were being watched, but did not qualify by whom. He also stated that he and others were investigating the sources of funding for conservation organizations.



Details:

EVENT 1:

“Chris” is a Flathead Valley resident and arborist. In July of 2001, Chris had a discussion with a long-time acquaintance, “Doug,” at Doug’s place of business. Chris had known Doug for about 15 years and had never had a conflict with him. But this time, Doug had been listening to KGEZ radio and had become agitated when he saw Chris enter the building.

- Individual
- Physical Intimidation
- Flathead County
- July, 2001

While Doug expounded on the subject of environmentalists, he drew a handgun and began waving it about. Doug knew Chris was involved in the controversial closure of the Krause Basin trail, an illegally built snowmobile trail near Foothills Road. The trail was challenged by a local environmental activist and closed by an order from a federal judge.

Over several hours, Chris was able to calm Doug down and convince him to put the gun away. Chris also convinced Doug to read more about the owner of the Kalispell radio station. Doug put the handgun away, and they were able to resume a calm discussion.

EVENT 2:

Chris (who is of large physical stature) sometimes appears at public meetings with a friend of his who is a conservationist (who is of smaller stature.) A person approached Chris’ wife and told her that Chris is perceived as the conservationist’s body guard. The person told Chris’ wife that Chris had better watch out, because someone wanted to put a bullet in the conservationist’s head.



Details:

“Earl” attended a public hearing on the Forest Service Roadless Initiative in Kalispell. When Earl walked into the crowded room, he saw a local wise use activist, “Francis.”

- Conservation Activist
- Verbal Harassment
- Flathead Valley.
- June 2000/Feb. 3, 2001

In a loud voice, Francis said Earl had almost run him off Highway 93 on the drive to an earlier Forest Service hearing in Missoula. Francis made sure people around him heard the allegation.

In fact, Earl didn’t attend the Missoula hearing and could not have had any conflict on US 93. When

Earl confronted Francis about this, Francis said the offending motorist looked like Earl. At the time, Earl sensed that the inflammatory statements were intended to justify or stir up retaliation against him.

Later, at the February Winter Carnival in Whitefish, Earl was dancing to the band at a local bar. Francis was also on the dance floor. While Earl was not looking, Francis struck Earl in the ribs very hard with his elbow. The blow knocked the air out of Earl, and he doesn't believe this was any mistake.

Later that evening, Earl approached Francis on the dance floor and asked Francis why he had struck him with his elbow. Francis ignored the repeated questions. Earl danced a few more songs, but stayed out of Francis' elbow range. Earl then left the bar.

Earl believes Francis intentionally struck him with his elbow, perhaps simply as a cheap shot but perhaps in an effort to start a fight on the dance floor.



Details:

"Geri" has been receiving harassing phone calls since John Stokes, owner of KGEZ radio, used her name on the air. Several came back as blocked, but some came back as a number in Hawaii. Geri dialed \*57 and reported these calls. To date, she has received over 100 harassing phone calls. The calls follow a pattern. The phone rings and, when Geri answers it, she can hear two to three males having a conversation. They do not talk directly to her or acknowledge her statements to them. Geri usually gets the calls in the middle of the night. She usually gets several in a few hours then doesn't receive any for up to a couple of weeks. The callers have always talked about killing environmentalists and trashing environmental trails, along with other comments about smoking dope, getting drugs, and surfing. They sound as if they have an accent Geri doesn't recognize or are changing their voices slightly.

- Individual
- Phone Call Harassment
- Kalispell
- Sept. 19, 2001
- Reported to Flathead County Sheriff

At 3:00a.m. on Sept. 19, 2001, Geri received a call with a different message. She heard a male's voice which sounded Middle Eastern. The male started saying words like, "Go do some terrorism" and other words she didn't understand. After a few minutes of this, the male said, "Stimulate me" and a female could be heard in the background laughing. The conversation turned to genitalia, and Geri hung up the phone. \*69 once again showed it to be the phone number from Hawaii. Geri dialed \*57 and then called the Flathead County Sheriff's office to report these calls.



Details:

At 3 p.m., "Harry" went cross-country skiing at Dickey Creek. The Dickey Creek Road is used both by snowmobiles and cross-country skiers to access the high country. Harry parked along the railroad right of way.

- Individual
- Property Damage
- Dickey Creek
- April, 16 2001
- Reported to the Flathead County Sheriff

Harry returned from skiing after dark. He tried to open the hatchback on his Subaru Outback and could not. He figured it was iced up and drove home.

The next morning, he noticed the rear quarter panel had been smashed in about three inches above the bumper. Harry believes his car was vandalized by the driver of another, larger vehicle. He had a "Brian

Schweitzer for Senate” bumper sticker and a “Wildlife Forever” bumper sticker on his vehicle.

Harry said there were no other cars parked near him. There was plenty of room for another vehicle to turn around at the right of way, without going near his car. Damage totaled \$2,000.



Details:

“Ilene” has been an outspoken critic of “The Edge,” a radio show on Kalispell’s KGEZ station. Her daughter wrote an article critical of the radio station in a school newspaper. Ilene also wrote a letter-to-the-editor critical of “The Edge’s” host, John Stokes, and has complained to the show’s sponsors. She has also been interviewed in news articles about the radio station.

- Individual
- Phone Call Harassment/Property Damage/  
Physical Harassment
- Kalispell
- Spring and Summer, 2001

EVENT 1:

In March 2001, Ilene attended a meeting publicized by the Kalispell radio station. At that meeting, she said audience members discussed that a local conservationist should be “eliminated” or “taken out.” She also said the featured speaker made jeering references to an environmentalist who had recently died under suspicious circumstances.

EVENT 2:

Ilene said, after she spoke out publicly about KGEZ, she began receiving hang-up phone calls, particularly in the middle of the night. She figures, at the peak of the trend, she received 30-40 such calls a day. She also twice saw men standing in her yard in the twilight. When she stepped outside, the men ran off.

EVENT 3:

Ilene took her daughter to a track meet in Whitefish. When she returned, she found her hot tub vandalized. Specifically, she found the hot tub cover was punctured and broken and the tub was full of debris. Damage totaled about \$500. She reported the incident to the Flathead County Sheriff’s Office.

EVENT 4:

Ilene attended a retreat sponsored by a non-profit group in Helena. When she returned, she found a tire on her daughter’s car was punctured through the sidewall while it had been parked at her house. The tire was new and Ilene believes it was slashed maliciously. She also reported this incident to the Flathead County Sheriff, who examined the tire two weeks after it was punctured.

EVENT 5 :

The Montana Human Rights Network and PRIDE held a rally in Kalispell on June 8, 2001. Ilene attended the event. On the drive home, Ilene and her daughter stopped at a convenience store in Creston. A motorcycle rider had been following behind her. At the store, the rider pulled alongside the building. He smirked at her and displayed a lariat to Ilene. She interpreted this as threatening behavior.

Ilene saw an acquaintance and told him of the incident. The acquaintance and another motorist fol-

lowed Ilene home. The motorcyclist followed, but the two other cars stayed between Ilene and the motorcycle.

EVENT 7:

In early summer, Ilene was home alone at midnight. She heard a man shouting her name and vulgarities outside her house. She called the Flathead County Sheriff’s office and remained in the house. The man remained outside her house, shouting for 5-10 minutes. A deputy arrived after 15 minutes. The deputy did not take a statement, but left a form for her to fill out and return to the Sheriff’s office, which she did.

EVENT 8:

Ilene’s daughter works at a local restaurant in Kalispell. When her daughter got off of work at night, Ilene said her daughter was followed home by motorists. Sometimes, the motorists would circle the restaurant’s parking lot until her daughter got off work. One night, the daughter reported that a motorist had followed her. Ilene also saw another motorist in her driveway that night and reported both incidents to the Flathead County Sheriff’s office.

To feel safer, the daughter would ask co-workers to drive home with her. One night she was being driven home with three boys. They believed they were followed by the driver of a green pickup truck with broken tail lights. They stopped at a bowling alley to drop off one of the boys. Two of the boys confronted the driver of the green pickup. They returned, telling the daughter the driver had a gun and threatened them with it. The driver was in his 50s and wore a beard and mustache.

The next morning, Ilene called the Kalispell Police Department. The sergeant said the kids should come to the police station and make a formal report. One boy didn’t want to go to the police station, and none of the kids made a statement to police.



Details:

The week of Oct. 12, 2001, several candidates for Kalispell City Council announced their decision to appear on KGEZ radio which routinely attacks conservationists. Jerry organized several members of the Flathead Valley Human Rights Coalition to urge those candidates not to appear on the show. The Flathead Valley Human Rights Coalition sent a letter to the candidates, which included “Jerry’s” home address as the return. On Oct. 17, 2001, Mayor Candidate Jean Johnson and council candidate Bob Hafferman went on the program anyway.

- Conservation Activist
- Vandalism
- Kalispell
- Oct. 17-18, 2001
- Reported to Kalispell Police Department

At 9:30 a.m., Oct. 18, 2001, Jerry went to scrape the ice from his car windshield. He found his Subaru’s hatchback splattered with an egg. The car was parked in front of his house and had a window placard for Johnson’s opponent.

Jerry called the Kalispell Police Department. The officer who answered the telephone said police had received no similar complaints overnight. Jerry perused the neighborhood looking for other egged cars and found none.



Details:

“Kevin” owns a rental unit and a shop in Whitefish. On March 27, 2001, he was about to leave town for a ski vacation. He stopped by his shop and found a green swastika sticker on the glass door. It was the same style of sticker that was also placed on a local conservation group’s office sign earlier that month.

- Individual
- Vandalism – Green Swastika Sticker
- Whitefish
- March 2001

Kevin owns a construction company. Since he gave money to a conservation group, his business was listed on KGEZ radio’s website’s list of green businesses. However, Kevin’s name is not on the shop.

Kevin responded by making his own sign, saying he supported wildlife and tomorrow’s children. A week later, someone had removed the original sticker.



Details:

“Lloyd” is a member of a conservation group and a substitute teacher in Kalispell. On Sept. 28, 2001, he taught at a school. When he returned to his truck after work, he found the window covered in tobacco-spit. The truck has a conservation bumper sticker.

- Individual
- Vandalism
- Kalispell
- Sept. 28, 2001



Details:

EVENT 1:

During the forest fire season in July or August 2000, “Matt” received a phone call at his office. The caller facetiously asked him if his house was on fire yet. The caller then hung up.

- Conservation Group Staffer
- Verbal Harassment/Denial of Services/  
Vandalism
- Kalispell
- 2000-2001

EVENT 2:

In May 2001, Matt’s car broke down at the junction of Highway 93 and Four Corners, about three miles south of Kalispell. Another motorist helped Matt push the car off the road. Matt traveled to a nearby convenience store and called his partner for help.

While he waited, a 1980s model, white Chevrolet pickup truck pulled up to a nearby stop sign. The driver recognized Matt and began shouting expletives at him, calling him by name. Matt did not recognize the driver, but it was clear the abusive driver recognized him.

EVENT 3:

Between April 5-23, 2001, Matt ordered roller bearings for a hydraulic crane from a Kalispell technology business. The business also referred him to a machine shop that could install the bearings. The machine shop agreed to pick up the bearings from the technology business and do the work. The total price of the transactions was \$387.

Matt returned to the machine shop 10 days later and was told they could not do the work. They returned the crane rollers. One side of one roller had been cleaned and turned out in a very professional

manner. When Matt asked why they could not finish the work they had already started, the shop manager said that they knew who Matt was and would leave it at that.

Matt then went to the original business to check on his bearing order. He was told that, because of philosophical differences with his work as a staffer for a conservation group, his order had been canceled.

EVENT 4:

During the Forest Service hearings on the Roadless Initiative, callers made a number of harassing phone calls to the office where Matt works and to his home phone. The callers alleged Matt was supporting the destruction of jobs and forest access. Some foul language was included in the calls.

EVENT 5:

John Stokes, owner of KGEZ radio and host of "The Edge," has encouraged his listeners to request copies of conservation group's IRS forms, as a way to retaliate against the groups. The forms are public information, and Matt's organization keeps them available at its Helena office. Three people requested copies of the group's IRS 990 form from the Kalispell Field Office. Matt politely referred these requests to the Helena headquarters. Two people stopped by the field office seeking the papers, while one person called the staffer at home.

EVENT 6:

In March 2001, Matt arrived to work at his office and found a sticker on his door. It said, "Just say No to the Green Nazis." It included a swastika in a red "prohibited" sign.

EVENT 7:

In August 2000, Matt wore a T-shirt objecting to the Rock Creek Mine to a Kalispell supermarket. The shirt read, "Alternative 1, No Mine/A bad mine is a good thing to waste." A man in his 50s told Matt that people in the Flathead didn't believe that way, and wondered if Matt was an environmentalist from California.



Details:

"Patricia" is a member of a conservation group. Like others, she was upset over KGEZ radio's John Stokes labeling the group and other organizations as "Green Nazis." She voiced her concerns with the radio station's advertisers. Stokes responded by verbally vilifying Patricia over the air.

- Individual
- Vandalism
- Kalispell
- Spring of 2001
- Reported to Kalispell Police Department

The next day, Patricia found a large black garbage can tipped over on her driveway. The contents, including numerous tacks, were spilled on her driveway.



Details:

“Rob” is a member of a conservation organization and teaches at the local community college. At the noon hour on Sept. 15, 2001, he stopped by the community college to photocopy teaching materials. He parked in the lot on campus and was inside for 10 minutes.

- Individual
- Property Damage/Vandalism
- Kalispell
- Sept. 15, 2001
- Reported to College security

When he returned to his car, he found it splattered with a white, paint-like substance. The car had a prominent “Keep It Wild!” bumper sticker.

Rob believes the damage was done because of his bumper sticker. His car was the only one vandalized in the lot.



Details:

“Sam” is a staffer for a non-regulatory agency charged with finding voluntary ways to protect water quality in the Flathead River Basin. In his private time, Sam has criticized KGEZ radio, including writing letters to advertisers.

- Individual
- Radio Harassment
- Kalispell
- Aug. 28-30, 2001

The non-regulatory agency was scheduled to meet on August 30, 2001. In the mornings prior to that meeting, the KGEZ’s John Stokes broadcast false statements about Sam on his morning talk show. Specifically, he said Sam was an “alleged criminal” who should not be employed by the state. Stokes said Sam was “stalking” the radio station by complaining to advertisers.

On Aug. 29 and 30, 2001, Stokes urged listeners to attend the agency’s meeting and demand Sam’s resignation or firing. About 15 people attended the meeting, which was open to the public. The agency’s chairwoman allowed public comments, and several people spoke. Although people accused the agency of being involved in, or dupes of, various global conspiracies, nobody brought up Stokes’ trumped up allegations against Sam.



Details:

“Trent” is a longtime, high-profile environmental activist in the Flathead Valley and a frequent subject of criticism on KGEZ radio.

- Conservation Activist
- Radio Harassment
- Creston
- Spring of 2001

In February or March 2001, Trent was working at his home office when he received two phone calls, one right after another. They were both from friends who warned him that a caller on KGEZ had just broadcast Trent’s home location over the air and suggested that people should vandalize his house while he was on vacation. Trent was in fact not on vacation.

Later that spring, after Trent wrote a letter-to-the-editor critical of the Kalispell radio station, callers again criticized the activist. John Stokes, host of “The Edge,” said, “We know where [Trent] lives.”

On May 10, 2001, Stokes again went on an on-air tirade against Trent. The host said, “This is an Earth First terrorist. This is the guy who has spiked trees. He has closed down forests.”

Trent, who does his environmental work through legal means, believes the statements were made to drum up hatred against him.



Details:

The Flathead County Fair has long been a venue for the exchange of ideas. Groups of all political stripes have booths to meet people and distribute information. This has traditionally been done with respect for all. A conservation group has staffed a booth for seven years and is the only environmental group that has a booth at the fair.

- Conservation Organization
- Verbal Harassment
- Kalispell
- Aug. 18-19, 2001

On Saturday, Aug. 18, 2001, John Stokes, owner of KGEZ radio and host of “The Edge,” told his listeners to protest the group’s booth. A topic of discussion that day had been the Thirtymile fire in Washington State, in which four fire fighters died. In the broadcast, at least one caller asserted the firefighters had died because the Endangered Species Act prevented effective fire fighting.

“Ursula” was staffing the conservation group’s booth and was confronted by a protester with a sign saying, “People are more important than fish, 4 firefighters dead because of the Endangered Species Act.” Another protestor confronted Ursula and took her photograph. Sometimes, the protester shouted at other volunteers working the booth.

The protestor spent the afternoon a few feet in front of the group’s booth with the sign, standing in the narrow aisle.

“Victor” showed up to relieve Ursula. Victor was confronted by another man, who said the group had no conscience and supported fish over people.

The protestor stayed in front of the booth until 4:30 p.m. During his march, about a dozen people approached the protestor, shook his hand, and said they supported his message. One person repeatedly brought the protestor lemonade. Supporters included two members of the sheriff’s posse, who provide security at the county fair.

The booth was staffed for the rest of the afternoon and evening. Three more people brought up the Endangered Species Act/firefighter “issue.”

More volunteers took the booth on Sunday. Again, a family of protesters including a man, woman and two children picketed in front of the group’s booth for much of the afternoon.

Victor said he respects the protesters’ right to express themselves. However, he notes that his organization paid \$147.50 for the booth, and the area around it is quite restricted. Everyone has a right to rent booth space, no matter their political beliefs. Victor said the issue is the right to have a booth without protester’s interfering with free discussion and potentially blocking the aisle or intimidating volunteers and fair-goers. He said he would bring this issue up with the fair board.



Details:

“Wes” received an e-mail with a subject line: “you guys will perish.” It read: “YOU SUCK YOU BIG UGLY PIECE OF SHIT. CHRISTIANS WILL PREVAIL. THE FATHER SON & HOLY GHOST DO NOT LIKE WHAT YOU ARE DOING!!!! [sic].”

- Conservation Activist
- Threatening E-mail
- Creston
- March 7, 2001
- April 20, 2001
- July 11, 2001
- Reported to Flathead County Sheriff

On April 20, 2001, Wes received another e-mail from the same person. It said: “tell that cat on red owl driv hes in TROUBLE WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE [sic].”

On July 11, 2001, Wes received a third e-mail from the same person. This one concerned the United Nation’s alleged “Agenda 21.” In that e-mail, the person wrote: “the father, the son and the holy ghost brought me to write this letter.... KEEP YOUR POWDER DRY. YOU’RE GOING TO NEED IT [sic].”

A sheriff’s deputy met with the person who sent the messages and warned him about sending further e-mails. The perpetrator reportedly agreed not to send any more messages.



Details:

“Zach” was at the Forest Service’s open house on its plan to manage habitat for the lynx in Kalispell. “Alan” was loudly asking people to sign a petition to remove Flathead National Forest Supervisor Cathy Barbouletos from office. When someone pointed out Zach to Alan, Alan went over and told Zach that he had filed three inches of papers with the Internal Revenue Service about Zach’s conservation group.

- Conservation Activist
- Intimidation
- Kalispell
- Oct. 11, 2001



Details:

The Forest Service held an open house on its plans to manage habitat for lynx. The meeting was at a Kalispell hotel. “Barry” attended the meeting, and, when he entered the meeting room, he passed behind two men talking to each other. Barry recognized one of the men, “Carson,” as the man he had deputies eject from his office earlier in the month.

- Conservation Group Staffer
- Intimidation
- Kalispell
- Oct. 11, 2001

Barry began reading the visual displays. Within five minutes, Carson approached him from the side and said loudly, “You SOB. You called the cops on me. You told me to get the f\*ck out of your office. You wouldn’t answer my questions.”

Barry told Carson in a stern voice that he never told him to “get the f\*ck out” of his office and that Carson shouldn’t lie. Barry went on to say that Carson didn’t visit his office looking for answers, but rather wasted Barry’s time.

Carson repeated himself even louder. This attracted the Forest Service planner and two other Forest Service employees. Barry asked Carson “if he wanted to get it on or something.”

The Forest Service Planner then asked Barry to move away. He told the planner that he had come to the meeting to learn about the Forest Service’s lynx plan and was not about to move out of the way. Carson kept getting louder. Carson’s friend came over and told Carson to cool it and that “this was not the place.”

The Forest Service Planner and two other Forest Service employees then moved Carson out of the conference room. As Barry continued reading the displays, Carson’s friend snapped a picture of Barry. Carson’s friend passed Barry and said in a singsong manner, “You’re now on candid camera.”

Barry stayed at the meeting another 15-20 minutes and ended up talking with the Forest Service Planner about the agency’s plans for the area burned by the Moose fire. Carson’s friend who took the picture stood about three feet away, obviously eavesdropping on the conversation. Barry then left.



Details:

“Dylan” opened his office door. Then, he noticed someone had spit “some nice, big slobbering spit” all over the office door. “Kind of like someone might have been enjoying a vanilla milk shake and decided to spit.” The door is well labeled as the conservation group’s office.

- Conservation Group Staffer
- Vandalism
- Kalispell
- Sept. 17, 2001



Details:

“Emmett’s” father lives at the state veteran’s home in Columbia Falls. Emmett took his father shopping at a local supermarket.

While crossing the parking lot, a man passed him driving a late-model, silver Chevrolet pickup truck. The driver yelled, “Hey, environmental terrorist, yeah, environmental terrorist! F\*ck You! You suck!” The man then left, and Emmett proceeded with his shopping.

- Conservation Group Staffer
- Verbal assault
- Columbia Falls
- Nov. 1, 2001



Details:

“Fran” was eating lunch in front of her house in Somers when a neighbor, “Jamie,” referred to dog droppings on the lawn. Jamie made a comment about the “Green Nazi’s dog” next door.

Fran walked over and talked to the neighbor, telling Jamie that her father was a World War II veteran. She said she didn’t appreciate the slur and thought it was ignorant and thoughtless.

Jamie repeated the slur. When Fran pointed out that the Nazis killed 6 million Jews, Jamie denied that many had been killed and asked if Fran was a Jew.

As the conversation continued, Jamie’s grown daughter cut in and claimed Fran’s partner was an atheist. Fran’s partner is a staffer for a conservation group. Fran said that wasn’t true, and that her partner’s religious beliefs were his business.

Jamie went on to call the woman a red communist. Jamie’s daughter said, “We outnumber you and are going to drive you out.”

- Individual
- Verbal Harassment
- Somers
- June 5, 2001



Details:

A conservation group received an e-mail stating: "TAKE YOUR GROUP OF GREEN NATIZIS TO HELL WITH YOU....WE HAVE A GOU RIGHT NOW AND ITS TO RID YOU AND YOUR GROUP FROM HERE. WE ARE WATCHING YOU VERY CLOSLEY,KNOW YOUR EVERY MOVE AND WE WILL GET YOU OUT OF THIS STATE [sic]."

- Conservation Organization
- Threatening E-mail
- Kalispell
- Feb. 9, 2001
- Reported to Flathead County Sheriff

The organization’s director reported this to the Flathead County Sheriff’s Office, after realizing other groups had received similar emails from the same individual.



Details:

“Lori” has been a staffer for a local environmental group. Currently, she serves as program director, but was also the acting director for more than a year. As such, she has been a frequent target of KGEZ radio.

- Conservation Organization and Staffer
- Vandalism/Radio Harassment/ Physical Harassment
- Flathead County
- Spring of 2001

EVENT 1:

Between Jan. 19, 2001, and Feb. 2, 2001, Lori was warned by a listener of KGEZ that John Stokes, host of “The Edge,” joked about “burning Green Nazi’s homes.” A board member for the conservation group called to warn Lori that a caller to KGEZ had mentioned the location of Lori’s home in an isolated forested area 20 miles from Kalispell. Lori told the Flathead County prosecutor about this broadcast.

EVENT 2:

On March 8, 2001, Lori was driving on U.S. Highway 93 in heavy traffic in Kalispell. A car with two young men wearing ball caps bumped her car from behind. The bump did not damage her car. She is uncertain if the incident was intentional or accidental and did not report it to police.

EVENT 3:

On March 11, 2001, Lori was to conduct several school tours to the community compost garden at the landfill. When she arrived, she found that eight of the ten compost bins and the grounds around them had been vandalized. They were doused with diesel fuel and sown with what appeared to be thistle seed. All the compost had to be dumped in the landfill. Lori had been at the compost garden the day before and nothing was amiss. She reported this to the landfill manager.

EVENT 4:

On April 21, 2001, Lori and volunteers were again going to lead public tours of the composting site. These tours were well publicized. The composting project became a target on KGEZ radio. On April 20, 2001, a volunteer who was to help with the tour called and was concerned for his safety. He had

heard John Stokes urging listeners to protest the composting tours. Lori and another staffer completed the tours, without the help of volunteers. There were no incidents during the composting tour. Lori notified landfill officials about the radio show.

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Details:

The manager of a business reported it had received a green swastika sticker. The business was on the list of "green businesses" posted by KGEZ radio on its website. John Stokes, host of KGEZ's "The Edge," had criticized the business for contributing to environmental causes. The business manager was very concerned about publicity surrounding the sticker, saying such publicity would only fuel KGEZ.

- Business
- Vandalism - Green Swastika Sticker
- Whitefish
- March 2001
- Reported to Whitefish Police Department

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Details:

The newly-hired director for a conservation group noticed two green swastika stickers plastered on the sign outside the group's office. The stickers were about three inches across and said "eco-power" and "enviro power" around the swastika.

- Conservation Organization
- Vandalism - Green Swastika Stickers
- Kalispell
- March 15, 2001.
- Reported to Kalispell Police

The stickers were first noted on March 15, 2001. It's not known exactly when they were put on the sign. The director reported the vandalism to the Kalispell Police Department, which investigated the scene and took photographs. The stickers were removed March 16, 2001, and placed on file by the organization.

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Details:

In the spring of 2001, "Marty" received a phone call from a friend. The friend warned Marty that, while KGEZ radio's John Stokes was vilifying him on the air, a caller to the station had read Marty's address over the air. Marty was concerned because he had recently moved, and the address read over the air was now a rental.

- Conservation Activists
- Radio Harassment
- Bigfork
- Spring 2001

Later, Marty's wife wrote a letter-to-the-editor criticizing KGEZ. In the middle of the morning broadcast, John Stokes called Marty's home phone number. Marty was listening to the radio program that morning and told his wife not to answer. The answering machine picked up the call.

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Details:

“Peggy” had set up a collection box at a local school. Students could donate spare change to a fund designed to protect the tropical rain forest. The program was run by a national conservation group. KGEZ radio’s John Stokes urged his callers to protest the donation box to school administrators. When callers complained to the school, the principal withdrew the donation box and gave the money to a local rails-to-trails effort. In a newspaper interview about the incident, the principal said the school received about 10 phone calls. In that same article, Stokes said he wanted to use his station to “get that green crap out of our schools.”

- Counselor
- Radio Harassment
- Kalispell
- Spring 2001

## John Stokes: A History of Going Over “The Edge”

When it comes to conservationists being harassed and intimidated in the Flathead area, the discussion usually turns quickly to John Stokes. Stokes owns Kalispell’s KGEZ radio and hosts its talk show “The Edge.” Since taking over the station in 2000, “The Edge” has featured daily anti-environmental diatribes, which sometimes are directed at local conservationists on a personal level.

Tapping into the area’s economic frustrations, Stokes uses derogatory terms like “Green Nazis” and “the Fourth Reich” to drum up anger against conservationists and use them as scapegoats for the problems facing the Flathead Valley. Stokes makes no distinction between eco-terrorist groups like the Earth Liberation Front and mainstream conservation groups like the Sierra Club. Stokes’ use of “Green Nazi” usually degenerates into verbal shorthand for anyone who does not share his viewpoints. For Stokes, all “Green Nazis” have something in common: they are more dangerous than the Third Reich of Nazi Germany.

People are quick to dismiss Stokes as merely a “shock jock” who rails against conservationists to provide entertainment. His past, however, proves that he is a political activist and propagandist who now has a radio station at his disposal. Before moving to Montana in 1994, Stokes spearheaded a county secessionist movement in Washington State. He and his followers tried to create new counties within existing ones that would have been able to circumvent land-use laws. While spearheading this campaign, Stokes told the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, “I’m surprised no one’s been shot. I wouldn’t want to be wandering around here if I were with the Department of Ecology or any bureaucrat.” Immediately upon arriving in Montana, Stokes became a vocal opponent of the Flathead County Master Plan, and he’s been a major property rights activist since. He even ran for the Montana Legislature in 1998. He advocated changing Montana’s enabling act to require the federal government to cede all its land within Montana’s

borders to the state. He also wanted to sell the university system, terminate Indian reservations, and teach creationism in public schools. Stokes clearly has a right-wing political agenda, and now he uses his radio station to push it.

The topics covered by Stokes and his callers range from anti-government militia issues to beliefs of fundamentalists. The one attribute that all his callers agree to is that conservationists are evil. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Stokes added another twist. He began blaming conservationists for the attacks. Initially, he blamed conservation policies; then he labeled people involved in conservation groups as domestic terrorists; and finally he has hinted that conservationists and their funders support Islamic terrorists.

The good news for the conservation community is KGEZ does not appear to be a financially viable operation. According to court documents, John Stokes purchased the station for between \$550,000 and \$555,000. Upon talking to other radio stations in his market, the Network has discovered that Stokes’ advertising rates are well-below his competitors. However, that has not resulted in businesses scrambling to be sponsors of “The Edge.” His list of advertisers has remained small and is largely made up of small, mom-and-pop stores. Stokes frequently says on the air that he has yet to see a paycheck since taking over the station.

John Stokes dehumanizes conservationists and sets the stage for their intimidation and harassment. By using the public airwaves, he has turned conservationists into catch-all scapegoats. He sends a message that environmentalists are not entitled to be citizens of society. This makes conservationists an easy target. The following pages contain transcripts of “The Edge,” illuminating this point.

The following statements are from John Stokes' radio program "The Edge." "JS" stands for John Stokes, and "PS" stands for Pam Stokes.

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON CONSERVATIONISTS

### *Conservationists are Just Like the Ku Klux Klan*

Date: 8/16/01

JS: "Here's a heads up for every school district out there, because we know you listen to us, and we've got some great teachers that work for you. Anytime we hear of a 501(c)3 having information, literature in the classroom, a teacher espousing the propaganda of the environmental Fourth Reich, the Green Nazis, and handing out literature or using their talking points. Now here's something that just shocked me. You go to the *Daily Interlake's* webpage, and I get a lot of stories from them, and you scroll down to where it says ERC - Educational Resource Center - and you click that. This is a service provided by them. You will find just about every environmental, animal rights activist group listed through the *Daily Interlake* as teaching aides for educators in their community. That needs to be eradicated. I'm sorry. I don't want to tell anybody how to run their business, but, when you have a private enterprise funneling information from these radical extremist groups for teachers to educate and providing the links for them, something is terribly wrong with that. Now, any time we hear of, and this is all up to you guys out there - report back from your kids or attend the school board meetings and make your opinions known, because you're paying the bills down there, make your opinions known - anytime the Audubon, the stream keepers, the Citizens, the Nitwits, any of these groups appear or have their literature there, demand that you get equal time and you want to distribute some very valuable information from the Ku Klux Klan. Because, after all, they are a 501(c)3, and you let one in you let them all in."

### *Conservationists are Nazis*

Date: 8/29/01

JS: "They don't get a pass anymore. There's no reason for them to keep funding the Green Nazi movement in this country, the Fourth Reich. You know, and if somebody would have stood up to the Third Reich in the '20s and '30s, we would not have had the Holocaust, and the problems that we've had. But those people that were involved in the Third Reich went on to the United Nations and started writing international animal rights policies and nature policies.

### *Conservationists are American-Hating Bastards*

Date: 9/13/01

JS: "When I say the environmentalists are the worst thing to happen to America, they are. They've been destroying America from within. These bastard groups, these environmentalists, are trying to end every resource industry in America, make us dependent. They are all tied into this ultra-left thing that's going on across the world that hates America."

### *Conservationists are Un-American*

Date: 9/14/01

JS: "I think you're going to see a huge backlash, and I think it is starting to happen now about all these un-American groups that have been operating through foundation money, the environmental groups, the green extremist groups, the Citizens groups. They are truly communists out to destroy the American

way of life, and we've been tolerant of them, and I think the backlash, I think the human cry that 'Oh no, we're really patriotic. We're Americans and that's more hate coming out of it.' We've seen your policies. We've seen your policies. This is what tolerance gets us."

***Conservationists Aren't Americans***

Date: 10/2/01

PS: "People don't understand. They don't like America - the environmentalists - they're trying to say, 'Well yes we're Americans.' No you're not Americans. You don't believe in the ideology of America at all."

***Let's Post a Billboard of Adolph Hitler***

Date: 10/9/01

JS: "Pam and I were talking this morning that we would like to put a billboard up here in front of our studio with a giant, giant picture of Hitler on it as you drive into Kalispell up 93. All the liberals love people to come up here, and they hate this idea of a black box down here causing all these problems in the valley. They just can't stand it. The chamber. They black balled me. All those people down there. The boycotting people. A big old picture of Hitler in there with a bunch of kids around him, with their hands raised up, Sieg Heil, with a caption over on the side saying, 'Think Green. I did.'"

***Conservationists are Traitors***

Date: 11/29/01

JS: "These useful fools down here, the local environmental Nazis, they don't even know what they're being used for. They just get their grant from the Ted Turners, the Pew Foundation, the Bullitt Foundation, the Ford Motor Company, and they go about doing their work for them, and they don't even have a clue. That's why I call them traitors to America."

***Conservationists are SATAN***

Date: 12/13/01

JS: "By the way, we have them listed on our website. It's called SATAN. Under the Fourth Reich on our webpage, [www.z600.com](http://www.z600.com), you go to the Fourth Reich and you click that. We have all the animal rights activists, all the environmentalist extremist website. Why do we call them Green Nazis? You'll find out. Go to the website and research it. Find out for yourself. We do not make the terms up. It's very uncomfortable for them to be called what they call themselves. They have their own organizations, and, when you go to the acronym that we have there, SATAN, you will find, when you go to the SATAN page, the 'S,' if you click that, takes you to the Sierra Club. You click the 'A' it takes you to the Audubon club. You click the 'T' it takes you to the Turner Foundation. You click the 'A' and it takes you to the animal rights foundation's page, PETA. You click the 'N' on SATAN and it takes you to the Nature Conservancy. SATAN. You better start thinking about it. It is truly evil, and that's why the acronym, low and behold, came up SATAN."

## CONSERVATIONISTS AND THE 9/11 TERRORIST ATTACKS

### *Conservationists are Responsible for Terrorist Attacks*

Date: 9/11/01

JS: “We need to take care of all enemies of America. I’m sorry. I don’t want to put anybody’s life in danger or threaten them in any way, but there are people working in our society that hate America. They hate our system. They hate our private property. They hate our constitutional rights. And they’re undermining them at every level, and this is where it goes [World Trade Center attacks].”

### *Conservationists are Destroying America*

Date: 9/11/01

Caller: “I knew it was going to come to this. I’m sure glad I’m not a Green Nazi right now. I’ll tell you what. I’d be hunting for a hole”

JS: “I think their safety is not in peril. Nor would we ever advocate that, and I don’t want to let anybody assume...”

Caller: Starts to interrupt

JS: “Wait a minute. I want them to seriously re-examine their core beliefs. I want them to seriously re-examine their core beliefs as they attempt to file lawsuit after lawsuit, destroying industry in America, making us reliant upon all these outside forces, whether it’s energy, food, you know shutting off the water to, filing lawsuits to shut off waters to the Amish, to the Klamath Falls people, you know, putting a suckerfish above the sovereignty of the food supply of America.”

Caller: “Well, the thing is, what I’m saying is I’ve been preparing for a guerilla war. Not that I’m going to be in it, because I’m too old, you know, and I’ve got health problems and whatever, you know. But the thing is, I knew it was going to come to this sooner or later, and now we’re there.”

JS: “These people need to have a close, self-examination, and all the people that have been supporting them through their \$15 donations and showing up at their meetings, saying, ‘hate radio.’ You know, look what you’ve participated in – the destruction of America, the open attack on the sovereignty. You’ve been doing this stealth attack on the sovereignty of America. Well, this is what happens [World Trade Center attacks] when the movement progresses.”

### *Conservationists Tied to Terrorist Attacks*

Date: 9/11/01

JS: “He [a previous caller to “The Edge”] has decided which side of the line he’s on. He’s defending Marxism, liberalism, Green Nazism and saying that they’re not somehow associated with the destruction of America and what’s going on in New York and the East Coast, having to do with the destruction of America, and you say, ‘We’re not tied together.’ How despicable is that? Or how ignorant is that? I think they’re nervous about the self-examination they’re having to do right now, and saying, ‘You know what, we may share a little bit in this.’”

### *Terrorists and Conservationists Have the Same Agenda*

Date: 9/13/01

JS: “More and more people are now starting to see the true agenda of the greens, and that is to destroy America. Just as these extremists did it all at once [World Trade Center attackers], they

[conservationists] were doing it slow, and the results would be the same. But, there's lots of enemies of America – internally and externally.

Caller: "Oh, definitely."

JS: "And I guess this external one just didn't like the timetable these were on, so they ratcheted it up a notch."

### ***Conservationists and World Trade Center Attackers***

Date: 9/25/01

JS: "Yes, they [World Trade Center attackers] ran an airline, some airliners into some trade towers. We've had the environmentalists run as terrorists into our state and no one has checked them."

### ***Conservationists are Responsible for Terrorist Attacks***

Date: 10/1/01

JS: "So, when these left-wing lunatic liberals complain that I have somehow connected them to this, yes you are responsible. You lunatic fringe. You know who you are - the green extremists out there. The Green Nazis and 'How dare Mr. Stokes in this horrible event.' Look in the mirror. It's your political correctness that has caused these problems. So, it's not only me making the tar stick to you. The nation is beginning to examine what you have done to them."

### ***Conservationists and the Taliban***

Date: 10/17/01

JS: "What's interesting, and we'll be breaking this over the next couple days and we're getting the documentation on it now, the Taliban has been supported in large part by a lot of foundation money. Billionaires, multi-millionaires, big corporations funding the Taliban through foundations. You're starting to follow the money here. Some of these same contributors and foundations and corporations that have been funding the Islamic jihad are also funding the green jihad here in America. The same players."

## **VEILED, AND NOT SO VEILED, THREATS**

### ***Post Names, Addresses, Information on the Internet***

Date: 9/10/01

Caller: "It seems to me that people that would be in a position to know maybe could compile a list of like all the head honchos in the environmentalist movement and all members of the BATF, all members of the Treasury Department and put their names, addresses, phone numbers and any other pertinent information about all these people that commit treason against the United States and the people of the United States on the 'net. We'll put them on the Internet and, you know, they can do with that information what they want."

JS: "Not a bad idea."

Caller: "Yeah, it might change a few people's minds."

JS: "Thank you."

***Put Conservationists in Concentration Camps***

Date: 9/25/01

JS: “A lot of you guys out there have been talking about the concentration camps, the internment camps. They’re going to round all the patriots up. A poll was conducted in New York about internment camps. Should we, as a society, round up the Muslim extremists, the foreigners, the illegals that are in this country? Illegal meaning illegal, unlawfully, criminal and put them in internment camps. Now, you thought it was for all you white crackers out there, didn’t you? Now, how do you feel about it if it is for the bad guys? Maybe the environmentalists have been deemed domestic terrorists. Maybe they should all be rounded up and put in internment camps. Would you feel bad about that?”

***Let’s Shoot Conservationists***

Date: 10/9/01

Caller: “You keep saying that nobody cares, there’s nobody but you and a few other people that really give a damn about anything.”

JS: “I’m not so sure I said me.”

Caller: “Well, I don’t know. I keep hearing this that nobody cares. Who’s this nobody?”

JS: “Are you seeing it?”

Caller: “What are we supposed to be doing John? Going out there shooting things up?”

PS: “No.”

Caller: “What are we supposed to be doing John?”

JS: “You know I can’t say that on the air.”

Caller: “What are we supposed to be doing John?”

JS: “Get involved locally. Run for office. Sign petitions. Protest.”

Caller: “We’ve done all that symbolism crap.

PS: “I know it.”

Caller: “The symbolism crap is getting nowhere. Parties and little doodads and stuff aren’t getting anywhere. I just want to know John. You keep telling us that we don’t care.”

JS: “Okay. What’s your solution? Shoot them?”

Caller: “Damn right.”

JS: “Isn’t there recourse for that?”

Caller: “What am I supposed to do? Lay down in a fetal position and let them walk all over me?”

***Vigilantes and Conservationists***

Date: 10/22/01

JS: “What they’re doing is completely criminal and illegal. They cannot lobby for any kind of legislation or rules or be an advocate for animals.”

PS: “I don’t think the law matters.”

JS: “It’s going to, especially if the Vigilantes take the law into their own hands. Then, it’s really going to matter to them, and I hope that don’t happen.”

***Lots of Dead Bodies***

Date: 10/22/01

JS: “This idea that conservatives are not tolerant. Boy, excuse me? Excuse me? There’d be a whole lot of dead bodies hitting the floor if we weren’t tolerant.”

## APPENDICES

- MHRN Letter to Law Enforcement
- Missoula Independent* article on Conservationists being Targeted in the Flathead
- Article on Political Intimidation
- Open Letter to the People of the Flathead Valley

[Original sent on Montana Human Rights Network letterhead.]

10/4/2001

To: Tom Esch County Attorney, Jim Dupont County Sheriff, Frank Garner City Police Chief

Fr: Ken Toole

Re: Harassment of Conservationists in the Flathead area

The Montana Human Rights Network is increasingly concerned about the targeting and harassment of conservation oriented organizations and individuals in the Flathead area. A recent confrontation at the Montana Wilderness Association office prompts this letter urging law enforcement agencies to become more active in this regard.

The Network was initially contacted about concerns in this area in the summer. Upon discussing several incidents with individuals, we decided to try to sort through how much of the concern being expressed was simply people's discomfort with political controversy, how much constituted criminal conduct, how much was "socially inappropriate" but not criminal and how much was simply rumor. I am enclosing the base documentation so you can review it

We have become increasingly concerned. We think the incident at the Wilderness Association office is a warning that people opposing the work of this and similar groups have lost any sense of appropriate limits to their actions. It is when individuals lose this sense of limits that they are likely to turn to criminal and violent activity. In total we have concluded that the likelihood of some kind of serious incident is increasing. We base this on the following:

1. We believe that the militia structures put in place in the mid 1990's are increasingly active and organizing around resource issues targeting conservationists as "enemies."
2. John Stokes radio program is serving to provide a central point for delivering a consistent message to many of these individuals and groups, constantly providing them with new fodder and targets.
3. There are at least a few individuals (who have already had contact with law enforcement) who are quite aggressive about confronting people they disagree with.
4. The anxiety among conservationists is increasing to a level which may lead relatively minor incidents to escalate.

Our experience in other communities has led us to believe that law enforcement has a critical role to play in averting serious problems. We urge you to consider the following as appropriate law enforcement intervention.

1. Criminal activity which is directed at people because of their political views should be treated very seriously by law enforcement and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Law enforcement's stance in this regard should be publicly stated at every opportunity.

2. Reach out to individuals who have been targeted and talk with them about their concerns and law enforcement's willingness to help.
3. Designate a consistent contact person who is tasked with assuring coordination between agencies and outreach to potential targets of harassment.
4. Meet with leaders in the conservation community to discuss their concerns.

From incident to incident much of what law enforcement sees in this area seems minor. The vandalism of an office building, a confrontation in a public office, trespassing, people receiving hang up calls may each seem quite insignificant. But to the community being targeted (in this case, conservationists) they have a cumulative effect. Equally important, in this case we believe that they point to a pattern of escalating tension which may result in more serious criminal activity.

I am planning a meeting with conservation leaders in late October to discuss their concerns. I would be very interested in talking with you about having someone come to the meeting. I will call in the next couple of weeks to discuss that potential.

Sincerely,

Ken Toole  
Program Director  
Montana Human Rights Network

[Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted with the permission of the *Missoula Independent*. The article originally ran in the 10/18/01 issue of the *Independent*.]

## Stoking the Flames

by Nick Davis

A commonly held theory about drought posits that the longer one lasts, the greater the amount of precipitation needed to reverse its effects. In other words, a drought-plagued region that, after years of insufficient moisture, receives an historically average amount of rain will not only not reverse the drought, but may actually extend it.

If this theory holds true for economic as well as watershed health, then the Flathead Valley, like the rest of the state, is in the midst of a seemingly endless dry spell. As Montana founders in the gap between an extraction industry-based economy to a new, as-yet undetermined economic engine, the residents of the Flathead- an area once renowned for its legendary forests and huge deposits of mineral ore- are feeling the pinch.

But despite the fact that Flatheaders are slightly better off than Montana residents as a whole- according to 2000 Census figures, the county's median household income is \$32,387, compared to the statewide average of \$29,672, with the number of people living below the poverty line actually lower than the state average- a number of individuals, schools and businesses are becoming the scapegoats for the region's financial woes.

In an increasingly vitriolic public discourse, everything and everyone, from sporting goods stores to high school teachers to area environmentalists, are being singled out in McCarthyist fashion as the primary culprits for the loss of a once-proud way of life. And the backlash has grown to the point where some residents no longer feel safe in the communities that they call home.

The threatened residents of the Flathead point to one common denominator as the instigator for the ill will blowing their way: a daily, three-hour talk show on a Kalispell radio station owned by outspoken right-wing organizer John Stokes.

### The Name-Calling Begins

The trouble began in the spring of 2001, less than a year after Stokes purchased the KGEZ-AM radio station and instituted a format that revolves around hardcore, youth-oriented music and "The Edge," a talk show that features Stokes' views on the news of the day paired with the call-in opinions of his listeners.

In Stokes' world view, most of the troubles plaguing the Flathead Valley are the direct result of the environmental movement, which he contends is a conspiracy that rivals Germany's Nazi Party of the 1930s.

In a letter written to media outlets in Montana this spring, Stokes writes: "Yes, Virginia, there is a FOURTH REICH. It has its roots in the same deep ecology and environmental extremist movement as the infamous third Reich. Today, they work hand in glove with the fourth estate. Only the uninformed would also deny the existence of the GREEN NAZIS and that they are operating in this state... Because for over a decade or longer of these green extremists groups operating unchecked or exposed, Montana is now the economic equal of Appalachia. . We intend to peel the Fourth Reich like a grape with the facts, the truth, public opinion, and use legal due process to rid our schools and the state of these eco fascist [sic]." In May, the Montana Human Rights Network

sponsored a visit to Kalispell by Klaus Stern, a Holocaust survivor who took Stokes to task for his free use of the term “Nazis.” Stokes responded on his radio show by calling Stern a “cheap whore,” and, commenting on the fact that Stern had lost 35 family members to Nazi concentration camps, said, “too bad, so sad, get over it.”

Environmental activist Keith Hammer is a 37-year resident of the Flathead, a former Forest Service employee, ex-logger, and head of the Swan View Coalition, an organization formed to fight a development project in the Swan Mountains east of Bigfork. In April, Hammer, who is a frequent on-air target of Stokes, began receiving threatening, obscene and anti-Semitic e-mails from a person identifiable only by the e-mail user name, “jmpnfish.”

Although no direct link to Stokes or his radio station has been made to “jmpnfish,” that e-mail user name, along with the Z-600 station Web site, was listed as a contact in a *Daily Interlake* article for information on a relief convoy to the farmers of Klamath Falls that left Kalispell on Aug. 18.

When contacted in August, Flathead County Attorney Tom Esch told the *Independent* that the e-mails had been traced to a single individual, who had been ordered to cease and desist. Esch went on to say that no further activity along those lines had occurred since May.

But if local authorities had hoped that such intimidation tactics against environmentalists would cease, those hopes have since been dashed. Cesar Hernandez, who runs the Montana Wilderness Association office in Kalispell, has been verbally accosted and threatened twice in the last month. According to Hernandez, the first episode occurred Sept. 27, during which a man entered his office and accused him of costing people their jobs, as well as causing the deaths of firefighters. (A frequent topic on Stokes’ show has been the contention that environmentalists, through their support of the federal Endangered Species Act, are responsible for the deaths of four firefighters in Washington this summer).

Hernandez says that the man called him and Keith Hammer “eco-terrorists,” and said that their names were on a list of people who will be “taken care of.” When the man refused to leave the office, Hernandez called the police, who escorted the man out and told him he would be arrested if he ever showed up there again. Hernandez’s version of events were confirmed by Flathead County Sheriff Jim Dupont.

Then on Oct. 12, Hernandez attended a public meeting dealing with the protection of Montana’s lynx population, where he was again confronted by the same man. This time, Hernandez says, the man, accompanied by an acquaintance, instigated a shouting match that had to be broken up by three Forest Service employees. In a written report of the incident, Hernandez states: “This is the second unfriendly and uncomfortable confrontation I have had with this individual in two weeks time and I believe that bad blood is brewing between us. The comment from [the man’s] friend that ‘this is not the place,’ can be construed in many ways, but inclines me to believe that the issue between us is not resolved.”

### **Targeting Women and Children**

Not everyone feeling the heat in the Flathead Valley is an environmentalist, however. Brenda Kitterman moved to her home at the base of the Swan Mountains three years ago from Casper, Wyo., where she worked as a police officer. Part of her reason for moving was to bring her daughters closer to their father, who has roots in Great Falls and Helena. Kitterman originally intended to continue her law enforcement career in Montana, but her effort was thwarted by a labor dispute at the Kalispell Police Department at the time. Although Kitterman has never been

a member or contributor to any environmental organization, the events that have transpired in the last six months have not only caused her to re-think her attitude towards local law enforcement, they've got her looking for a new place to live. After hearing that swastikas were being placed on the windows of local businesses mentioned on Stokes' show in April-he had identified them as supporters of the Missoula-based Alliance for the Wild Rockies-Kitterman tuned in to hear callers criticizing Hernandez, who had made an appearance in Stokes' studio. "Stokes and his listeners were making statements I recognized as militia-oriented propaganda," says Kitterman. "Due to my law enforcement background and training, I knew how potentially violent it could become."

After deriding Klaus Stern on the air, Stokes mentioned by name a high school student at Stern's lecture who had questioned Stokes' use of the word "Nazi." That student was Kitterman's 17-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, who later interviewed Stern for her school newspaper. In response to the on-air attack on her daughter, Brenda Kitterman wrote a letter to the editor denouncing Stokes, which was published in three separate newspapers in May.

Stokes read the letter on the air for his callers to discuss, repeating Kitterman's name several times. Within a couple of days, Kitterman says, a campaign of intimidation began against her and her daughter. One day, the hot tub on the deck behind her house was vandalized, resulting in \$525 in damage. Later that night, she saw a man in her yard, and reported the incidents to the police.

About a week later, a tire on her daughter's car was slashed. Then the harassing phone calls began, sometimes 30 or more a day. Some were just hang-ups, others were males voices talking about killing environmentalists.

One night in early June, Kitterman says, a man stood in the trees bordering her yard and yelled, "Brenda, get your ass outside! I said now!" She called the police, but by the time they showed up, the man was gone.

Kitterman decided to go public with what was happening to her. She gave an interview with KPAX-TV in Missoula, thinking that the exposure might help stem the tide of harassment. Stokes derided her on his show, talking about "a woman, who shall remain nameless, getting airtime because she was threatened."

A week or so later, Stokes mentioned on his show the school newspaper article written by Kitterman's daughter. Although he changed her name to "Catherine Bitterman" on the air, he followed by suggesting that she was affiliated with the Human Rights Network, another one of his favorite targets.

On June 8, Brenda Kitterman spoke at a PRIDE rally in Kalispell as a friend of gay rights. Shortly after leaving the rally, she was followed for several miles by a man on a motorcycle. "The motorcycle followed me in, and the driver held up a lasso of short roping rope while he looked directly at me," she says. "He shook it a few times, and I took it to mean a noose, as I had heard on Z-600 that they were going to use stones and nooses on the gays."

In July, Elizabeth Kitterman began to be followed home from work. According to her mother, Elizabeth was tailed at least three or four times, once by a man who reportedly displayed a gun to several of her friends. Needless to say, the incidents have left Elizabeth nervous.

"Leaving work is a big deal now," she says. "I always make sure someone walks with me. I refuse to park in our parking lot because it's not lit up. It just gives me the willies. I'm always checking the rear view mirror to see who's following me. I'm constantly checking over my shoulder."

Still, she doesn't back off what she wrote in her school newspaper.

"I don't regret writing the article," Elizabeth says. "I was ashamed of what Stokes said, and I

wanted to let the other kids know what was going on.”

Although Elizabeth hasn't been followed since early August (the Kittermans took a vacation for much of the month), Brenda was again followed on Sept. 19 by a man who tailed her for twenty minutes, staying within inches of her rear bumper and then nearly ran her off the road. She never got a good enough look to identify the driver.

Last month, Kitterman began looking for a place to relocate her family, but the stock market crash after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks has taken its toll on her savings.

“I remember as a police officer, dealing with people who called in all the time,” she says. “It was a real pain, and I don't want to be like that. But I'm at my wit's end here and I don't know how to stop it. It's gotten to the point where I don't feel safe living here anymore, and I fear for my daughters' safety.”

Kitterman is looking for a more tolerant community to live, and knows that political conservatism and social tolerance are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

“In Casper I was one of maybe 11 registered Democrats,” she says. “People would take me around and introduce me as the token liberal, even though I wasn't politically active. I was readily accepted, I wasn't seen as a threat. Here, on the other hand, I was labeled by Stokes and I know there's a lot of Democrats here but they're afraid to express themselves in public. People don't even talk about that amongst friends unless they know each other really well. I've never seen anything like it.”

### Teaching Intolerance

The winds of agitation blowing from Stokes' show have been felt in the school system as well. School fundraisers for environmental causes have been the object of Stokes' ridicule, and at least one was cut short because of a picketing threat.

Randall Hansen, a Flathead High School social studies teacher in his 19th year of service, had a first-hand encounter with bullying protesters. While teaching a class last spring about the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations, Hansen asked the class for comparable organizations.

“Someone said ‘The United Nations,’ and this kid says, ‘The UN is nothing but a bunch of blue-helmeted Nazis, and they should all be executed,’” Hansen says. After warning the student about the consequences of using such loaded terms, the issued faded, or so Hansen thought.

Several months later, three men, accompanied by the student in question, confronted Hansen in the school hallway outside his classroom. “These guys had anti-UN T-shirts on, and one of them got right into my face, saying that I had taken away the student's freedom of speech. I got a little riled up, and it degenerated into a shouting match. When they finally left, they got into it again with the vice principal, dropping f-bombs all over the place and saying that this would get on the radio.”

The next day, he says, Stokes was on the air encouraging people to vote against an upcoming school levy because of teachers like Hansen. The student was also on the radio show, and said of Hansen, “[He's] more than one [of the teachers] that sponsors the Green Party and goes along with fascist statements against students.”

### Drawing No Lines

“I'm not the anti-Christ,” Stokes says in a phone interview with the *Independent*. “I'm nobody's leader, I don't follow anybody, I don't belong to any organizations. I'm sorry if people think I'm

some sort of Pied Piper, but I'm not. I don't have that kind of Svengali effect on people."

He is quite aware of the charges leveled against him by the "the opposition," but says that he and his station, along with the businesses that advertise with him, are the real victims of harassment and vandalism, not the environmentalists. He cites instances of broken headlights, broken windshields, egging and spray-painting of buildings, phone threats to himself and his sponsors.

"I've seen on the opposite side of the fence that their propaganda, their zeal to turn the country into green totalitarianism, has invoked a lot of damage, property damage, jeopardy to people's lives," he says. "They call my sponsors probably 15 times a day and threaten them and harass them with all kinds of nasty stuff."

Asked whether he feels any responsibility about the harassment endured by members of the opposition, Stokes says, "See, they believe this stuff. 'Oh, he's going to make people do things. We've got to stop him because at some point somebody's going to go off.' I'm sorry, I don't buy it. That's just propaganda they spread around among themselves to keep their faithful in line. They have to have a boogey man, and I'm their convenient boogey man for rallying their troops."

Stokes goes one further, contending that if these instances of intimidation are occurring, it may well be coming from inside the environmental movement itself.

"Knowing how these people operate, I would not be a bit surprised if it was some of their own people, psychological warfare, calling some of their own special people, threatening them with the implication that it would be me," he says. "I mean, what better way to do it than with counter-terrorism and scare your own people?"

According to Stokes, the conspiracy against him doesn't end with the environmentalists; other radio stations in the Flathead market are targeting him as well. "I've been framed a lot, let's put it that way. I know that some other employees of other radio stations, who are my competitors, are the ones behind it. And I know full well who does it," he says.

When pressed if there is a line of public discourse that shouldn't be crossed, Stokes remains defiant.

"I'm looking at the Constitution, at the First Amendment, and that's a slippery slope that you're asking me to define where the line is," he says. "I don't want any politically correct police defining where the line is, because obviously the line has changed decade after decade based on hindsight. Today, it's not politically correct to say 'Jap' or 'Redman' or 'Chink,' OK. That was common language at the time. Today, that might be inflammatory and somebody may say that's crossed the line to incite violence. It's a constantly moving line and I don't necessarily want to get into that debate."

Stokes remains convinced that the environmental movement is on its last leg, and that soon all forest land will be open to all people and any vehicles. "I see a return to where sustainable harvesting does come off," he says. "Trees grow back, and they have to be managed. Biolife can co-habitate with humans, as they always have done. I see great opportunities for all out there, and it's called free market. [Environmentalists] are in the death throes of their movement, and they're lashing out right now, just like the KKK, in my opinion. At one point, they were pretty powerful, everybody thought it was a good idea. Now you probably can't get anybody to admit they're KKK."

### Answering the Rage

Such hard-line rhetoric is familiar enough to journalist and private investigator David Helvarg, author of *The War Against the Greens*, a book that documents the backlash against environmen-

talists in the mid-1990s when the “wise use” and militia movements were at the peak of their power. The scene playing out in the Flathead, Helvarg says, was once fairly common.

“You’ve got an economy in transition, people getting displaced, and then you have a right-wing organizer come in and give them easy answers to complex questions,” says Helvarg. “It’s not atypical, although most of this kind of ground-level targeting of local environmentalists has gone by the wayside in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing.”

Helvarg’s advice to targets of intimidation tactics is unequivocal. “Historically, when people stand up to this stuff and speak out, it has a positive effect. The more people let themselves be intimidated by that sort of behavior, the more it encourages and perpetuates it.” Helvarg, like Stokes, sees a movement on its last legs, at least from a populist standpoint. “It’s getting increasingly tough to sell the idea that environmental protection is stealing jobs,” he says. “The market itself is beginning to recognize that sustainability is a requirement and that states with the best economic profiles are the states that have the best environmental protections.”

As for the threats and harassment to Kitterman and others, the police say there’s not much they can do about it. “I don’t think they’re making it up, but we haven’t reached a point where we have evidence to believe someone is being followed,” says Flathead County Sheriff Jim Dupont. “We don’t do anything until a crime is committed. We don’t, nor does any police agency in Montana, have enough people to put a stakeout on a place unless there’s a substance to a claim, and normally there’s not substance to these claims.”

Perhaps. But for those who still have unanswered questions about the mysterious death last April of Flathead Valley environmentalist Tary Mocabee, such assurances ring hollow.

Whether or not people get hurt or arrests are made, it’s a safe prediction that one way or another, Stokes’ war on the greens will end up in a courthouse. Word among the green community is that Stokes will be the subject of at least one slander suit sometime in the near future.

##

[Editor's Note: This excerpt from Sheila O'Donnell's manual *Common Sense Security: A Handbook for Community Activists* is re-printed with her permission.]

## **Intimidation**

by Sheila O'Donnell

Activists from all communities have faced attempts at intimidation from corporations, law enforcement, and the FBI, as well as hate groups. If you are seeing attempts to intimidate you or your organization, it is probably because you and your compatriots are successfully raising the consciousness of your community. Know that these attempts at intimidation are not personal. It is because you and your organization are working for change. It is not you, it is your ideas that probably mean change in the way people are doing business in your community.

If someone tries to take your feeling of security from you by intimidation, threats, or violence, what they are doing is illegal. Go to your community first. Document the problem as best you can. If you decide to respond, talk to others who have experienced similar threats.

What to do when you, your group, or your community faces harassment and attempts at intimidation? First, talk with others in your organization. Because this is not personal, you should not attempt to deal with it alone. In numbers there is safety because it is the organization that is the target, not you. Talk with other activists in the community. See if all organizations in your area are facing the same problem.

Oftentimes, individuals are targeted. There could be a rumor circulating about a person's conduct. Often, rumors are started in an attempt to discredit the group or to divide it. Rumors can be deadly and can wreak havoc on a community. Is the rumor accurate? Is there a member of your group having serious trouble? Is there a way to help that person? Where did the rumor start? Do a little investigation into the genesis of the rumor; it might surprise you. Don't gossip about your friends; it makes the group vulnerable and it gives juicy information to others who might use it against you.

If there is an attempt to divide and conquer your community by your local resource extractor, join forces with other groups. Stand firm with other like-minded groups if they are being targeted.

Has your job been threatened because you have spoken out as a member of the group? You have a First Amendment right to speak your truth. It is illegal to bully you into silence because you have taken an unpopular stand. Of course, you must be an exemplary employee, or you could be fired for cause. If there is no cause and your problems only started because you embraced an unpopular position, your employer is wrong and you can fight the decision.

Deal with the issue immediately; don't let it fester and create further problems. If the problem is not considered carefully and dealt with quickly, damage can be done because others could react negatively to you or your group. Depending on the problem, it might be advisable to talk to other groups in your community and ask for support from them as well.

If someone is physically threatened, or is fearful of a physical attack, deal with the situation immediately. Discuss the threat and find a way to make the target of the potential attack secure, and attempt to determine where the threat came from. Talk to your local police and politicians. Get support from other groups. If one individual or group is being singled out, ask for solidarity from other groups.

Don't try to ignore the problem. It will only encourage the bullies who will view your silence as consent.

Go to your local, county, state, or federal law enforcement. If they do not take you seriously, tell them about the national and international campaign against environmentalists. Give them examples from David Helvarg's *War Against the Greens* and Andrew Rowell's *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement*.

Go to your local congressional representative. Go to the press. Call the clergy and ask for support. Go to the police and the local prosecutor.

Be relentless. Make yourself heard. Turn the fear into action.

##

[The following letter was circulated by Kalispell's Ben Long in March 2001.]

## **An Open Letter to the People of the Flathead Valley**

Residents of northwestern Montana have been blessed with a beautiful place to live and a 225-year tradition of American democracy.

While all people have a right to express their opinions, we all have a responsibility to maintain a civil level of public discourse. We encourage everyone to take part in public discussions, in a manner respectful of a broad, diverse spectrum of opinion. We must keep foremost in mind that we are all neighbors here.

Recent use of the term "Nazi" to describe members of our community goes beyond the bounds of proper civil discourse. To use this term too lightly dilutes the lessons of history, insults the memory of millions of people killed by the Nazis, and dishonors the entire generation of Americans who fought to stop Nazism.

The plastering of swastika stickers on the offices of organizations, and other acts of vandalism, are illegal violations of property rights and must not be condoned or tolerated. Such words and actions serve to poison the well of public debate and damage our sense of community.

While disagreements are a healthy and necessary part of civic life, we pledge to work together to keep our political discussions polite, tolerant, respectful and constructive. We may disagree, but we will continue to be good neighbors.

Sincerely,

Ben Long, Kalispell  
Tom Esch, Flathead County Attorney  
Jim Dupont, Flathead County Sheriff  
Frank Garner, Kalispell Police Chief  
Dan Vincent, Regional Supervisor, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Rita Fitzsimmons, Kalispell Businesswoman and Rotary Club leader  
Richard Kuhl, Chairman, Flathead County Democratic Party  
Rev. Ken Mottram, chaplain, Kalispell Regional Medical Center  
Rev. Hal Irvine, Kalispell minister  
Kris Russell  
Joe Unterreiner  
Donna Maddux, Flathead County School Superintendent  
Dorothy Laird, Flathead County Librarian  
Norb Donahue, former Kalispell City Attorney and Council Member  
Chris Kukulski, Kalispell City Manager  
Glen Neier, Kalispell City Attorney  
Tanya Gersh, Chairwoman, Flathead Jewish Community  
Rev. Victor Langhans, St. Matthew's Catholic Church  
Harry Amend, School District #5 Superintendent  
Dr. Lex Blood, Kalispell educator

