

# meridianews

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Please direct inquiries or comments to Shawn Walker at [shawnwalker@merid.org](mailto:shawnwalker@merid.org).

Please visit the new Meridian website, <http://www.merid.org> to learn more about the work we do and how we can add value to your organization

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## Dear Colleague,

Welcome to the second issue of *Meridianews*, Meridian Institute's on-line newsletter! We launched the newsletter last fall in conjunction with our new website. We greatly appreciate the useful feedback we have received from our colleagues and friends. Please visit the site at [www.merid.org](http://www.merid.org) for updates on projects, resources focused on issues ranging from sustainable forestry to nanotechnology, and ideas about how Meridian's collaborative problem solving approaches might assist you in addressing challenges facing your organization.

2004 has brought some exciting project opportunities to Meridian. Over the winter and spring a number of new projects were under development, where there are real opportunities to apply collaborative problem solving approaches.

*Healthcare* –We are partnering with Search for Common Ground to assess issues surrounding healthcare for the uninsured. The assessment is being conducted to determine whether there is interest among key players to proceed with a national consensus-building dialogue which would seek to inform policy makers on this important issue.

*Homeland Security* - Eighty-five percent of the critical infrastructure in the U.S. is owned and operated by private industry. We are working with the Department of Homeland Security and critical infrastructure owners and operators (e.g., utilities, financial services, food and agriculture, water, etc.) and their national associations to work collaboratively across and between sectors to identify priority activities, share information and best practices, and establish communication and governance systems among industry and with the government.

In addition to these new areas, we are continuing to promote dialogue about the introduction of new technologies into society. In partnership with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, we are developing the Nanotechnology Dialogues to engage respected leaders in discussions about the types of information and actions that are needed to encourage beneficial applications of nanotechnology and avoid potentially negative impacts.

You can read more about these projects and others in the “*In the Spotlight*” section below.

Thank you for your continued interest in collaborative problem solving and the work of Meridian Institute. Please let us know how we might assist you in the future.

**The Meridian Team**

## In the Spotlight

### Healthcare Coverage for the Uninsured

The number of Americans without health insurance is rising. In 2002, 17 percent of the non-elderly population was without coverage. This amounts to 43 million people without reliable access to healthcare. In response to this growing problem, we have partnered with Search for Common Ground to assess issues surrounding healthcare for the uninsured and help determine whether there is interest among key players to proceed with a national consensus-building dialogue which would seek to inform policy makers about options for how to address this important issue.

The assessment report will describe differing viewpoints on healthcare coverage for the uninsured, possible areas of common ground, who should be involved in an agreement building process, the political and budgetary environment, and which parties are willing to participate and under what conditions. It will also report the conditions under which a consensus-building process is most likely to be successful. Regardless of whether an agreement-seeking process proceeds from the assessment, the assessment should provide an invaluable mapping of the key issues and parties involved. For more information, please contact Tim Mealey at [tmealey@merid.org](mailto:tmealey@merid.org).

### Critical Infrastructure Protection

Government reorganization and an increasing need for public-private partnerships to ensure domestic security are challenges that are well suited for the neutral facilitation and strategy assessment and planning assistance that Meridian provides. Eighty-five percent of the critical infrastructure in the U.S. is owned and operated by private industry. We are working with the Department of Homeland Security to help private infrastructure owners and operators (e.g., utilities, financial services, water, food and agriculture, etc.) and their national associations work collaboratively across and between sectors to identify priorities, share information and best practices, and establish communication and governance systems among industry and with the government. As an example, we are working with Federal partners and companies and associations from the food and agriculture sector and the water sector to help facilitate the organization of these

massive and diverse sectors to better assess, communicate about, and address domestic security issues. Via this process, members of the agricultural supply and food chain and public and private drinking water and waste water entities are determining the organizational structure that will enable the sharing of best practices and ensure adequate information flows to and from the Federal government. For more information, please contact Michael Lesnick at [mlesnick@merid.org](mailto:mlesnick@merid.org).

### Nanotechnology Dialogues

“Nanotechnology” refers to certain research and technology development at the atomic, molecular or macromolecular levels. The potential applications of nanotechnology are diverse and include: developing new pharmaceuticals; introducing nanoparticles into existing materials to make them stronger or change their conductive properties; and using filters made of nanoparticles to remove bacteria and viruses from water systems. Although the inclusion of nanotechnology in manufactured products is still limited, some products, such as khaki trousers that won’t stain or wrinkle, have already entered the marketplace.

As nanotechnology science and product applications advance, regulatory agencies, industries, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders are becoming aware of the potentially far-reaching implications. In partnership with the Foresight and Governance Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS), we are developing the Nanotechnology Dialogues to engage respected leaders in discussions about the types of information and actions that are needed to encourage beneficial applications and avoid potentially negative impacts.

The goal of the Nanotechnology Dialogues is to stimulate discussion among a diverse group of leading stakeholder representatives that will improve the quality and timeliness of decision-making at the national and international levels regarding nanotechnology. The dialogues will highlight issues such as:

- Opportunities to contribute to sustainable development, including potential linkages between nanotechnology and poverty alleviation in developing countries;

- Options for assessing the health, environmental, and socio-economic implications of nanotechnology; and
- The interface between nanotechnology development and regulatory systems.

Following a discussion between the authorities of the US Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration as they relate to nanotechnology, we are continuing with a meeting series that explores the interface between nanotechnology development and regulatory systems. Upcoming sessions will address issues related to nanotechnology and intellectual property, and nanotechnology and worker safety and health. Other events are being planned and will be announced on the Nanotechnology Dialogues website at [www.nanodialogues.org](http://www.nanodialogues.org). Please check the site for updates.

### **Andrus Family Fund (AFF) Grant Supports Collaborative, Community-based Approaches to Improving New Mexico's Watersheds**

We began working with the New Mexico Environment Department's Surface Water Quality Bureau (Bureau) on community involvement in the Red River watershed under a grant from the Hewlett Foundation more than five years ago. Since that time, we have continued to customize collaborative, community-based processes to address the unique challenges facing New Mexico's threatened watersheds. In cooperation with the Bureau, we have initiated similar collaborative watershed projects in seven watersheds since 2001 to help address watersheds impaired by nonpoint sources of contamination such as mining, agricultural runoff, forest management practices, and development. The Bureau believes that a collaborative approach to reducing water contamination from these "nonpoint sources" could potentially create more durable solutions to improve the health of the environment and community.

In fall 2003, we received a grant from the Andrus Family Fund (AFF) to support our ongoing watershed efforts in New Mexico. This partnership with AFF creates a unique opportunity for Meridian to enrich our existing community-based watershed work with an emphasis on community transitions. Many of the community watershed groups we work with are attempting to transition from past modes of interaction that were adversarial and contentious to more collaborative community approaches to addressing

watershed issues. Under the AFF's Community Reconciliation Program, Meridian is supported to incorporate the principles of the Bridges Transition Framework, a philosophy of social change, into our existing community watershed work.

We believe that the principles of the Bridges Transition Framework and the work of the AFF represents an opportunity to enhance the collaborative community processes we are facilitating and to help our participants become more aware of the changes they are experiencing, as individuals and as groups. Integrating a heightened awareness and increased understanding of the impacts of transition into our collaborative work with communities has the potential to significantly improve the long-term sustainability and "community capacity" we are helping to develop. For additional information on our collaborative community approaches in New Mexico, please contact Sarah Walen at [skwalen@merid.org](mailto:skwalen@merid.org).



*Rio de los Brazos, a tributary to the Rio Chama, and the Brazos Cliffs in Northern New Mexico.*

### **Meridian Partners with the Collaborative Adaptive Management Network (CAMNet)**

In partnership with adaptive management pioneer Steve Light, Ph.D., Meridian has formed the Collaborative Adaptive Management Network (CAMNet). Building on an existing adaptive management network, we join the strengths of both collaboration and adaptive management to assist in the development of best practices for science-based ecosystem management and restoration. CAMNet assists leaders and professionals in

developing new approaches to ecosystem management in regional ecosystems, including the Everglades, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Upper Mississippi River, Colorado River, Pacific Northwest and Sacramento Bay Delta.

CAMNet develops best practices for solving complex conservation problems by creating and supporting adaptive and collaborative learning opportunities. It offers ecosystem managers, scholars, students, and engaged citizens an unparalleled setting for informal, collegial inquiry and the opportunity to learn from one other. CAMNet's challenge in the immediate future is to formalize its institutional foundation and ensure broader execution of its services. Through this partnership, we are sharing our facilitation, strategy assessment and planning expertise with CAMNet leadership versed in the science and policy of ecosystem management and restoration.

The next CAMNet symposium is planned for September 2004 in Seattle, WA in conjunction with the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration. For more information about CAMNet, please visit [www.adaptivemanagement.net](http://www.adaptivemanagement.net) or contact Barbara Stinson at [bstinson@merid.org](mailto:bstinson@merid.org).

## Resources

*This spring, a number of our projects produced interim and final reports. These efforts were a long-time in the making, and we applaud the parties and sponsors for their diligence and commitment to creating collaborative outcomes.*

### Superfund

The final report of the Superfund Subcommittee of the EPA National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT) has been forwarded to the full NACEPT Committee and made available to the public. The Subcommittee, consisting of 32 members drawn from very diverse interests and backgrounds, was convened by EPA to address three critical issues facing the Superfund program: the role of the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL), how best to address large, complex (mega) Superfund sites, and approaches that can be used to measure the Program's performance and progress. The Subcommittee's final report contains 17 consensus recommendations as well as in-depth

discussion of a number of other issues where the Subcommittee held diverse views. Meridian partnered in the management and facilitation of this project with staff from Ross and Associates Environmental Consulting. The final report is available through the EPA website [www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/naceptdocs/NACEPTsuperfund-Final-Report.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/naceptdocs/NACEPTsuperfund-Final-Report.pdf)

### Ocean Policy

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released a preliminary report in April calling on Congress and President Bush to establish a new national ocean policy that balances use with sustainability, is based on sound science and educational excellence, and moves toward an ecosystem-based management approach. The diverse 16 member Commission was appointed by the President in 2000 to develop recommendations for a comprehensive national ocean policy. The last comprehensive review of U.S. Ocean Policy was conducted 35 years ago. Meridian has provided process guidance to the Commission and its staff since 2002.

### Coal Bed Methane

In April, the Western Governors' Association released *Coal Bed Methane Best Management Practices, a Handbook*. The Handbook was developed through a collaborative effort involving approximately 40 people from diverse perspectives (industry, environmental and conservation organizations, landowner representatives, State and Federal agencies, tribal groups, and other interested parties). The group developed best management practices on a range of controversial issues related to coal bed methane (CBM) development in the Rocky Mountain west, including produced water management, fisheries and wildlife protection, landowner relations, and infrastructure. Meridian facilitated the development of the Handbook in partnership with WGA staff. The Handbook is available at [www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/coalbed/index.htm](http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/coalbed/index.htm)

## Resources (continued)

### Sustainable Forests

In March 2004, the U.S. Forest Service published the *National Report on Sustainable Forests—2003*, which represents the U.S.'s first step towards implementation of the internationally agreed upon Montreal Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for Temperate and Boreal Forests. The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests, a multi-stakeholder dialogue that Meridian has facilitated since its 1998 inception, organized a series of technical workshops to assess potential sources of data with which to populate the C&I framework, as well as a series of review workshops to provide stakeholder feedback on earlier drafts of the *National Report*. The report is an important milestone in that it establishes a baseline for further measurement toward the goal of sustainable forest management on our nation's public and private lands and provides a common framework for enhanced public dialogue and decision-making. Free CD copies of the report may be ordered at the Roundtable's website, [www.sustainableforests.net](http://www.sustainableforests.net)



*The Meridian Institute Team at our January 2004 Staff Retreat in Keystone, Colorado.*

## People

### Meridian Team Welcomes New Member

Meridian has added a new team member to its Washington, DC office. For a complete profile of the Meridian team, click on <http://madison.merid.org/meridian/home.nsf/staff>.

**Yasmin Abdullah** is a *Project Coordinator* in the Washington, DC office, where she supports several projects. Yasmin's background is in event planning, as she spent several years planning functions for a Maryland-based national residential remodeler. She is originally from Atlanta, Georgia, but currently calls New Carrollton, Maryland, home. Yasmin enjoys spending time with her family, particularly her two nephews, and reading mysteries. Always on the lookout for how to make her events more exciting, she is an avid cook book collector and reader of local travel books.

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