

mental degradation, then, there just "is nothing distinctively national about the causes, harms, or solutions."

Attempts to link environmental threats with national security, Deudney notes, may partly stem from a desire to have people respond to those threats with a sense of urgency. And it is true, he says, that "the national security mentality engenders an enviable sense of urgency, and a corresponding willingness to accept great personal sacrifice. Unfortunately, these emotions may be difficult to sustain." Cycles of alarm and complacency are not likely "to establish permanent patterns of

environmentally sound behavior, and 'crash' solutions are often bad ones." For example, he says, the energy crisis of the 1970s "spawned such white elephants as the proposed synfuels program, the 'energy mobilization board,' and a Byzantine system of price controls."

"Intense nationalism" Deudney maintains, directly conflicts with a sensible environmental outlook. "Thinking of the environment as a national security problem risks undercutting the sense of world community and common fate that may be necessary to solve the [environmental] problem."

Swamp Monster

"The Swamp Thing" by Rick Henderson, in *Reason* (Apr. 1991), Reason Foundation, 2716 Ocean Park Blvd., Ste. 1062, Santa Monica, Calif. 90405.

When the Carter administration set out in 1977 to combat destruction of U.S. wetlands, there was not much question about what lands were to be protected. *Wetlands* were areas so often flooded or saturated with ground water that they would normally support "vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." Only "aquatic areas"—swamps, marshes, and bogs—qualified. And they deserved protection. Wetlands are home to about one-third of the animals on the endangered species list, and they also reduce flood damage, act as natural filters for ground water, and check soil erosion. But during the 1980s, the federal government vastly expanded its definition. Now, says Henderson, assistant managing editor of *Reason*, most of the eastern United States and two-fifths of drought-stricken California qualify as "wetlands."

The definition's enlargement occurred when guidelines developed by the Army Corps of Engineers to help distinguish between plants that grow in wet soils and those that grow in dry soils, evolved into the 126-page *Federal Manual for Identifying and Delineating Jurisdictional Wetlands*. Instead of being defined by the functions they performed, wetlands came to be defined by "technical factors": the soil's wetness, its chemical properties, and the

varieties of plants that grow in it. "Theoretically, land is supposed to meet... three criteria before it's declared a wetland," Henderson notes, "but the burden of proof is on the landowner. And the parameters are extremely elastic." Land that is inundated for just one week a year, for example, is now deemed a wetland.

Bernard Goode, who helped develop the wetlands manual, told Henderson that each agency involved in developing the new definition made it as broad as possible. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service, for instance, included soils moist enough to impede crop growth—but not necessarily saturated or flooded—as wetland soils. And the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Henderson says, "insisted that facultative vegetation—plant life which by definition appears in uplands as often as in wetlands—be included as a wetland-defining parameter."

The broad definition of wetlands makes the job of environmental regulators easier. But if the definition is strictly followed, Henderson warns, it "will make millions of acres of private property unusable and require huge tax-dollar payouts to compensate property owners." One real-estate developer whose property was designated a wetland was awarded \$2.6 million in compensation last year.