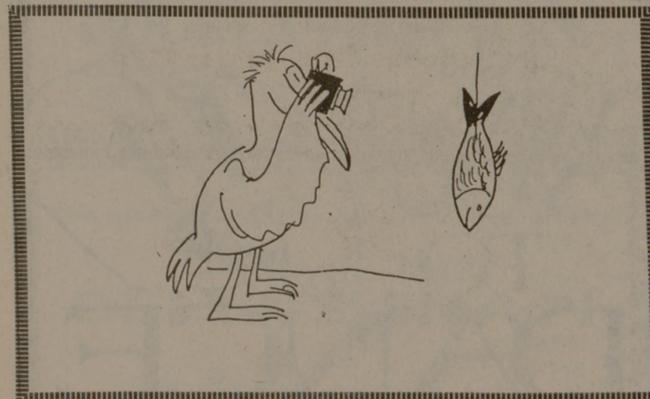


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EPA scraps regulating radiation

United Press International
 WASHINGTON — Citing what was termed a "trivial" increased risk of cancer, the Environmental Protection Agency Tuesday threw out plans to regulate airborne radiation emitted from facilities such as nuclear weapons plants.

On the last day it could act under a federal court order, the agency withdrew proposed regulations for radio-nuclide emissions from phosphorous plants, Department of Energy facilities, Nuclear Regulatory Commission licensed facilities, other federal facilities and underground uranium mines.

The decision, EPA officials said, was based on a determination that there currently was an "ample margin of safety" to protect the public near the facilities from cancer.

"In our judgment, the risk is a relatively trivial risk," said EPA Assistant Administrator Joseph Cannon.

The Sierra Club disagreed, however, and said it would appeal the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals. A spokeswoman said the environmental group would also file suit in U.S. District Court seeking to find EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus in contempt of the original court order.

That order, issued in U.S. District Court in San Francisco, gave the EPA until Tuesday to make final its plans to regulate the radio-nuclide emissions under the Clean Air Act.

Cannon, the EPA's chief air pollution official, said the agency believed it was acting legally in withdrawing the proposed regulations. "The order said 'You make a decision by such and such a date,' and we made a decision," he said.

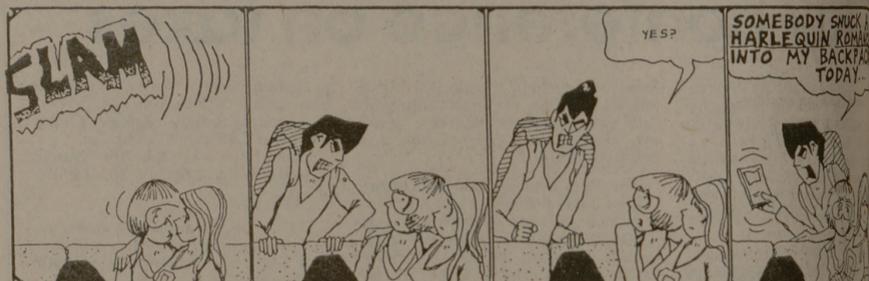
However, Brooks Yeager, the Washington representative of the Sierra Club, argued the court order meant that either the final regulations be issued, or that the low-level radiation be found not to be hazardous.

Cannon said the EPA was not issuing a final determination on whether the emissions were harmful, noting "we're not closing the book."

"I honestly don't think this represents a retreat," Cannon said. "I don't think this is a backing away from a health-risk standard."

Warped

by Scott McCulloch



SHOE

by Jeff MacNeil



Whooping cranes return to Texas

United Press International
 AUSTWELL — The first of the last wild flock of whooping cranes is expected to arrive this week on the South Texas coast where officials are trying to determine if the rare birds' winter habitat is threatened by oil and grease deposits.

"They should be showing up any day," said Kenneth Schwindt, assistant manager of the Aransas Wildlife Refuge. The refuge attracts thousands of people each winter seeking a glimpse of the 5-foot tall birds.

Schwindt said three whoopers were spotted flying over an Oklahoma refuge on Oct. 1 and one was spotted at a Kansas refuge on Oct. 3. But rainy weather the last part of last week and first part of this week has kept Aransas officials from flying

to the 54,828-acre refuge to look for the early arrivals.

Meanwhile, Schwindt said laboratory tests were underway in Pasadena, to determine whether oil and grease sediment discovered in the Intercoastal Waterway has gotten into the whoopers' habitat or into their favorite food — shrimp and crabs.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Department took samples from throughout the habitat last month after the U.S. Corps of Engineers discovered oil and grease residue during a dredging operation of the waterway which cuts through the refuge.

Frank Johnson, manager of the refuge, said he was optimistic the contamination was confined to the deeper water of the channel, noting

that the cranes stay mostly in water under 18 inches deep.

Last spring 73 cranes left Aransas on their annual 2,600-mile migration to Canada's Wood Buffalo National Park, and Aransas officials have reports that 19 cranes were hatched.

But because some of the cranes might have been lost to predators, Aransas officials say they do not know the size of the flock and the birds have arrived for the

Officials estimate that more than 140 whooping cranes are worldwide since their nesting grounds in Iowa, Minnesota and Dakotas were turned into farmland. Their wintering areas of the west also were displaced by agriculture and industry.

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