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Mark Tapscott: When journalists become Big Green's spinmeisters

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By: [Mark Tapscott](#)
Editorial Page Editor
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Many Gloucester, Mass., residents depend on commercial fishing, so it's not surprise they have little patience with the almost uniformly negative media coverage in recent years suggesting the entire marine ecosystem is about to collapse due to the industry.

Nancy Gaines, a Gloucester Times reporter who recently analyzed that coverage, made some shocking discoveries about a cozy little Iron Triangle among well-known reporters, Big Green environmental scientists whose findings they regularly report, and funding by foundations that share the movement's ideological agenda.

"The journalists are wined and dined by the advocates and hired to train the scientists to use the media to advance their message," Gaines reported. "The journalists, in turn, call on those same scientists as sources when writing about the advocates and their agenda."

In 2002, for example, the Pew Charitable Trust flew a group of elite scientists and reporters from the New York Times, the Economist, Time, U.S. News & World Report, and other prestigious publications to the island of Bonaire in the Caribbean for five days of fun in the sun.

Once there, they could "loll on the island's fine beaches, sip cocktails at the Tippy Seagull and perhaps marvel at the flamingoes for which Bonaire is famous," Grimes wrote.

But there was an agenda for the gathering, too. Among the attending scientists was Daniel Pauly, author of "Aquacalypse Now: The End of Fish," and head of a fisheries center at the University of British Columbia that received \$15 million from Pew.

Following the Bonaire junket, Tom Hayden (no relation to the radical activist formerly married to Jane Fonda) of U.S. News & World Report, wrote a cover story in the magazine, "Fished Out," that strongly supported the idea that commercial fishing is destroying the oceans' fish populations.

The article quoted 14 sources, including Pauly and another Pew-funded scientist who went snorkeling with Hayden on Bonaire, according to Pew's scheduled program. Thirteen of the 14 sources Hayden quoted in the article received Pew funding, directly or indirectly. The other quoted source was a restaurant chef.

Hayden did not disclose that Pew paid for his trip to the Caribbean or that Pew funded all but one of his sources. Even so, his article continues to influence debate on commercial fishing's alleged impact on the environment. In March of 2009, the Pew Charitable Trust started a nationwide public relations campaign against overfishing.

One of the scientists whose research was cited by the Pew PR campaign and in Hayden's article was Oregon State University professor Jane Lubchenco, a Pew fellow, member of the Pew Oceans Commission and of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative that evolved from it. Obama appointed her as director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 2009.

The Packard Foundation gave \$2.1 million for Lubchenco's Aldo Leopold Leadership Program, which she started in 1997. She says scientists must lead politicians and the public to create a world that is "ecologically sound, economically feasible and socially just."

Her ALLP trains selected scientists to use talking points with reporters. Among the trainers for ALLP are current and former newspaper and broadcast journalists, as well as current and former White House and congressional staff members.

Mark Tapscott is editorial page editor of The Washington Examiner and proprietor of Tapscott's CopyDesk blog on washingtonexaminer.com

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