

and delisting as failure,” says Environmental Defense Wildlife Chair Michael Bean, one of the study’s two authors. “Such an all-or-nothing assessment classifies the 50 percent of now stable or improving species as failures and ignores 30 years of improvement.” By this standard, the bald eagle, which has rebounded from fewer than 400 breeding pairs in the 1960s to more than 8,000 breeding pairs today, would be considered a failure because it has not yet been removed from the list of threatened species.

The study’s authors feel that the Endangered Species Act is doing its job. Tim Male, senior ecologist at Environmental Defense and coauthor of the study says, “When given the resources they need, species are fighting their way back from the brink.”

—Environmental Defense news release, 11 August. (M.P.)

## **SCHOOLS ASSIGNED A SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT**

Washington state public schools will go green this year, following Governor Christine Gregoire’s decision to sign into legislation the Washington Sustainable Schools Program (WSSP). The law requires new K–12 schools that receive state funds to attain the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED Silver Standard or to meet the WSSP protocol, which addresses aspects of planning, water and energy efficiency, materials, and indoor environmental quality for high-performance buildings.

In an effort to inform the legislation, five Washington School Districts—Bethel, Northshore, Olympia,

Spokane, and Tacoma—undertook pilot projects in the fall of 2004. The schools explored the impacts of more innovative HVAC systems and other energy-saving features as well as rain gardens, soil amendments, and other technologies to promote on-site stormwater infiltration and treatment. For example, the Olympia School District pilot study found that radiant floor hydronic (hot water) heating demonstrated annual energy cost savings of 7 percent, an 83 percent reduction in maintenance costs, and life-cycle savings of \$196,000 compared to baseboard hydronic heating. In addition, the district estimated a 32 percent life-cycle cost reduction from using water-efficient toilets, urinals, and other indoor plumbing at its Washington Middle School.

The Bethel School District studied the impact of energy-efficient lighting, heating, cooling, controls, and building envelope (everything that separates the interior from the exterior) at a school under construction and found that these elements would reduce total energy use by 30 percent.

Pilot studies in neighboring districts demonstrated benefits from using daylight-responsive lighting controls, geothermal heating systems, and displacement ventilation, which introduces cool air at floor level instead of at ceiling level.

A total of \$6.5 million was allotted to help initiate statewide implementation of WSSP, with a limit of \$250,000 per elementary school, \$350,000 per middle school, and \$500,000 per high school.

—BetterBricks news release, May. (S.B.)

## **In Brief ...**

A report commissioned by the Australian government found that temperatures there may increase 0.4–2°C by 2030 and 1–6°C by 2070. As a result, bushfires and heat waves may become more prevalent, and the number of frosts may decline. Other possibilities include sea level rise, increased cyclonic wind speeds, and annual rainfall reductions as severe as 20 percent by 2030. —ABC News (Australia), 27 July (<http://www.abc.net.au/science/news/stories/s1423223.htm>); and <http://www.greenhouse.gov.au/impacts/publications/pubs/risk-vulnerability-summary.pdf>. (D.H.)

By the end of this year, Cyprus is expected to launch a pilot program introducing liquid biofuels for vehicles from grain, potatoes, and fruits.

According to Georgios Roditis of the Applied Energy Centre of Cyprus’s Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the national target will be to replace 1 percent of the annual 650,000 metric tons of fossil fuels it consumes each year with biofuels.

—Planet Ark/Reuters, 27 July. (S.B.)

A gang of poachers responsible for devastating Nepal’s rhinoceros population has been caught. Responding to a tip-off to conservation officials, Nepalese police arrested the eight rhino poachers, who were selling the animals’ horns for massive sums. At the time of arrest, kingpin Pemba Lama Gurung had in his possession a rhino horn and the equivalent of US\$6,300 in currency.

—WorldWide Fund for Nature press release, 29 July. (S.B.)