

Give Greenpeace a Chance

By now the trials and tribulations that have befallen **Greenpeace USA** in recent years are well-known. In the biggest blowup, the entire board resigned after bickering with **Greenpeace International**-backed Executive Director **Kristen Engberg** over the direction and organization of the redoubtable environmental group.

Current and former staffers [ranted about Engberg's leadership style](#), which they described as based on intimidation. Engberg loyalists within the organization [disputed that characterization](#).

But now Engberg is history and there is a new sheriff coming to town: 38-year-old **John Passacantando**, who is hoping to bring his whole shoot-from-the-hip, guerrilla-organizing **Ozone Action** team with him.

The specifics of the merger between Ozone Action and Greenpeace USA are still being worked out, but rumor has it that Passacantando, generally regarded as a pretty nice guy, has offered solid buyout offers to entice all his troops to make the trek into the larger (and possibly more bureaucratic) Greenpeace world.

One natural question: Is this guy nuts? Why would Passacantando leave a small, but thriving, enviro shop that gets good media play, raises money easily, and runs effective grassroots campaigns to take over a once great, but more recently staggering, behemoth?

"My sense is that many of the problems are gone," Passacantando explains. "The financial problems are certainly gone. They have lost a lot of people, but I think things have stabilized."

The buzz in enviro circles is that Passacantando is just what Greenpeace needs: a creative, energetic guy who can smooth away the fear and loathing that have run rampant in the organization of late.

"It's sort of like my two best friends getting married," says **Kalee Kreider**, a Greenpeace alum who worked for Passacantando at Ozone Action before jumping over to run the global warming campaign at **National Environmental Trust**. She also warned that Passacantando is in for a big culture shock when he digs into his new job on Sept. 18.

"[Greenpeace] has a governmental structure, some very important external players, and an international organization that's funded by Germany, the U.K., the Netherlands, and the U.S. There really are a lot more players that have to be managed, so he won't just be able to focus on campaigns in the U.S."

None of that appears to worry Passacantando, who says he will not tamper much with the campaigns Greenpeace is currently running, particularly the high-profile efforts on toxics, climate change, forests, oceans, and disarmament.

"All in all, I can tell you, [Greenpeace] is ready to fly," he says. "That's the whole reason I think it's worth risking everything we've done at Ozone Action. ... These guys have historically been the greatest environmental organization of all time. They still have a lot of talent and they still have a lot of potential."

So what does he plan to do differently?

"It's the whole tool kit you've always seen me work with: direct action, nontraditional partners, talking truth straight to power. ... I am going to be part of that place when it flies again and people are going to think, 'Wow, isn't that great?'"

That kind of giddy enthusiasm actually has some green group head honchos worried, not because they think Passacantando won't be able to right the Greenpeace ship, but because they fear he might steal

their deckhands to do it.

Not a Major League [Expletive Deleted]

We don't know whether **Adam Clymer**, the *New York Times* political reporter singled out for an (accidentally) public tongue-lashing from GOP presidential nominee **George W. Bush**, really is a "major league [gross anatomical reference]." But we are pretty sure that retiring *Times* science reporter **Bill Stevens** (known to readers as **William K.**) is not.

News of Stevens's departure from the *Times* was met with some sadness in green circles because of the dogged reporter's pivotal articles over the last decade that established, as only the Old Gray Lady can, that the scientific community by and large believes global warming is for real and not kooky, cooked-up hokum. Some enviros pointed in particular to a series that ran just before the Kyoto climate change conference in December 1997 as a blow to naysayers.

Stevens didn't ignore the global warming skeptics, but neither did he elevate them to the status of those who assert that human activities are pushing up temperatures worldwide.

Stevens steered clear of activists for the most part, preferring to stand on the firmer ground of science and out of the mucky world of politics, something his replacement, **Andrew Revkin**, seems less inclined to do.

"Bill always was persnickety," one leading enviro flak said. "He didn't like to quote environmental groups. ... But you have to give him his due on [Kyoto]."

Revkin, who formerly covered enviro issues in the New York region for the *Times* and is the author of a book entitled simply *Global Warming*, joins **Douglas Jehl**, who has been out covering wildfires of late, and **Matthew Wald** on the *Times's* national environment/energy/science beat, a triple threat that allows green flaks three swings at getting a story into the paper of record.

Hot Off the Greenwire

For activists, reporters, and political types (well, at least their interns), *Greenwire* is essential daily reading, a thorough update on all news environmental. The staff culls green stories from a staggering array of media sources and boils them down into chunks (some more digestible than others) -- all for a hefty subscription fee.

Now its future isn't fully clear.

National Journal, *Greenwire's* parent company, is preparing to sell the nine-year-old online publication to E&E Publishing, a small D.C. outfit that provides original reporting on environmental legislation and regulation. An E&E source would not comment on the purchase, saying details have not been finalized and paperwork has not been signed.

But some current and former *Greenwire* staffers, not to mention regular readers, wonder how many of the current staff members will make the move to E&E and whether E&E will even continue to publish the newsletter at all or will simply use the *Greenwire* marketing list to sell people on existing E&E publications. [Editor's note: *Grist* was founded and is run by two former *Greenwire* editors who managed to escape D.C.]

If E&E does continue to publish, but does not take many key staff, will it "get" what *Greenwire* does and how it does it?