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Bill Denneen
1040 Cielo Ln.
Nipomo, CA 93444-9039

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Docket No. 02-277 Don't abandon media safeguards!

Dear FCC Commissioners,

I strongly urge that the FCC abandon its plan to end long-standing and critical safeguards that have served as an important "check and balance" system to help ensure diversity of media ownership. Under the proposal you are considering, one company in a community will be able to own the newspaper, several TV and radio stations, the cable system, and the principal Internet access company. There will be fewer owners of networks, stations, and newspapers nationwide. This will very badly damage true media diversity and competition. A competitive and diverse media is absolutely essential to ensure an informed citizenry and a healthy and vibrant democracy.

Eliminating these last remaining protections of the public trust would constitute a complete abandonment of the FCC's mission to ensure that our airwaves, which are owned by all Americans, are used in a manner which ensures the diverse range of voices and opinions needed in a healthy democracy. Loss of these protections would constitute a huge and unacceptable giveaway of public resources and political power to a few large and powerful media companies.

Further consolidation of the media in the false name of "deregulation" must be halted and in fact reversed. TV and radio news in the hands of a handful of profit-driven corporations has undermined our democracy more than any other modern force except the high cost of broadcast commercials during elections. The media companies have failed in their public trust to provide crucial unbiased information to the public about most public issues. Americans depend upon the media to bring us information that will allow us to make the informed choices necessary for the well-being of our nation and our future.

As an American concerned about our democracy, I urge you to reject the current proposal to abandon the last remaining controls on media consolidation. Instead, I strongly urge you to break up the media conglomerates, to open the spectrum to a wide diversity of organizations and independent journalists, and to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine.

Most sincerely,

Bill Denneen



William L. Denneen
1040 Cielo Ln
Nipomo CA 93444

Bill Denneen: American Rivers member and river activist extraordinaire

American Rivers member Bill Denneen is a jack-of-all-trades when it comes to working to protect his local creek and surrounding wetlands, using the pen, the Internet, and some creative marketing to get his message out. While many people share his determination to help protect the environment, what makes Bill Denneen unique is his age — he's 77 years old.

Denneen, a former biology professor who now resides near the California coast

about 200 miles north of Los Angeles, works diligently to protect his community's environment but also saves plenty of time to get out kayaking, hiking, and running.

One of his missions is to protect Oso Flaco Creek and its surrounding watershed, a former outlet for the Santa Maria River, which Denneen has seen deteriorate during the past 40 years and is now one of the most polluted bodies of water in his area. With water quality standards for clarity, bacteria, and other reaching as much as 15 times the state maximum, Denneen took action. He placed letters-to-the-editor in two local newspapers and created a postcard showing Oso Flaco's ugly face (shown at right), urging recipients to contact the state fish and game department.

Denneen also maintains 25 separate email list serves for contacting activists about different subjects. When an important event takes place or is about to happen, he sends out a message encouraging people to edit and forward a sample letter to decisionmakers.

One reason for Denneen's dogmatic activism is the fact that more than 90 percent of California's wetlands have been lost. He feels that protecting our rivers, lakes, and creeks takes the work of numerous parties.

"Environmentalists have an obligation to point where we are headed," he wrote in a recent op-ed. "Our government has an obligation to protect these resources.

Governmental agencies must then protect our precious wetlands."

Denneen also operates a farm hostel at his home (where lodgers can stay in exchange for a few hours of work each day) and organizes weekly expeditions through

the area's vast natural areas that often include philosophizing and Henry David Thoreau readings. Bill Denneen's website is Slonet.org/~bdenneen. **(BDENNEEN@SLONET.ORG)**

To learn more about how you can become an activist in your community or online, visit

<http://amriversaction.ctsg.com/wac/>

