

INSIDE

Comics B4-5

Business B7

Weddings B8-9

The News-Times

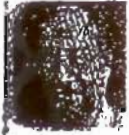
## LOCAL/STATE

B1

.TURDAY

November 8, 2008

NewsTimes.com



Robert  
Miller  
STAFF WRITER  
COMMENTARY

# Water is the new oil

As the famous photos of Earth taken from space show, we are a planet where water rules.

"You can tie any environmental issue back to water," said Shawn Sweeney, national coordinator of the Roots & Shoots program started by primatologist Jane Goodall to raise environmental awareness around the watery globe.

But increasingly in many parts of the world, clean drinkable water is becoming scarce. That's true in cities we think of as grand, and places where the desert is spreading.

"Shanghai is a city with something like 19 million people," said Howard Russock, a professor of animal behavior at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury.

"Nobody can drink the water there. It's not just a matter of western visitors with delicate stomachs. If you're poor in Shanghai, you boil your water. If you're rich, you buy bottled water."

Which means that water is becoming increasingly valuable. "Clean water will be the new oil," Russock said.

The issues of diminishing water supplies in an era of climate change, the competition for water where there's a limited supply, and the move by huge multi-national corporations to buy water rights around the world will be discussed Sunday at WestConn in a Symposium "Water in Our World: Finding a Drop to Drink."

The symposium will feature Goodall, along with Larry Marsicano, executive director of the Candlewood Lake Authority, and Charles Kukuk, a professor of political science at WestConn.

It will begin at 6 p.m. in White Hall on the university's midtown campus, White Street and Fifth Avenue, and is free and open to the public.

For Goodall, Sweeney said, the issue of water scarcity is one she sees in her travels around the world.

"It's something she's very passionate about," he said.

For those who live in New England — where clean water is plentiful and where there's plenty of rain — it may seem far less urgent.

But there is a fly in our ointment. A huge multi-national company — Suez Energy North America — now owns the five hydroelectric plants along the Housatonic River, and the three big lakes — Candle-

## Water is new oil

Continued from Page B1

wood, Lillinonah and Zoar — they create.

Suez also owns a 35 percent share of Suez Environment, which, in turn, owns United Water Co. in New Milford.

Kukuk, who wrote his 2001 doctoral dissertation on multinationals' purchase of water resources and the privatization of water, said this is becoming increasingly common, and increasingly ominous.

In some countries, such as Bolivia, there have been protests and street riots over water rights.

"In British Columbia, they've outlawed the



Robert  
Miller  
STAFF WRITER  
COMMENTARY

sale of their water to the United States," he said.

On our green-blue planet, it's water that determines what lives and what dies, Kukuk said.

"Humans can go for a month without food, about seven days without water," he said. "We can live without oil. We can live without corn. But we can't do without water."

Contact Robert Miller at [bmiller@newstimes.com](mailto:bmiller@newstimes.com) or at (203) 731-3345.

▶ WATER, PAGE B3