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Letters

Reemphasizing Rainier's risk

I was both pleased and saddened to see the article on the hazards of Mt. Rainier ("Mount Rainier threatens with fire and ice," SN: 5/28/94, p.341). Pleased, since it confirms what I learned while preparing a land-use study for the Puyallup River Basin for Pierce County in the late 1980s. Saddened, since I know what a daunting task it will be to convince the local powers that a real hazard exists.

The river valleys are beautiful, fertile land with old, well-settled towns in them. Trying to convince politicians, or even the county engineer, that there is a real chance that those valleys could be bulldozed by a 60-foot wall of liquid concrete, leaving a 30-foot layer of dirt behind, is a monumental task. Besides, a host of condominium developers would individually and collectively apply every pressure to overturn any restriction on development of such great property.

No doubt the only real answer is pressure

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Cover: Two emus owned by Zoann Parker, Penn State Cooperative Extension agent. These animals belong to an order of birds known as ratites, and raising ratites is becoming a burgeoning agribusiness. The birds — ostriches, emus, and rheas — produce a lean red meat ranchers are hoping will rival beef. But some critics think the big birds will be a big bust. (Photo: Brian McLaughlin)



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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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from the federal government, but the lawyers have contorted effective regulation into such a bureaucratic nightmare that there's really little hope of saving those tens of thousands of lives in Orting, Sumner, Puyallup, and the densely settled unincorporated areas.

Arthur L. Hamilton
Oroville, Wash.

Info highway: Healthy hodgepodge

"Guiding the growth of the info highway" (SN: 6/4/94, p.357) suggests that "a hodgepodge of computer vendors, service providers, and communications companies" lacks a chief architect and a basic blueprint for the information infrastructure. Not so! We, their customers, and company profits are the architects and supply the blueprints. The hodgepodge listens well.

I subscribe to one of the hodgepodge and have an ever-widening gateway to Internet and more multilingual, international light, sound, and action services than I can digest. All this for less than the cost of a second phone. The

last thing we need is "for the government to articulate a vision. . . ." By the time they can say "National Research Council study committee," the hodgepodge will be another three generations ahead.

My advice to the government: Relax, watch technology grow, don't try to fund or regulate it. Just let the subscribers and users continue to guide it.

Bruce McCarroll
Boulder City, Nev.

Computer professionals and business people alike should write to their representatives in Congress and to the President, asking the government to stay out of the information business and to clear the regulatory obstacles preventing its free development. The alternative is an information infrastructure run with the efficiency of Congress and the U.S. Post Office, while the future Internets of the world are trampled into oblivion by bureaucrats.

Henry Blaskowski
Apple Valley, Minn.

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