



Strategic Plan

May 2006

Mission Statement

The American Society for Environmental History (ASEH), founded in 1977, seeks to promote scholarship and teaching in environmental history, to support the professional needs of its members, and to connect its undertakings with larger communities. The ASEH aspires to advance a greater understanding of the history of human interaction with the rest of the natural world; to foster dialogue between humanistic scholarship, environmental science, and other disciplines; and to support global environmental history efforts that benefit the public as well as the larger scholarly community. It promotes these activities through publication of the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental History*, annual conferences, scholarly awards, on-line discussions, conversation with other professional societies, and public outreach.

Introduction

The ASEH will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in 2007. Our organization has attained intellectual and professional maturity during the last three decades, as demonstrated in our quarterly journal, annual conferences, and other activities. As our thirtieth anniversary approaches, this seems a good time to assess our current status and to develop our first long-term strategic plan. ASEH's Development Committee drafted this plan in early 2006 to articulate our goals and to chart a course into the future. We will circulate this plan among the membership, asking for input, and will revise it as needed by the end of 2006 so that we can move forward with a shared vision. Our hope is that future Development Committees will update this plan annually as a rolling five-year strategy.

The following plan is presented in three sections. The first provides background, along with a summary of organizational strengths that will help us continue to promote our mission. The second section lists specific goals, strategies, and tasks. The third section summarizes financial information, including annual income and expenses.

Section I: About ASEH

Membership

By 2006, the ASEH had attracted approximately 1,000 individual members and 500 library subscribers. Individual memberships have increased slowly since 1998, growing by 100 people in an eight-year period. Most individual members are associated with universities, although our membership also includes secondary teachers and public historians working in museums, archives, government agencies, and consulting companies. From the outset, we have regarded environmental history as an inherently global subject. While most members reside on the United States, our membership includes more than 100 people living in other countries, and many members residing in the US have research interests that extend beyond its borders.

We publish a quarterly journal, *Environmental History*, jointly with The Forest History Society. A survey conducted by ASEH in 2001 revealed that most members consider receipt of the journal to be a primary benefit of membership, with professional growth, support of ASEH, and receipt of *ASEH News* ranking next in priority.

Organizational Strengths

Affiliations

While there are other organizations devoted to environmental education and scholarship, the ASEH is one of the oldest and largest devoted to the study of environmental history. It is affiliated with the International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations (ICE-HO), European Society for Environmental History (ESEH), and the newly formed La Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribena de Historia Ambiental (SOCHA). The ASEH has been a member of the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History since 1999 and a member of the American Council of Learned Societies since 2004.

Journal

ASEH's quarterly journal, *Environmental Review*, began publication in 1977, continuing as *Environmental History Review* in 1990, and as *Environmental History* (with the FHS) in 1996. In 2003, a fifth article was added to the journal, along with a new feature called "Gallery" that examines images important in environmental history. We plan to add a sixth article in 2007. The journal is available online through History Cooperative, which features issues from January 2003 through October 2005.

Conferences

The ASEH's conferences have been well attended, attracting one-third to half the membership by the early 21st century. We held our first conference in 1982 at U.C. Irvine, and from that point met every two years in a different city. By the year 2000 attendance had reached sufficient numbers to warrant the move to annual meetings. Typically, ASEH conferences attract from 350 – 450 attendees, and our speakers have included Jared Diamond, Pulitzer-prize winning journalists, and a scholar from The History Channel. In 2004 we met in British Columbia with the National Council on Public History – a conference that attracted more than 700 people. We

have met jointly with the Forest History Society as well, most recently in St. Paul – a meeting that attracted more than 500 people.

Grants

In 2002, the ASEH established 11 travel grants for graduate students, low-income scholars, and international scholars to attend its annual meetings. A travel grant for minority scholars was also established – and these grants of \$500 each are awarded annually. A research grant, named for Samuel P. Hayes, was also founded in 2002, and will be awarded at a future date.

Awards

The ASEH began recognizing excellence in scholarship in 1989, when the best book prize was established. Since that time, a prize for the best dissertation, the best article appearing in *Environmental History*, and the best article appearing in another journal were added, and beginning in 1999, all have been awarded on an annual basis. Our Executive Committee also awards prizes for distinguished scholarship and service, on an episodic basis.

Committees

The ASEH has established 12 committees devoted to award evaluation, conference planning, outreach, publications, and its website. All relate to scholarship, education, and dissemination of information.

Vanguard and Money Market Funds

In 2006, the ASEH had Vanguard and Money Market accounts amounting to \$284,550.79. The amount in these accounts has increased more than \$100,000 since the year 2000.

In summary, a review of the ASEH's organizational strengths reveals that while we are still fairly cash poor we are rich in intellectual capital. Accordingly, our long-term strategy will be to substitute mind for money where we can, to leverage what we have in abundance to produce more benefits for our members. The goals listed below are designed to expand our presence and service to members– and many do not require sustained fund-raising.

Section II: Goals and Tasks

The following section lists the primary goals, along with strategies and tasks to accomplish them. ASEH's executive director will review this list on a quarterly basis and will keep the president informed of progress. The executive committee will review and update the document at our annual meeting, noting tasks completed.

Goal 1: Formalize the Budget

Task 1: Reorganize the existing funds to express better current intentions and track the annual flow of money.

Task 2: Establish an endowment large enough to support the executive director position at 5% annual interest. The initial fund will begin with \$100,000.

Task 3: Create a mechanism for planned giving.

Task 4: Concentrate fund-raising on specific tasks in the strategic plan [See Goal #8 below]

Task 5: Establish investment guidelines, including moving funds to green investments.

Goal 2: Move the Executive Director Position to Full-time

Task 1: Establish a committee to recommend how to appoint a full-time director by January 2007.

Task 2: Consult with executive committee and vote.

Goal 3: Review the Grant and Award Programs

Task 1: Appoint committee to make recommendations for travel grants; approve by Baton Rouge meeting.

Task 2: The Development Committee will explore ways to increase the Samuel P. Hays Research Grant, which currently receives \$1,000 annually. The Development Committee will also draft a plan and schedule for awarding this grant.

Task 3: Consider and launch an endowed research prize (Hal Rothman Award for graduate students).

Task 4: Review and formalize procedures for selecting Distinguished Scholar and Service Awards.

Goal 4: Improve Membership Services

Task 1: Expand Website

The executive director will work with the hired programmer to create a searchable membership directory – one that is accessible, unlike the current FHS membership database, which includes ASEH members. This password-protected directory will be available to members only.

The executive director will work with the hired programmer to create polling capabilities to be activated by the president and Executive Committee approximately four times/year. This password-protected function will be available to members only.

The executive director will work with the hired programmer to create online voting system, to be activated for members beginning in 2007.

Task 2: Expand "Resources" section of the website

The executive director will work with the H-Environment editors to update the list of environmental history programs, course syllabi, and bibliographies posted on ASEH's website.

The Executive Committee will explore ways to expand the "Resources" section of the website, including links to fellows, grants, and internships of interest..

Task 3: Devise ways to simplify duties and expedite work of program and local arrangements committees

Task 4: Post all back issues of EH on-line; organize a fund-raising campaign

The executive director will work with the FHS to post back issues of the journal online, preferably on History Cooperative.

Goal 5: Improve Outreach

The ASEH member survey from 2001 indicated an interest in reaching out to other disciplines, and the newly formed Outreach Committee is exploring exchanging panels with other societies and holding workshops with other societies on themes and in places that reach beyond what our annual meetings can do.

Task 1: The Outreach Committee and 2007 Program Committee will pursue the idea of exchanging sessions with the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) and History of Science Society (HSS), offering them panels at the Baton Rouge conference. Subsequent program committees will continue with this task.

Task 2: The Outreach Committee and future Program Committees will talk with the Society for Conservation Biology about the possibility of contributing an ASEH panel to an overseas meeting.

Task 3: The Outreach Committee will look for opportunities to send ASEH delegates to meetings of interest. Specifically, this committee and the executive director will follow up on the Santa Barbara Summit on Environmental Studies in 2006, reporting to the Executive Committee and the membership.

Task 4: The local arrangements chair and executive director will continue to submit press releases on the annual meeting to local newspapers in the conference city. They will set up a press conference at the meeting for

the president and, if appropriate, the keynote speaker and other ASEH members from the roster of environmental experts developed by the Outreach Committee.

Task 5: Create roster of experts, linked to website, as sources for contact by journalists or others.

Task 6: Investigate how other societies handle policy positions and outreach that verge on advocacy. (Nancy Langston has volunteered to do this.)

Task 7: Continue contacts with evolving Organization for Environmental Studies to explore and build upon common concerns.

Task 8: Improve global connections, through ICE-HO and other institutions. Support world environmental history conference in 2009.

Task 9: Press Releases

With the assistance of the Publications Committee, the executive director will send press releases to selected publications several times throughout the year, to provide information on award winning books and articles and to report on major activities of members.

The executive director will distribute copies of the journal to selected publications and conferences recommended by the Publications Committee.

Task 10 : Add "Links" Section to Website

The Website Committee will develop a list of links and resources for use by environmental educators (secondary school teachers?).

Task 11: Coordinate with Society of Environmental Journalists to develop panels or workshops at both our conferences.

Goal 6: Increase Diversity

Task 1: The president will appoint a three-person committee devoted to this issue.

Task 2: The Diversity Committee and executive director will work with the Program Committee to distribute the Call for Papers and ensure paper and panel submissions pertaining to this issue. For the Baton Rouge conference, we will encourage paper and panel submissions exploring connections between environmental history and the work of historians of African American history, Southern history, and agricultural history as well as environmental justice.

Task 3: The committee and executive director will explore fundraising possibilities to diversify attendance at our meetings.

Goal 7: Strengthen Graduate Student Programs

Task 1: Strengthen Graduate Student Liaison Program.

Task 2: Explore Possibility of Assisting with Internships (re: Tom Dunlap's proposal).

Task 3: Examine Possibility of Graduate Research Awards (see Goal 3 above).

Goal 8: Provide Administrative and Financial Support

While the ASEH has operated successfully for three decades mostly on volunteer labor, we recognize that our new goals will require considerable administrative and financial support. It is difficult for any organization to raise money for operations, and our plan is to use the administrative support of the executive director to increase revenue by finding ways to fund services to members. The idea here is not to fund the executive director position directly, but to bring in additional revenue overall, so that our revenue exceeds our expenses.

Task 1: Increase Individual Memberships

The president will appoint a Membership Committee of three people to explore this issue.

The Executive Committee will initiate a membership drive beginning in 2007, asking all members to recruit one person.

Task 2: Establish Institutional Memberships and Sponsorships

The executive director will work with the Executive Committee and the FHS to identify and recruit institutional sponsors for ASEH. While we counted libraries among our members in 2005, for instance, we had no companies or organizations as members or sponsors of ASEH.

Task 3: Increase Advertising

The executive director will work with the FHS to increase advertising in the journal.

The executive director will solicit presses for advertising in the newsletter and on the website.

Task 4: Submit Grant Applications

The executive director will work with the Program Committee chair to submit applications to the National Science Foundation and others to support workshops (panels?) at our conferences.

Task 5: Continue to Investigate Corporate Donations

The Development Committee, in consultation with the Executive Committee, will review the executive director's list of 250 "environmental" companies (derived from online research) to determine which to approach.

Task 6: Promote environmental history at other conferences, through exhibiting, making copies of the journal available, and other means.