



## Environmental Films Featured at Houston Conference

**By Joseph Taylor, Simon Fraser University, Houston Program Committee Chair**

ASEH's Program Committee will hold a mini-festival of environmental films next spring in Houston. We are featuring two films: *The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film*, and *Borderline Cases: Environmental Matters at the United States-Mexico Border*. Both will be aired in the Brown Auditorium of the Museum Fine Arts, adjacent to the conference center. Producers will be on hand to introduce films and later participate in panel discussions.

*The Greatest Good*, produced by the USDA Forest Service, is a two-part film, shot in High Definition digital video, which recounts the struggle to shape the content and meaning of American public forestry. The first hour traces the rise of conservation and its key forestry figures. The second hour explores contests to shape forestry management during the last half century. Throughout the producers make

extensive use of archival films and interviews, enhanced by dazzling, HD images of America's public forests.

*Borderline Cases*, produced by Lynn Corcoran, illustrates the vexing social and environmental problems that besieged border communities in the decades since passage of Mexico's *Maquilador* Program in 1965. Focusing on activists and urban planners along both side of the Mexico-U.S. border, the film reveals the insidious, transnational nature of industrial pollution in the Borderlands region, and the growing, often ingenious efforts to break the structural links between pollution and poverty.

The Program Committee is extremely pleased to show these films, and we only wish we could have included more in this year's program. We hope that strong attendance will ensure that this becomes an annual feature of ASEH meetings.

See page 4 for more information on the films.

### **The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial Film**

*USDA-Forest Service photo  
#F-59304 by W.J. Lubken,  
Forest History Society  
Collection.*



This film explores how the Forest Service's popularity has ebbed and flowed over the last century.

As one interview subject in the film says, "They've gone from wearing white hats to black hats in the public's mind." The film will be followed by a discussion of the changing perception of the Forest Service in the popular mind. Steve Dunsky and Dave Steinke, co-directors of the film, will be on hand to discuss the filmmaking process. Char Miller, a historian who has written extensively on the Forest Service and is the leading biographer of the first Forest Service chief, Gifford Pinchot, and Jeff LaLande, a historian with the U.S. Forest Service who has written about forest rangers in the popular media, will serve on the discussion panel following the showing of the film. For more information, see <http://www.fs.fed.us/greatestgood/index>.

### **Borderline Cases: Environmental Matters at the United States-Mexico Border**



This film explores the social and environmental consequences of the American-owned factories (*maquiladoras*) on the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Corcoran effectively presents the argument that corporate capital flight from the United States is not restricted to the pursuit of a lower cost labor but also serves as an escape from environmental regulations and enforcement – Recommended for anyone interested in the effects of corporate mobility and NAFTA." Terrence McCormack, SUNY Buffalo

Lynn Corcoran, producer, will discuss the film after the showing, along with a panel of government officials and community activists from both sides of the border.

For more information, see <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com>.

## From the President's Desk

In only a few short months we will gather in Houston for our annual conference. By then the Boston - St. Louis World Series and the presidential election will be history. Slowly, we will return to our customary pursuits, once again clearing our minds for serious intellectual efforts.

No sophisticated analysis is needed to remind us that, in contrast to bucolic, intimate "Vic," B.C., we meet this year in a bustling U.S. metropolis within whose precincts high-profile environmental justice conflicts were recently waged (over the siting of municipal incinerators, for example) and which can make a pretty strong claim to be an "energy capital" of the whole planet.

Thanks to the efforts of the Program Committee, chaired by Joseph "Jay" Taylor working closely with Kathleen Brosnan and her Local Arrangements Committee, this year's program, in addition to the usual smorgasbord of high-quality panels, will feature a number of special and commemorative events. Most of us have used Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* in our undergraduate and graduate environmental

history surveys. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the book's appearance gives us an opportunity to revisit its complex set of claims regarding the interplay between the Scientific Revolution, the emergence of modern capitalism, the evolution of gender roles, and the construction of new, cognitive understandings of the nature of humans and the nature of "nature." A distinguished panel will take up this challenge, and in the best traditions of academic give-and-take, Carolyn will be there to have her say.

Additionally, this year's conference will feature something completely novel: presentation of complete documentary films and discussions afterwards. One film that has particular relevance for our venue is *Borderline Cases*, which explores the environmental-epidemiological effects of U.S.-owned factories that have relocated just over the border in Mexico (*maquiladoras*). We are particularly fortunate in that the film's director, Ms. Lynn Corcoran, will be present, along with government officials and community activists. Another film that will be shown is *The Greatest Good: A Forest Service Centennial*.

Doubtless, one question that will crop up is how environmental histories in print differ in their narrative structure, the use of evidence, and the process of editing to name just three variables, from those on celluloid. Other questions might include: Can either genre claim a greater "truth value"? Can both genres depict complexities equally well? How do the social roles of the academic author and the documentary filmmaker overlap, and how do they differ? I hope that film showings and discussions with directors present will become a regular practice at our meetings – as we continue to build bridges between creative communities.

Douglas Weiner  
ASEH President

### American Society for Environmental History

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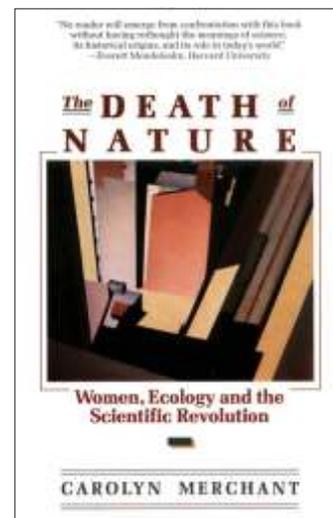
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The American Society for Environmental History seeks understanding of the human experience of the environment from the perspectives of history, liberal arts, and sciences. The Society encourages cross-disciplinary dialogue on every aspect of the present and past relationship of humankind to the natural environment. ASEH maintains a website at <[www.aseh.net](http://www.aseh.net)>. Contact <[K.J.W.Oosthoek@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:K.J.W.Oosthoek@newcastle.ac.uk)> to discuss including material on the web page.

Items for the next newsletter should be sent by December 17, 2004 to: Lisa Mighetto, Editor, 119 Pine St., Suite 301, Seattle, WA 98101. E-mail to <[mighetto@hrassoc.com](mailto:mighetto@hrassoc.com)>.

Other correspondence should be directed to: American Society for Environmental History, 701 Vickers Ave., Durham, NC 27701-3147.  
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*The Houston Conference will feature a discussion panel on Carolyn Merchant's book, now in its 25th year.*

## Houston Conference Update

### ASEH Annual Meeting To Be Held in Houston, Texas, March 16-20, 2005

#### "Energy, Space, Time"

By Kathleen Brosnan, University of Houston, Local Arrangements Chair

Houston, renowned as an international energy center and affectionately known as "Space City," is not your typical Texas town. More than 4.8 million people call greater Houston home. Members of a culturally diverse community, Houstonians speak more than 90 languages. ASEH participants will discover a wide array of ethnic cuisines within easy distance of the Warwick Hotel.

Originally built in 1925, and reflecting the elegance of nineteenth-century Europe, the historic Warwick Hotel rises above Houston's beautiful Museum District, with ten cultural institutions nearby. The Warwick also overlooks verdant Hermann Park, home to the Houston Zoo and a plethora of jogging trails. A new light rail provides quick access to downtown Houston.

The opening reception will be held at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on March 16, and will feature the Texas Southern University Jazz Trio. On Friday, March 18, we will gather at the Museum of Natural Science for the second annual ASEH fundraiser; "A Waltz Across Texas" will offer a taste of Texas foods, wine, and beers. Field trips will include birding at Brazos Bend, historic Galveston, NASA, the oil industry landscape and ship channel, and the Armand Bayou Nature Center.

Wilma Subra, a chemist and environmental activist who investigated Love Canal, will speak at the ASEH banquet on March 19. The plenary session on March 17 will include Judith Kimerling (Queen's College), David Nye (Syddansk Universitet), Joseph Pratt (University of Houston), and Heather Turcotte (UC-Santa Cruz). A special plenary session will feature former directors of the National Park Service, including Robert Stanton, Gary Everhardt, and Russell Dickenson.

Conference attendees will find pleasant days with temperatures in the lower 70's. Temperatures will drop into the 50's during the evening.



*The Warwick Hotel, Houston*

The Warwick Hotel can be reached toll free at 800.963.6523. Please be certain to mention the ASEH when making your reservation to receive the special rate of \$119 (single or double). Twenty rooms (single or double) have been reserved for graduate students at the rate of \$59.50; please bring your student i.d. when you check in. For additional information on the Warwick, please visit <[www.warwickhotelhouston.com](http://www.warwickhotelhouston.com)>.



*Museum of Fine Arts, Caroline Weiss Law Building, Houston*

Registration forms will be available on the ASEH website in December 2004. Pre-registration will close on *February 23, 2005*. Pre-registration fees are \$85 for members, \$40 for student members, and \$95 for non-members. On-site registration fees will be \$100 for members, \$50 for student members, and \$115 for non-members.

The program for the 2005 meeting will be posted to the ASEH website by December 2004.

from **Films** page 1

## Environmental Films Featured at Houston Conference

### Borderline Cases: Environmental Matters at the United States-Mexico Border

Produced by Lynn Corcoran (1997); Distributed by Bullfrog Films

For more than thirty years, American-owned companies have been closing manufacturing facilities in America's industrial heartland and opening new factories – called *maquiladoras* – in Mexico at the U.S.-Mexico border, where they pay Mexican workers a fraction of U.S. salaries – as little as a dollar an hour. Companies were also attracted by some thing else that kept operating costs low: in Mexico, companies didn't need to comply with costly environmental regulations. At first, regulations didn't exist . . . later, they were not enforced.

The proposal to create the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, changed things. Years of environmental neglect and the consequences for the health of border residents became part of the NAFTA debate.

By the time the NAFTA treaty went into effect in 1994, a new era of environmental activism on the border had begun. Almost overnight, the environment had become central to the rapidly evolving relationship between the United States and Mexico.

*Borderline Cases*, a documentary essay, describes the consequences of twenty-five years of environmental neglect, the results of five years of earnest activity, and the promises made for the future.

The central focus of *Borderline Cases* is the bi-national effort to craft solutions to the border's deteriorating environmental conditions. Filmed in three border regions (Brownsville and Matamoros; Tijuana and San Diego; Ciudad Juarez and El Paso), the documentary shows a range of problems, projects and proposals. It indicates the complexity and magnitude of the task, and gives a sense of the energy and imagination found in the diverse mix of people of both countries, from grass roots, government, academia and industry, who are re-thinking traditional notions of borders as they engage in the search for solutions.

Lynn Corcoran began making documentaries in 1974. Her independently produced work has examined the relationships between citizens and government in areas including community renewal, health care, housing and the environment.

Documentaries about the environment include *In Our Own Backyard*, which chronicles events at Love Canal and examines how citizen and government participants viewed the central issues the disaster raised. *Testing the Waters* considers the complex bi-national effort to chart a future for the polluted Niagara River, at the U.S.-Canada border. *Borderline Cases* is a view of the bi-national effort to repair the environmental damage at the U.S.-Mexico border that resulted from rapid, unregulated industrialization – the building of nearly 2,000 foreign-owned factories, or *maquiladoras*.

Corcoran's work has been broadcast nationally on PBS and on TLC (The Learning Channel) and it has received awards including a Blue Ribbon at the American Film Festival, a Cine Golden Eagle, Best of Category at the Audubon Environmental Film Festival, and awards from the Athens Film and Video Festival and the U.S. Film and Video Festival.

Her independently produced documentaries have been supported by grants from the New York Council for the Humanities, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Beldon Foundation, and the U.S./Mexico Fund for Culture / Fideicomiso para la Cultura Mexico/USA, (Rockefeller Foundation). She has received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the New York Creative Artists Fellowship Program.

For the Buffalo-Toronto PBS affiliate, WNED-TV, she produced 65 one-hour programs of *The Frontier*, a nationally distributed series featuring the work of independent filmmakers and video makers. She has been a Visiting Associate Professor in the Department of Media Study at the University at Buffalo and has lectured and conducted workshops throughout the country. Since 1978, she has worked as a freelance video producer, director, and editor of independent and commercial productions.

### A Forest Service Centennial Film and Companion Book

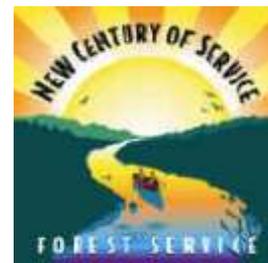
One hundred years ago, Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot announced a land management policy that sought to develop wisely all natural resources for "the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time." The principle of conservation – managing the land and its resources for multiple uses on a sustainable basis – has guided the United States Forest Service since the agency's creation in 1905.

This year, James G. Lewis, visiting scholar at the Forest History Society, will complete the companion book to the film. This book, tentatively titled *The Forest Service and The Greatest Good: A Centennial History*, traces the agency's development from its beginnings as a one-man research outfit to today's broad-based operation of approximately 30,000 employees overseeing 191 million acres of public land.

Richly illustrated and organized by era, this book examines how conservation has evolved over the last one hundred years and explores how those changes have determined who may use the land and why. Featuring rarely seen photographs and images, and drawing on memoirs and interviews with past and present personnel, as well as with leading historians, *The Greatest Good* provides an entertaining and informative account of the U.S. Forest Service's first one hundred years as it enters a new century of service.

The Forest Service will celebrate its centennial in 2005. For more information, see

<<http://www.fs.fed.us/newcentury/centcongress.htm>>.



## Announcements

### Conferences

#### European Society for Environmental History "History and Sustainability" February 16 - 19, 2005, Florence, Italy

The third international meeting of ESEH is only a few months away and registration is now open. Information on how to register is available on the conference website at [www.eseh2005.unifi.it](http://www.eseh2005.unifi.it). Note that the registration deadline is *December 15, 2004*. Information about accommodation and transport can also be found on the conference website.

The preliminary programme of the conference is also available on-line at the conference website. A more detailed programme will become available in December and can be downloaded as a PDF file.

#### *ESEH Website*

The ESEH website was recently updated and now contains the latest ESEH Notepad newsletter. In addition, the site now features a letter from ESEH President Verena Winiwarter inviting environmental historians to participate in the next International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP) open meeting to be held in October 2005. Anyone interested can submit a proposal for an environmental history related panel session.

For more information on the IHDP meeting and other news, visit the ESEH website at [www.eseh.org](http://www.eseh.org). Both items mentioned above can be accessed through the important bar on the main page at the left-hand side.

#### Society for Conservation Biology

The annual meeting for the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) will be held July 15-19, 2005 in Brasilia, Brazil. The Zoology Department of the Universidade de Brasília (UnB) is very pleased to host the 2005 Society for Conservation Biology Annual Meeting, bringing together conservation biology scientists, practitioners and students from around the world.

The SCB 2005 Annual Meeting will consider the theme of "Conservation Biology Capacity Building and Practice in a Globalized World" and other emerging topics through plenary sessions, symposia, workshops, organized discussions, contributed oral presentations, and poster sessions. Field trips to key conservation sites in and near Brasília have been organized to highlight the possibilities that exist. Please see each menu item above for information. For more information, see <http://www.scb2005.unb.br/index.htm>.

Steve Trombulak, President, SCB North American Section

### Graduate Fellowship Available

#### History of Environment and Technology University of Virginia

The University of Virginia seeks applicants for one or more graduate fellowships in the history of environment and technology. The fellowship covers a Ph.D. student's tuition and stipend for three academic years (subject to satisfactory progress) through a combination of grants and teaching assistantships. The fellowship is funded by the National Science Foundation and the University of Virginia. It is overseen by the university's Committee of the History of Environment and Technology, which urges potential candidates to contact one or more member of the committee before applying.

Primary members of the committee are Brian Balogh (political history), John K. Brown (history of technology), W. Bernard Carlson (history of technology), and Edmund Russell (environmental history and history of technology). Their addresses and further information about the program are at <http://www.sts.virginia.edu/news/chet-job>.

The committee strongly encourages applications from candidates who will enhance the diversity of the university. Candidates should submit a standard application for the Ph.D. program in the Department of History <http://www.virginia.edu/history/> and specify an interest in this fellowship. Applications are due *December 1, 2004*. The fellowship is contingent on final approval of funding.

### Member News

Ari Kelman has received the Abbott Lowell Cummings Prize from the Vernacular Architecture Forum for his book, *A River and Its City*.

Sara Pritchard (Assistant Professor, Department of History & Philosophy, Montana State University) has been awarded the Brooke Hindle Postdoctoral Fellowship in the History of Technology by the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT). The Hindle fellowship will support manuscript revisions during the spring of 2005 and new research in France that summer.

Hal Rothman was inducted into the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame on October 5, 2004, only the third historian to be so honored. In August, his *Encyclopedia of the National Parks*, co-authored with Sara Dant Ewert of Weber State, was published by M. E. Sharpe and Company.

from **Conference** page 3

**Silent Auction**

Be sure to stop by the ASEH booth in the exhibit room at the Houston conference. In addition to offering information about annual awards and next year's conference, ASEH's booth will include a silent auction throughout the conference. So far, the items include the following:

- Collection of books by ASEH presidents
- Forest History Society book collection
- Glass lantern slides of images in environmental history
- Political button collection
- Hotel and restaurant certificates
- Texas products

Do you have an item relevant to environmental history? If you would like to make a donation or you have questions about the silent auction, please contact Lisa Mighetto at <mighetto@hrassoc.com>.

**ASEH Fundraiser**

***A Waltz Across Texas***

**Friday Evening, March 18, Houston Conference**

Here is your chance to sample microbrews, wines, and desserts made in Texas. This year, ASEH's annual fundraiser (our third) will feature regional specialties from the Lone Star State. Located in the Museum of Natural Science, our fundraiser in Houston will include admission to all exhibits and galleries. Please join us for an evening of camaraderie with friends and colleagues.



*The Houston Museum of Natural Science, Hall of the Americas*

Sign up on the conference registration form. Proceeds will benefit the ASEH Endowment Fund, which supports ASEH annual prizes, travel grants, and the campaign for a permanent executive director.

**Attention Authors and Presses**

ASEH's Houston conference will include a book exhibit. For more information, contact Kathleen Brosnan at <kbrosnan@uh.edu>.



**Future ASEH Meetings**

*ASEH 2006 Meeting*

St. Paul Minnesota

"A River Runs Through Them: Landscapes in Environmental History"

March 29 - April 3, 2006

For more information, contact John Anfinson at <John\_Anfinson@nps.gov>

*ASEH 2007 Meeting*

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Hosting Future ASEH Meetings**

ASEH's Site Selection Committees is now soliciting proposals from individuals or groups interested in hosting the annual meeting of the ASEH in 2008 and 2009. Those interested should contact Paul S. Sutter, Site Selection Committee Chair, Department of History, LeConte Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-1602; phone: 706.542.2487; e-mail: <sutter@uga.edu> for a copy of the ASEH Conference Guidelines and other information.

The deadline for submission of proposals for the 2008 meeting is *January 15, 2005*.

Please keep in mind that hosting a conference requires substantial effort and time as well as significant institutional support.

from **Announcements** page 5

**Results of Website Survey**

Thank you to all who responded to ASEH's website survey. Most respondents have a fast connection to the Internet, and most find that information about conferences, general information about ASEH, and course syllabi are the most useful components of the website. All respondents would like to see features added to the website, especially *Environmental History*, images, teaching resources, and a membership directory. Most respondents would be willing to pay for services on the website.

The Executive Committee will be discussing expanding ASEH's website and raising funds for this effort at its meeting in Houston. ASEH members will have additional opportunity for input at the business meeting, scheduled for Saturday, March 19, at 5:30 p.m. See the Houston conference program (which will be mailed to members in December 2004) for additional details.

## Awards

### ASEH Annual Prizes

Each year, the ASEH awards the following four prizes for outstanding published work in the field of environmental history: George Perkins Marsh Prize for best Book in Environmental History; Leopold-Hidy Prize for Best Article in *Environment History*; Alice Hamilton Prize for Best Article Outside *Environmental History*; and the Rachel Carson Prize for Best Dissertation in Environmental History.

### Submissions for 2004

This year ASEH's prize committees will evaluate submissions (published books and articles and completed dissertations) that appear between November 1, 2003 and October 31, 2004. Please send three copies of each submission by *November 5, 2004* to: Lisa Mighetto, 119 Pine Street, Suite 301, Seattle, WA 98101. No need to send copies of articles published in *Environmental History*. If you have questions, contact Lisa at <mighetto@hrassoc.com>.

The awards will be presented at the banquet in Houston, scheduled for Saturday evening, March 19, 2005.

### ASEH Travel Grants Awarded

Congratulations to the following individuals, who will receive travel grants for the ASEH conference in Houston in 2005:

#### Recipients

Eric Dinmore  
James Giesen  
Benjamin Jordan  
Robert Lifset  
Scott Moranda  
Eric Stoykovich  
Joseph Adelegan  
John Varty  
Renata Andrade  
Crystal Fortwangler  
Wilko Graf von Hardenberg

#### Grants

E. V. and Nancy Melosi Travel Grant  
Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood Travel Grant  
Morgan and Jeanie Sherwood Travel Grant  
Ellen Swallow Richards Travel Grant  
Donald Worster Travel Grant  
J. Donald Hughes Travel Grant  
John D. Wirth Travel Grant  
ASEH Travel Endowment Grant  
ASEH Travel Endowment Grant  
ASEH Travel Endowment Grant  
ASEH Travel Endowment Grant



### ASEH Donation Form

I am pleased to support the ASEH through a gift, which is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Please check all relevant boxes:

Benefactor \$25,000    Patron \$10,000    Sponsor \$5000    Scholar \$1000  
Sustainer \$500    Associate \$250    Friend \$100    Contributor up to \$100  
Please send me information on gifts of:    Appreciated stock certificates    Bequests    Planned giving

I am contributing to the:

General Endowment    Travel Endowment    Minority Challenge Grant    S.P. Hays Research Fund  
John D. Wirth Travel Grant to assist international scholars in presenting research at ASEH annual meetings.

My check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed. Make checks payable to American Society for Environmental History.

My pledge in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is payable    monthly    quarterly    annually for \_\_\_\_ years (Reminders are sent)

Credit card in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_    Mastercard    Visa    Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Unless otherwise indicated all donors will be listed in the ASEH Newsletter.    I prefer to be listed as anonymous.

Mail to: Mark Madison, ASEH Treasurer, National Conservation Training Center,  
698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, WV 25443-9713

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American Society for Environmental History

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