

ESA Environmental Justice Section – Report to the Governing Board July 2013

The overall goals of the Environmental Justice (EJ) Section are to 1) promote environmental justice, i.e. “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies” (US EPA), 2) encourage the development, application and use of ecological research to address environmental issues, particularly those that disproportionately impact underrepresented or low-income groups, 3) stimulate education and outreach efforts that will provide better use and understanding of ecological concepts and research by non-scientists, 4) increase participation by individuals from underrepresented groups in the ESA and 5) take leadership in advancing EJ concerns within ESA, and in the work of ESA members with other organizations engaged in EJ issues.

To accomplish these goals, the section is presently focusing on:

- 1) Increasing the effectiveness of community collaboration and outreach by ecologists through a several year plan of fostering community-ecologist partnerships.
- 2) Integrating EJ concerns with ecological research through collaboration with other ESA sections in organizing annual meeting sessions and ongoing activities.
- 3) Supporting outreach and partnership of scientists communicating with religious organizations.
- 4) Growing leadership of newer and younger members in the Section’s activities.
- 5) Designing annual meeting activities in partnership with local communities and other EJ-related projects.
- 6) Engaging beyond ESA in ecology and justice-related initiatives.

Progress and Plans in Accomplishing our Goals

1) Growth of the Section and Collaboration with other Sections in Meeting Activities

Our official paid membership tally remains around 80 with a total of 200 that signed in to our sponsored meeting sessions and collaborative events last year. Tiffany Carey, of the student section, has met with us regularly and serves as a liaison between the EJ and Student sections. Former Vice-Chair Ana Elisa Perez Quintero, Secretary Kellen Marshall-Gillespie and Past Chair George Middendorf have all completed their terms and we are developing our officer slate for an upcoming election. We have engaged new graduate students and seasoned ecologists members in leadership activities. During the 2012 – 2013 year, we met throughout the year via conference calls to reflect on meeting activity outcomes and develop plans to advance our goals and enhance collaborations with other facets at the upcoming meeting.

To enhance understanding of how justice concerns can be incorporated into one's research, education, policy engagement and other work as an ecologist, the 2013 meeting features an organized oral session we designed in collaboration with members of the Education Section and Education and Diversity Committee: **OOS#7: *Doing Justice Through Your Research: Following Your Passion and Creating a Just Society as an Ecologist*** (Organizers: Leanne M. Jablonski, Carmen R. Cid and Megan M. Gregory). To facilitate citizen involvement in creating positive environmental and social change, ecologists increasingly employ community-based approaches to research and education. Engaging people in constructing and applying ecological knowledge can enhance citizens' capacity to address environmental issues that affect quality of life, thus promoting EJ. However, because participatory action research is not well-established in the natural sciences, ecologists often lack role models and institutional support for undertaking community-based research and its praxis of mutual engagement and ongoing reflection. To address these gaps, this session features stories of ecologists who have addressed justice concerns through research and education. Our goals are to (1) inspire and guide ecologists to engage in community-based research and education for justice and sustainability, and (2) contribute to dialogues about institutional change to support such work. It features seasoned ecologists from diverse subspecialties and work settings telling their stories and giving tips about justice engagement.

We also designed a companion evening workshop, **WK #41: *Developing Action Plans for Incorporating Environmental Justice (EJ) in Ecological Research and Education: Learning from Diverse EJ Practitioners How to Shape Future Community Sustainability*** (Organizers: Carmen R. Cid; Co-organizers: Leanne M. Jablonski, Megan M. Gregory, Jennifer L. Shirk and Tiffany S. Carey; featuring Scott J. Peters and Heidi L. Ballard). This workshop will service ecologists of all ages and workplaces – from students and their advisors to established ones – who want to practically explore ways they can develop or apply justice components in their research, education, outreach and community partnerships. Wisdom and best practices from these two sessions will be distributed by print, electronic and social media.

At the 2012 meeting in Portland, we led a collaborative special session, **SS 11: *Ecological Research Questions and Theory Associated with Human and Justice Concerns*** (Organizers: Charlie Nilon, Leanne Jablonski, Kellen Marshall-Gillespie and George Middendorf). We engaged the following other sections in dialogue with us: Agro-Ecology, Applied Ecology, Human Ecology, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Urban Ecosystems Ecology, and had small group discussions. Our goal was to explore tradeoffs between ecological benefits and human negative impacts, and identify terminology and frameworks to arrive at a common language to advance the discipline of ecology and benefit human societal concerns.

At the 2013 meeting, we are building on this collaboration in **SS 4: *Generating a Historical Time Line of 'Earth Stewards' to Inspire Our Future*** (Organizers: Robert A. Dyball, Leanne M. Jablonski and Mimi E. Lam). Members of ESA's human-centered Sections will 1) generate a list of ESA contributions that aid understanding the topic of Earth Stewardship and 2) develop biographical sketches of Earth Stewards. Results will help us assess how ecologists have interacted with societal movements and environmental events impacting ecosystem sustainability. In anticipation of ESA's 100th anniversary, the results will celebrate ESA's major contribution to Earth Stewardship, inspire younger members and foster future research efforts. We will use the timeline software 'Tiki Toki,' recommended by the Historical Records

Committee. We will overview how the various 'human-centered' Sections of ESA, the broader ESA community and other basic and applied ecologists might benefit from this collaboration to create a timeline of Earth Stewards. Next, we will present a brief guide of what makes a compelling historical biographical sketch, and demonstrate how Tiki-Toki works, including how to upload a biography, edit or enhance a biography and link to other resources and archives. We will then open discussion of suitable 'Earth Stewards' to initially populate the timeline, together with a call for commitment from individuals to generate first drafts. Progress will be revisited at the 2014 ESA Meeting, in preparation for a presentation at the 2015 Centennial.

We are also collaborating with other sections in **Symposium #13: *Can Ethics and Justice Pave a Sustainable Pathway for Human Ecosystems?*** (Organizers: Mimi Lam, Catherine Gross and Charles Nilon; Moderator Steward Pickett). Endorsements include Agro-Ecology, Applied Ecology, EJ, Human Ecology, Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Finally, the EJ Section continues to collaborate in the joint mixer with Applied, Human and Urban Ecosystems Ecology, where we share information on activities of the sections, present awards and conduct the annual Bioblitz-outreach in addition to socializing. Our other three major EJ Section initiatives are described below.

2) EJ Website Development

At the 2012 ESA annual meeting the Environmental Justice (EJ) section decided to launch a new website powered by the WordPress self-publishing platform. We selected WordPress because it makes setting up a dynamic, multi-contributor website very easy. Chris Jensen, who has experience running his own WordPress professional website, volunteered to serve as *Website Facilitator*. He is providing the technical support section members need in order to feature their EJ-related work on the site. Chris also ensures that the site presents basic EJ information and section updates. ESA administration provided the section with all the help needed: Toni Kumala, ESA webmaster, set up the site at <http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/> so that Chris could begin work. We are excited that ESA is so supportive of these valuable section websites. Chris worked with Megan Gregory to set up an initial site architecture. Megan provided a large amount of content to populate the main pages of the site and there is now a wonderful framework for ESA EJ work to be displayed.

Two major projects have been well-realized on the ESA EJ site over the past year: Megan has composed a very thorough page on the section's work *Fostering Community-Ecologists Partnerships*, including a page of resources (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/community-ecologist-partnerships/>). Greg Hitzhusen has created presence on the site for the *Partnering with Faith Communities* project (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/faith-communities/>). Working with Chris, Greg has started a list of scientists on the *Scientists' Speakers Bureau*.

An overall goal for the 2013-2014 year is to increase use of the site and to diversify and expand the information presently available. In particular we will include information about the section, its activities and how to join, member profiles, general EJ resources and student initiatives and opportunities for engagement with the Section. Secondly, we are working through decisions about breadth of content and editorial process for what is posted on our site to maximize the usefulness and involvement of members. Finally, we are exploring the use of a *forum* as a tool that might help to

foster communication about and work on the site. Chris recently installed it. This forum is a place where members of the section can privately discuss section business, including how to improve the site. Eventually the forum could also serve as a broader discussion center, where members of the section might discuss the logistics and ethics of environmental justice work.

3) Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships

An EJ Section subcommittee is working toward our goal of increasing the effectiveness of community collaboration and outreach by ecologists under the “Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships” initiative (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/community-ecologist-partnerships>). Community-based, participatory ecological research and education may contribute to EJ by:

- Generating knowledge to inform environmental stewardship efforts and/or policy decisions that have implications for community health and livelihoods, and
- Enhancing community capacity to address environmental issues that impact quality of life.

We have renamed and reframed our effort to support such research and education (formerly the Ecologists’ Guide to Working with Communities project) to reflect a growing consensus among EJ Section members and our partners that enhancing the quality of community-ecologist partnerships requires broader support than a general guidebook alone (for example, a community of practice and detailed profiles of successful partnerships) and to indicate our commitment to producing resources that are useful to both ecologists and community organizations.

Our work this year has involved research and dialogue with community-based organizations (CBOs) on best practices for mutually beneficial research and education partnerships between ecologists and CBOs, particularly those working to address environmental issues that affect quality of life in and with historically marginalized communities (e.g., communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities). Activities and accomplishments include the following:

Planning Grant: Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships for Environmental Justice Workshop

We received a 2013 planning grant and will hold a half-day workshop, “Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships for Environmental Justice” on August 9th, 2013 following ESA’s Annual Meeting in Minneapolis (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/community-ecologist-partnerships/workshop/>). This workshop will engage EJ organizations and ESA members in sharing, learning from, and supporting community-led EJ work that includes research and education partnerships with ecologists. We have engaged the University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (<http://www.uroc.umn.edu/>) as a co-sponsor and host of the workshop. Other participants will include the Land Stewardship Project (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/>) and members of faith communities and urban food projects in the Minneapolis area. EJ Section members are working with these organizations to select and develop “practice stories” that will be a discussion starting point. At the workshop, we will:

- **Share and learn from stories of community-ecologist partnerships:** We will provide a forum for EJ organizations to share stories of specific projects involving community-based ecological research. From these, we will identify lessons and further work to enhance community-ecologist partnerships.

- **Lay the foundation for a community of practice (CoP):** We will explore the potential for an ongoing CoP dedicated to supporting and enhancing community-ecologist partnerships for EJ. We will consider structures and technologies for ongoing communication, and its potential functions and activities.
- **Outline resources we could develop to provide guidance to community organizations and ecologists seeking to collaborate.** We will consider a guidebook/summary of best practices and a collection of multimedia practice stories. We also hope to work with other EJ organizations in our respective locations to gather stories of community-ecologist partnerships, input on best practices, and suggestions for the community of practice and needed resources.

Resources for Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships: We began an annotated guide to resources on community-ecologist partnerships and participatory research in general (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/community-ecologist-partnerships/resources/>). This page contains citations, links, and brief summaries of resources to provide inspiration, examples, and practical guidance to community leaders and ecologists seeking to design new collaborative projects or refine existing ones to better achieve integrated goals for science, education, and community well-being. We will continue to add new resources and refine the page to serve the needs of practitioners of community-ecologist partnerships, based on feedback from ESA members and community organization partners.

Practitioner Profile Project: We have made substantial progress on our work to create multi-media “practitioner profiles” or “case studies” of projects in which community leaders and ecologists worked together to build ecological knowledge and enhance community well-being. We will develop these profiles from narrative interviews and workshops with ecologists and community leaders, and feature them on the EJ section website with accompanying photos, videos, and other material sharing the stories of these collaborations. Completed milestones at the time of this writing include: Developing an interview guide and informed consent form for participants in interviews and workshops; submitting an application to the Cornell University Institutional Review Board and receiving approval to conduct this project; and identifying several ecologists and community organizations interested in participating in interviews and construction of multimedia practice stories. Megan Gregory (PhD candidate in Horticulture at Cornell) will serve as the PI, with Scott J. Peters (Associate Professor of Education at Cornell) serving as the faculty adviser. We anticipate that the first profiles will be completed and posted by the end of 2013.

2012 Annual Meeting in Portland *Special Session 22 - The Action Ecologist: Building the Ecologists' Guide to Working with Communities* (Organizers: Sara Gabrielson, Megan M. Gregory, Kellen Marshall-Gillespie, George Middendorf, Charlie Nilon, Beatriz Otero-Jiménez, Ana Elisa Pérez-Quintero). In this evening session, we discussed ongoing challenges, success stories and lessons learned from collaborations between ecologists and communities, with the goal of informing EJ Section efforts to promote and support community-ecologist partnerships. Participants identified and discussed the most important and challenging issues for ecologists seeking to engage with communities for justice and sustainability. This list of challenges has informed (and will continue to inform) EJ Section efforts to compile resources to support community-ecologist partnerships. See the list of participants' concerns, grouped into topic areas, at: http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2012-08-08-Ecologists-Guide_Issues-Challenges.pdf.

4) Outreach and Partnership of Scientists Communicating with Religious Organizations

The EJ section continues to develop opportunities for catalyzing dialogue and outreach with faith communities as a means to engage with a broad spectrum of the general public, reach local communities, and accomplish Earth stewardship outreach. Last August at ESA Portland, two workshops built upon these efforts: WK-5 was a dialogue for common ground between faith communities and ecologists (featuring local Portland faith-based environmental work), and WK-38 was a training session for the ***Speakers Bureau for Earth Stewardship Outreach to Faith Communities***. As an outgrowth of the speakers bureau initiative, we held two follow-up events during the year to support pilot efforts by ESA members doing faith community outreach around the country. A conference call in November allowed members to share successes, challenges and questions from their outreach to date, as well as provide further resources and training. ESA members Megan Gregory, Joseph Leyda, and Julie Doll presented their work, and Interfaith Power and Light's (IPL) state affiliates coordinator Bill Bradlee spoke about how to connect with IPL networks. A webinar in March, hosted by partners in the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program offices, featured Alexei Laushkin, senior communications director for the Evangelical Environmental Network, who spoke about how to do outreach to evangelical audiences. The call also included updates on the work of ESA members Dorothy Boorse and Rick Hammer. Building upon these efforts, ***WK- 51*** at ESA Minneapolis (***Launching A Scientists' Speakers Bureau for Outreach to Faith and Justice Communities***, organized by Greg Hitzhusen, Leanne Jablonski, and Forest Isbell) will mark the soft launch of the speakers bureau nationally, and provide training and orientation for ESA members interested in participating in the speakers bureau. The workshop will be video recorded so that the individual presentations will be available for ongoing training and orientation purposes on the speakers bureau website.

One of the most significant developments of the past year was the creation of the ESA EJ Section website, where we will post all of the speakers bureau and faith community information and feature ongoing developments at: <http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/faith-communities/>. This will include the growing list of speakers (including biographies and contact links), profiles of successful faith community outreach work, and resources for Earth stewardship outreach to faith communities. In the coming year, ESA and several partners will promote the speakers bureau. For instance, the Presbyterian Church (USA), in concert with its Earth Care Congregations program, will promote the speakers bureau to Presbyterian (USA) congregations nationwide, and the United Church of Christ has signaled a similar interest. Member organizations of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (<http://nrpe.org>) and the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology network (<http://fore.research.yale.edu/>) will also help promote the speakers bureau. Several state Interfaith Power and Light affiliates also intend to partner with the speakers bureau, and nationally, Interfaith Power and Light (www.interfaithpowerandlight.org) hopes to collaborate with the speakers bureau to connect clergy with climate scientists to help prepare them for a February 2014 "Preach-In," where 800-1000 clergy nationwide will be preaching about climate change in anticipation of the national climate assessment that will be released in March of 2014. IPL national communications staff hope to promote this effort in the fall of 2013 as clergy are signing up for the preach-in. We will summarize

and build upon these and other efforts of the speakers bureau in 2013-2014 at a workshop at ESA Sacramento in 2014.

Leanne Jablonski, Outgoing EJ Section Chair

In collaboration with EJ Team Contributors: Megan Gregory, Gregory Hitzhusen, and Chris Jensen