

ESA Environmental Justice Section Report to the Governing Board July 2014

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 section has approximately 90 paid members with a total of over 200 that participated in our sponsored meeting sessions and collaborative events last year. This is a net increase of approximately 10 paid members from the previous year; and over 20 members are brand new to the section. We developed a slate of candidates for section officer positions and held an election in spring 2014. Newly elected are: Charles Nilon, University of Missouri - Columbia, Chair; Gregory Hitzhusen, The Ohio State University, Vice-Chair; and Jessica Miesel, Michigan State University, Secretary. The outgoing Chair, Leanne Jablonski, Marianist Environmental

Education Center and University of Dayton, now serves as the Past Chair.

We have engaged new graduate students and seasoned ecologists members in leadership activities. During the 2013 - 2014 year, we met 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.

The section organized or collaborated with other sections in organizing the following sessions at the 98th Annual Meeting in Minneapolis:

Symposium 13: Can Ethics and Justice Pave a Sustainable Pathway for Human Ecosystems (Organizers: Mimi Lam, Catherine Gross, and Charles Nilon)

Organized Oral Session 7: Doing Justice Through Your Research: Following Your Passion and Creating a Just Society as an Ecologist (Organizers: Leanne Jablonski, Carmen Cid, and Megan Gregory)

Workshop 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: Leanne Jablonski, Megan Gregory, Jennifer Shirk, and Tiffany Carey)

Workshop 51: Launching A Scientists' Speakers Bureau for Outreach to Faith and Justice Communities (Organizers: Greg Hitzhusen, Leanne Jablonski, and Forest Isbell)

Special Session 4: Generating a Historical Time Line of Earth Stewards to Inspire Our Future (Organizers: Robert Dyball, Leanne Jablonski, and Mimi Lam)

We collaborated with the Applied Ecology, Agroecology, Urban Ecosystem Ecology, Human Ecology sections in a joint mixer and in supporting a booth during the daily poster sessions.

The Environmental Justice Section is organizing or participating with other sections in organizing the following activities at the 99th Annual Meeting in Sacramento:

Ignite 10: Ecology and Religion: How Should Ecologists Engage with Faith Communities? (Organizers: Forest Isbell, Greg Hitzhusen, Rick Hammer, and Leanne Jablonski)

Field Trip 19: Water, Environmental Justice and Science: Exploring Issues and Best Practices for Ecologists and Community Partnerships (Organizers: Leanne Jablonski, Colin Bailey, Charles Nilon, Jonathan London, and Scott Peters)

Special Session 18: ESA Speakers Bureau / Faith Community Outreach Strategic

Planning Session (Organizers: Greg Hitzhusen, Dorothy Boorse, F. Stuart Chapin, Rick Hammer, Forest Isbell, Leanne Jablonski, Christopher Jensen, and Nalini Nadkarni)

A companion set of events considering the environmental justice dimensions of energy and ecological literacy were co-organized between members of the EJ Section, Education and Committee on Diversity in Ecology:

Symposium 7: Achieving Energy and Ecological Literacies for All: Opportunities for Science Education and Outreach at the Interface (Organizers: Kenneth Klemow & Leanne Jablonski)

Organized Oral Session 8: Achieving Energy and Ecological Literacies for All: Towards Best Practices in Science Education and Outreach at the Interface (Organizers: Leanne Jablonski & Kenneth Klemow)

Workshop 35: Achieving Energy and Ecological Literacies for All: A Share-Fair and Discussion for Innovative Resources and Approaches (Organizers: Kenneth Klemow, Leanne Jablonski, Gillian Puttick and Jeffrey Corbin)

We will again collaborate with the human and applied-oriented sections in a joint mixer and in supporting a booth during the daily poster sessions. The Ignite Session Section Bash being held on Tuesday evening includes: Applied Ecology, Agroecology, Human Ecology, Environmental Justice, Southeast Chapter, Plant Population, Microbial Ecology, Biogeoscience, Soil Ecology and Urban Ecosystem Ecology.

2) EJ Website Development

The section website <http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/> is online and is managed by section member Chris Jensen. 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 featured 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 added content on the Partnering with Faith Communities project (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/faith-communities/>). We have been less successful in meeting our goal of increasing use of the site and in diversifying and expanding the type of information on the site and this will be a focus for the upcoming year.

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 re-framed 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.

In 2013 we received a planning grant to support a half-day workshop, "Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships for Environmental Justice," that was held on August 9th, 2013 following ESA's Annual Meeting in Minneapolis (<http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/community-ecologist-partnerships/workshop/>). We met with representatives from community groups in the Twin Cities that have dealt with justice issues: Northside Women's Space, Land Stewardship Project; Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota, Kwanzaa Community Church, and University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach Center (UROC). The participants provided "practice stories" documenting their involvement in community-based environmental activities and discussed the environmental justice aspects of the work. We discussed ways that ecologist might assist in the work of these groups. Our work on this project is ongoing and will include a similar field trip and workshop during the Sacramento meeting, this time focusing on water justice issues in partnership with the Environmental Justice Coalition for Water whose California work is based in Sacramento.

We will continue in our efforts to:

- 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 the resources needed.

Resources for Fostering Community-Ecologist Partnerships: We continued to develop 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.

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. We organized a workshop in Minneapolis, “Launching A Scientists’ Speakers Bureau for Outreach to Faith and Justice Communities,” organized by Greg Hitzhusen, Leanne Jablonski, and Forest Isbell) which recognized the launch of the speakers bureau nationally, and provided training and orientation for ESA members interested in participating in the speakers bureau. The workshop was video recorded so that the individual presentations will be available for ongoing training and orientation purposes on the speakers bureau website. In Sacramento the section is sponsoring a special session and an ignite section on work with faith communities. We are also supporting a dialogue dinner event between Catholics and Ecologists in view of the Pope’s anticipated encyclical on the environment. We are exploring how ecological scientists might be educational resources and could collaborate on goals of mutual interest.

The ESA EJ Section website, includes a page with speakers bureau and faith community information and ongoing developments at: <http://www.esa.org/enjustice2/projects/faith-communities/>. This includes 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.

Respectfully Submitted

Charles Nilon, Environmental Justice Section Chair

Leanne Jablonski, Environmental Justice Section Past-Chair