

**ASA Section on Environment and Technology  
Officers' Reports, August 2005**

**Chair's Report to Council - Phil Brown**

Our new Section structure

Having put together new by-laws, which was my major goal, we have now had two elections in 2004 and 2005 to fill the new committee chairs. This has placed us on a firmer footing, with well-defined responsibilities, including awards, and little or no ad-hoc tasks and committees.

In 2004 we elected chairs of:

- Policy and Research Committee –Maurie Cohen
- Nominations Committee – Bob Edwards
- Publications Committee –Richard York

In 2005 we just elected chairs of:

- Membership Committee –Beth Caniglia
- Teaching and Training Committee –Lori Peek

Our new structure has led to the work getting done rather smoothly, and for the kinks that need to be ironed out, we can start to do that at this Council meeting.

The chairs have been very active in recruiting committee members, and they will inform us of that in their reports. It is the section chair's obligation to appoint committee members and/or to approve the committee members that the committee chair has selected. This has gone through very smoothly. Committee chairs will tell us at this Council meeting if they need more members, and we can help think of some.

Our special session on the Future of Environmental Sociology

Special thanks to Maurie Cohen for putting so much initiative, good thinking, and solid organizing work into this project. Other council members stepped up to the plate to help think about this.

Fred Buttel memorial

Special thanks to Craig Humphrey, Tammy Lewis, and Tom Rudel for organizing the memorial tribute that will precede our reception. Pam Clinkenbeard, Fred's wife, will be present. Craig also proposed that we name the Distinguished Contribution Award after Fred, which the Council unanimously approved. We are holding the memorial session and the following reception in the ASA hotel, rather than off-campus, since we wanted to maximize the number of people who would attend and also because off-campus places are pleasantly noisy, which would be inappropriate for a memorial. Maurie Cohen solicited \$750 from Cambridge Scientific to defray the costs of this event.

Special thanks to Secretary-Treasurer Bob Brulle

As I leave office, I must give special mention to Bob Brulle. Bob is an astonishingly well-organized person whose work has made things run smoothly. He always stepped up to do extra things, such as co-organizing the EJ session in 2004 and finding excellent off-campus places to hold receptions. He made the machinery of the Section run smoothly in every possible way.

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**Chair-Elect's Report - Stella Capek**

As Chair-Elect this past year I did the following:

I organized the Environment and Technology Section paper sessions for the 2005 annual meetings. While the ASA electronic submission process had some glitches and delays, for the most part it went smoothly, and the ASA staff support was good. I also organized our section's roundtable sessions. It was not my intention to do this single-handedly, but it became necessary. In the future we should ensure that the Chair-Elect has assistance with this process. It was suggested earlier that the at-large Councilmember could take this on, perhaps finding a graduate student who could handle this task. In any case, we should find a way to share the work. As far as number of submissions, although we had a reasonable number between the paper and roundtable sessions, I believe we could be more successful at recruiting more participants to reflect the high-quality work and breadth of our field.

I took on the task of getting a "Greening of the ASA" letter to the ASA Executive Council. After Lori Hunter drafted an initial letter in response to our interest in the idea at last year's Council meeting, I sent it to the Council for feedback, edited the letter and incorporated some suggested changes. Jessica Spickard, our

ASA Section Liaison, informed us that anything originating in a section addressed to the Executive Council first needs to go to the Committee on Sections. I submitted the letter to them on June 28. Please see the attached copy of our letter below. There are also attachments from the American Psychological Association, which we are suggesting as a model.

I chaired the Robert Boguslaw Award for Technology and Humanism. I asked John Bellamy Foster and Andrew Szasz to serve on the Award Committee with me. We had four submissions, all self-nominations. They were quite good and also very diverse. We gave the award to Dr. William James Smith, Jr., with his paper "Filling a gap in international water development discourse: Challenges to capacity building at the rural, remote and least-wealthy small island scale in Chuuk, Micronesia." We do not give this award every year, and it was not created by our section, so my sense is that it is less familiar to our members. I would like to encourage more submissions from our section. I would also like to suggest that having the Chair-Elect chair this committee immediately after organizing all of the paper sessions may not be the best way to assign this award. Perhaps the Council can find a better solution.

**Planning for our 2006 meetings:**

Although we have put together some very good sessions, the number of submissions relative to our membership numbers seem low. Trying to increase submissions seems to be a perennial challenge, and the insights of the Council about this would be valuable. I would like to see a discussion at our Council and Business Meetings of possible thematic sessions as well as the potential for something like an "Author Meets the Critics" session to create some excitement about our work. Our paper sessions are now entirely open, and we have abandoned the discussant format in recent years. There are good reasons for this and the relative advantages of these strategies have been debated before, but it would be a good idea to take a reading of whether we feel the need to change any of this. Depending on where we meet next year, we also have the option of creating a local tour or hands-on experience, something that people have expressed interest in before. Symposia like the one organized by Maurie Cohen this year, or pre-meeting conferences co-sponsored with other sections work well to give us more space, and I think the section has been very creative in this way. I look forward to some good brainstorming about next year's possibilities. On a personal note, I will benefit from this past year's experience, since the organizing process will be more familiar and I can better anticipate the cycle. That includes the electronic submission format, which takes the process out of the hands of the organizers for extended periods of time. This second round will also help me work better with some of the other ASA session organizers. While a paper trade-off process is built into the electronic system, the personal communication makes a difference, especially if emerging themes can be anticipated. Concerning the roundtables, I want to secure a firm commitment from someone to help with those before the meetings are over. I thank Phil Brown for his mentorship and all of the Council members for their suggestions and the time they are putting into serving the section.

-----"Greening of the ASA" letter-----

TO: ASA Executive Council  
FROM: Section on Environment and Technology Executive Council  
RE: Annual Meeting and Environmental Best Practices  
DATE: June 28, 2005

The Council of the ASA Section on Environment and Technology wishes to urge the ASA to consider adoption of environmentally-responsible conference planning and management.

Sociological research has clearly demonstrated that contemporary environmental problems are important social issues. Contemporary environmental degradation is largely human-induced, and has important social consequences for human health and well-being. It is fitting that, as a major professional organization with approximately 14,000 members, we should critically consider our socio-environmental impact and make the best choices available.

The ASA Annual Meetings produce a large "ecological footprint" through the use of transportation, consumption of local services and products, and the production of materials such as badges and tote bags for each meeting. Particularly given sociology's problem orientation, we believe that the ASA should consider adoption of "environmental best practices" as a model for large-scale professional meetings. The American Psychological Association already employs such practices (please see attachments), and excellent practical guidelines can be found at the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Conventions ([www.cerc04.org](http://www.cerc04.org)) website. As CERC points out, large meetings offer many possibilities for curbing environmental impact: reducing emissions associated with global warming, decreasing waste, encouraging the use of public transportation and low emissions vehicles, and promoting environmentally

preferable products and services.

The APA has gone beyond merely “greening” its annual meetings to considering its entire set of organizational practices. We support such a holistic approach, but believe that concretely addressing the impact of the annual meetings would be an excellent first step. For example, the canvas tote bags produced for each meeting generate pollution and waste (and had a particularly noxious odor in 2004). Do we need all of these materials, and if so, can we make better choices about sustainable production and consumption?

Besides minimizing our environmental impact, committing to a “best practices” model will have other important consequences. It will bring positive attention to our professional society and will permit us to serve as a role model for our members and other organizations. Accordingly, the Section on Environment and Technology Executive Council proposes that:

- The ASA Executive Council focus on reducing the ASA’s ecological impact by developing criteria for planning the Annual Meetings based on the APA model and the CERC website.
- The ASA Executive Council undertake a broader agenda of greening the ASA by examining such things as office practices and journal publishing (the APA effort provides useful suggestions).

We would be pleased to help the ASA Executive Council further consider details of these practices by providing advisors from our Section.

On behalf of the Environment and Technology Section Council,

Phil Brown, Chair, Environment and Technology Section  
Stella M. Čapek, Chair-Elect, Environment and Technology Section

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#### **Secretary-Treasurer Report - Robert Brulle**

As of June 30, 2005, the section had total net worth of \$6,651. This is an increase of \$1,920 from the end of the 2004 fiscal year. I am projecting a total annual income of \$2,250 in membership dues/allocations and \$750 in external support, for a total of \$3,000 in income for the 2006 fiscal year.

I am projecting a total expenditure of \$2,100 this year, which includes \$1900 for the reception, and awards costs of \$200. This will leave us a budget surplus of \$900 for this year. Based on these projections, we should end the 2006 Fiscal Year on June 30, 2006 with an estimated net worth of \$7,551.

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#### **Nominations Committee Report - Bob Edwards**

The Nominations Committee included an elected Chair and two members appointed by the Section Chair. They were:

Bob Edwards (East Carolina University), Chair  
Lori Hunter (University of Colorado)  
Dianne Sicotte (Drexel University).

Nominees for three elected positions were needed for this year. They were as follows:

Section Chair-Elect  
Membership Committee Chair  
Teaching and Training Committee Chair.

The committee conducted the nominations process by e-mail in January. Committee members suggested names of potential nominees which were supplemented with suggestions from the Section Chair and other members of the section Council. Through a series of e-mail correspondence the committee selected two primary nominees for each position with several back-up nominees in case either of the two primary nominees declined. Members of the committee then contacted nominees by e-mail and phone to see if they were willing to stand for election.

In the end strong candidates were put forward for each position. They were as follows with those elected to office listed in **bold**.

Nominees for Chair-Elect:

**Timmons Roberts** (William & Mary)  
Steve Couch (PSU-Capital College)

Nominees for Membership Committee Chair:

**Beth Schaefer Caniglia** (Oklahoma State University)  
Scott Frickle (Tulane University)

Nominees for Teaching and Training Committee Chair:

**Lori Peek** (Colorado State University)  
Stephen Perz (University of Florida)

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### Membership Committee Report - Beth Caniglia

Steve Zavestoski, outgoing membership committee chair, and Beth Caniglia, newly elected Councilmember in the Membership Committee Chair position, discussed membership matters over the last month and have the following to report:

1) As of July 28, 2005, section membership stood at 356. This is quite consistent with memberships numbers in past years leading up to the annual meeting. 56 individuals have current ASA memberships but have let their section memberships lapse. Many of these individuals renew when reminded. We also get a handful of new members who sign up at the annual meeting. Our post meeting numbers are usually at about 375-400.

2) This means that our three-year running average, which ASA now uses to determine the number of sessions a section gets at the annual meeting, is 366.

3) Based on analysis of the last four years of membership records, we appear to be very consistent in terms of our membership levels, despite a number of different efforts to raise membership numbers. As such, it might be useful for Council to revisit the question of whether the Section is simply a 350-400 member section, and abandon future membership drives unless we begin to drop below the 350 mark.

4) If Council would like to consider some new ideas to recruit and retain members, the list below enumerates some of the past approaches and a number of new ideas generated by Beth Caniglia:

- a) Free student memberships (this approach is not longer feasible since ASA has a new policy forbidding sections from purchasing section memberships from section budgets)
- b) Swapping membership lists with SKAT or other sections similar to us to try to offer free memberships to each others' students and/or make appeals to each others' non-student members to pay for a membership (not very successful in my four-year experience).
- c) Emailing everyone who has presented at ASA or a regional meeting in an environmental sociology session and asking them to become members (attempted last year, not very fruitful)
- d) Culling recent publications in the area of environmental sociology and asking authors to consider joining (not yet attempted).
- e) Offering a "lifetime membership" (while this would not attract new members, it might reduce the number of memberships that lapse; although ASA has discontinued the lifetime membership option)
- f) Creating an endowment that could be used to pay travel costs for students, early-career faculty and/or underrepresented section members, to attend ASA (this could create some loyalty to the section).

5) The Committee intends to examine membership data for important trends that might indicate potential for increasing membership, and we are willing to implement a membership survey if the Council feels this would be fruitful.

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### Publication Committee Report - Richard York

Richard York, Chair  
Stephan Scholz, Newsletter editor  
Rob Gardner, Website manage

Andrew Van Alstyne, Listserv manager

#### Brochure

The committee produced a brochure, which provides information about the section, including how to join. Electronic copies can be obtained from the Chair of the Publication Committee (Richard York: [rfyork@darkwing.uoregon.edu](mailto:rfyork@darkwing.uoregon.edu)). Two hundred copies were printed on recycled, chlorine-free paper for distribution at the ASA meeting.

#### New Committee Member

Kari Norgaard is proposed as a new member of the Publication Committee. She received her Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Oregon in 2003, spent two years as a post-doc at University of California – Davis, and is starting as an assistant professor of sociology at Whitman College in fall. She won the section's Graduate Student Paper Award in 2003.

#### Proposed Survey of Members

We are considering implementing a survey of section members (probably electronically) to ascertain what they consider to be "core" journals in environmental sociology. If implemented, the results will be reported in the newsletter.

#### Newsletter

Since electronic distribution seems to have worked, we recommend continuing to distribute the newsletter electronically, not in hardcopy, so as to save resources (both those of the natural and financial varieties). We are taking steps to assure that the newsletter will come out on a regular schedule.

#### Website

The website is in the process of being updated.

#### Listserv

The listserv has operated and continues to operate fairly smoothly.

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### **Policy and Research Committee Report - Maurie Cohen**

#### **ETS Outstanding Publication Award**

This subcommittee reviewed ten nominations for this award (six books, two ensembles of articles, and two single articles). The recipient of this year's award will be announced at the Council meeting on Monday, August 16. The subcommittee also decided to acknowledge a secondary recipient as honorable mention. Members of the subcommittee were: Maurie Cohen, Chair (New Jersey Institute of Technology), David Sonnenfeld (Washington State University), and Shirley Laska (University of New Orleans).

#### **Marvin Olsen Student Paper Certificate**

This subcommittee received only two nominations for this award. After carefully reviewing these two submissions, the subcommittee unanimously decided not to issue this commendation this year. Members of the committee were Maurie Cohen (New Jersey Institute of Technology), R. Scott Frey (University of Tennessee), and Sara Shostak (Columbia University).

#### **Death of Environmentalism Symposium**

The Policy and Research Committee takes pleasure in announcing the convening of a special symposium as part of this year's ASA conference entitled "The Death of Environmentalism and the Future of Environmental Sociology." This event is due to take place on Sunday, August 14 at 2pm on the campus of the Drexel University Medical School. Participants in this event are:

#### *Panelists*

Robert Brulle, Drexel University  
Riley Dunlap, University of Central Florida  
Craig Jenkins, Ohio State University  
David Pellow, University of California at San Diego  
Lynnette Zelezny, California State University Fresno

#### *Moderator*

Maurie Cohen, New Jersey Institute of Technology

## **Additional Notes**

1. The subcommittee for the ETS Outstanding Publication Award had a number of concerns on how the guidelines for this commendation are currently specified. It was felt that the Council should charge a task force with responsibility for drafting a more precise scope for this award. In particular, the current wording in the award announcement does not differentiate among books, ensembles of articles, and single articles. As a result, the subcommittee had a great deal of difficulty determining how to fairly evaluate submissions across these various disparate categories.
2. As noted above, the subcommittee received only two submissions for the Marvin Olsen Student Paper Certificate. We had no knowledge of how this compared with prior iterations of this award, but were nonetheless concerned about the future viability of this award. The subcommittee requested input from the Council on how to proceed to avoid this problem next year.
3. The Policy and Research Committee was not fully staffed for the past year and the chair requests recommendations from the Council on appropriate individuals to serve in this capacity.

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## **Teaching and Training Committee Report**

**Committee Members:** Lori Peek, Colorado State University (Chair)  
Michael Agliardo, University of California-San Diego  
Christine Bevc, University of Colorado-Boulder

The newly established Teaching and Training Committee will compile a list of environmental sociology graduate programs and postdoctoral positions for posting on the web. The committee will also solicit articles on teaching issues for the section newsletter, as well as undertake periodic revision of the ASA Syllabi and Instructional Manual, per ASA's timetable.