

ASEH Call for Proposals
2022 Annual Conference in Eugene, Oregon
March 23-27, 2022

Disaster and Renewal

The American Society for Environmental History invites proposals for its annual conference March 23–27, 2022, in Eugene, Oregon. That month will mark two years since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, a public health disaster that has claimed millions of lives, intensified existing social inequities, tested the legitimacy and emergency capacity of governments worldwide, and impacted almost the entire planet. The past year has also seen the emergence of major new civil-rights activism in opposition to systemic racism as well as an escalation of climate catastrophe, with ever-worsening wildfires and tropical storms. All of these events have been inflamed and exacerbated by a series of political conflicts and crises.

Eugene's own history is marked by many of these same forces. Located on Kalupuya Ilihi, it is the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalupuya people, many of whom died during a deadly wave of epidemic disease in the early 1800s and were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. In the last century, Oregon has been the site of some of the world's most extensive forest clearcuts, and in 2020, the McKenzie River valley, just a few miles from Eugene, was devastated by wildfires, part of a trend of escalating fire intensity in western North America. But renewal is visible too. Today, Kalupuya descendants are primarily citizens of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and they continue to make important contributions to their communities, to Oregon, and to the world. Eugene has been the birthplace of new forms of environmentalist action and environmental justice. Novel ecosystems are emerging in the wake of clearcut logging and fires. This history provides a foundation for us to consider the long intersecting and overlapping genealogies of disaster: how our contemporary challenges are shaped by historic disasters, and how current crises are themselves the products of decades, if not centuries, of complex developments. Disasters are often the result of social inequalities but also shape and compound these inequalities far into the future. The committee encourages submissions that consider disasters in these wider temporal and social contexts.

Conversely, because they rewrite relationships between people, societies, and species, disasters as moments of disjuncture also offer new possibilities. Therefore we also encourage submissions that consider the concept of renewal. How have societies in the past imagined and remade their worlds in the aftermath of a disaster? What were the paths chosen and dismissed, and how might interactions between humans and non-humans have shaped the opportunities for and realities of renewal? Do these histories provide models of how to repair our worlds in the aftermath of destructive events and processes? How are discourses on disaster remediation embedded in power imbalances, and how does disaster recovery exacerbate existing social inequities? We also look to consider disaster and renewal in tandem, as new futures are often only imagined in the crucible of a crisis.

Submission Guidelines

While programming in Eugene 2022 will emphasize the theme of disaster and renewal, this conference, like all ASEH meetings, will feature research on all facets of environmental history, from any geographical or temporal context. The Program Committee welcomes traditional panels, individual papers, teaching and pedagogy sessions, innovative formats, and sessions that encourage active audience participation. Panels and papers that explore the intersections of environmental history and the fields of public history and the digital humanities are also welcome, as are those that discuss community engagement initiatives. The Program Committee encourages panels that include historians at different career stages (including independent scholars) and different types of institutions (universities, government agencies, museums), and that are diverse in their gender, racial, and national composition. Conference sessions are set at 90 minutes, including the requisite 30 minutes for discussion. We strongly prefer to receive complete session proposals, although we will endeavor to construct sessions from proposals for individual presentations. Submission proposal types include:

- Complete Panels (including four presenters and a session chair or three presenters, a commentator, and a session chair)
- Roundtables (presentations should be limited to 10 minutes per person to maximize audience participation)
- Experimental Sessions (this category is open, but such sessions should involve at least four participants. Sessions must still allow 30 minutes for discussion)
- Individual Papers (accepted papers will be placed in panels; presentations are limited to 15 minutes)
- Individual Lightning Presentations (each presenter gets 5 minutes and up to 10 slides)
- Posters (those presenting posters will be expected to participate in the poster session at the conference)

ASEH is committed to the Eugene conference as an in-person event. However, the Program Committee will consider a very small number of papers and/or proposals that have a virtual component, with a preference for fully virtual over “hybrid” panels (with both in-person and virtual presenters). Please note this preference on your official submission. Preference will be for presenters for whom in-person attendance is logistically restricted. Virtual presenters will also be expected to pay a registration fee. Those who wish to organize virtual events are encouraged to consider submitting to Environmental History Week, which will be held in April 2022.

Please note that individuals can be a primary presenter in only one panel, roundtable, or other session proposal, but can also serve as chair or commentator in a second session proposal. ASEH remains committed to inclusivity with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, and physical abilities both in terms of participation and topics discussed at our conferences.

Proposals may be submitted electronically. For more information and the link to the submission site, visit the ASEH website at www.aseh.org and click on “conference and workshops.”

Deadline for Submissions: July 16, 2021.