

From the President's Desk

The weather forecast for Denmark in 2081 claims that the yearly average temperature will rise by three to four degrees centigrade as compared to today. Winter precipitation will increase by about 50 per cent, and snow will be an extremely rare phenomenon. Summers will last a month longer and see 15 per cent less precipitation than today. Extreme storms will rage at forces that are unknown today. Over all, the climate of Denmark will be similar to conditions in present-day Alsace, in northern France.

These are the results of an ambitious five-year research programme which reported its findings this September 2006. The programme – Consequences of Weather and Climate Changes for Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems (CONWOY) – funded some 35 researchers at a total cost of €3.5 million, and sets a high standard for interdisciplinary collaboration. The CONWOY programme brought together climatologists, aquatic biologists, paleoecologists and environmental historians to examine past and future aquatic ecosystems in relation to climate change.

Environmental historians contributed to a better understanding of past changes and their relationship to climate change. More surprisingly, as the project developed it became evident that past patterns are indispensable for future modelling of the consequences of climate change. The researchers used historical patterns to model future aquatic life. By 2081 they predict that the cod will disappear from warm Baltic waters, and that the seas around Denmark will be swarming with anchovies and sardines. Algal blooms and oxygen depletion are likely to occur at increasing rates.

The successful completion of the CONWOY programme underlines the contribution that environmental historians are making to improve our understanding not only of the past but also of the future. Climate historians cleared the way in the 1990s, and now we are seeing colleagues in other parts of environmental history go down this path. Their work is bridging what seemed to be an insurmountable breach between human and natural scientists. This is a long and promising route to take.

Poul Holm
President ESEH

Report from the Executive Board meeting, Amsterdam, 29 June 2006

The meeting was hosted by the Local Organising Committee of the ESEH International Conference Amsterdam 2007, chaired by Petra van Dam. The meeting agenda, which demonstrates the main activities of the ESEH, is given below. In Amsterdam the Scientific Committee of the conference finalised the evaluation and selection procedure, the preliminary results of which had previously been disseminated.

1. Opening of the meeting by the President.
2. ESEH international conference Amsterdam 2007. Keynote speaker selection.
3. ICE-HO international conference 2009.
4. ESEH response to the founding of the Association of South Asian Environmental Historians.
5. Society budget.
6. The system of regional representatives.
7. Travel funding for the ESEH board.
8. Commission on education.
9. Web site and a report on how it is working and a discussion of what needs to be improved, changed etc.
10. Membership directory at the web site.
11. Update on the on-going bibliography project.
12. The ESEH Award for Outstanding Achievement.
13. Report on the SOLCHA conference in Carmona.
14. The next election procedure.
15. Close of meeting by the Chair.

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ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <www.esch.org>.

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