

ASEH Election 2019

Statement of Candidates

[Scroll down to read statements for candidates for Executive Committee and Nominating Committee]

Vice President/Incoming President

Sarah Elkind, San Diego State University:

I am a professor of History at San Diego State University, where I teach courses in American and global environmental history, often with some public history mixed in. My books, *How Local Politics Shape Federal Policy* (North Carolina, 2011) and *Bay Cities and Water Politics* (Kansas, 1998) focus on politics and policy-making in American cities in the nineteenth and twentieth century. My current projects include a textbook on global environmental crises, and two smaller studies that examine American western expansion and water resource development in the context of transnational discussions of national identity and nation building in the nineteenth century. I have held distinguished Fulbright and NSF fellowships.

I value ASEH as an intellectual home for a wide variety of scholars; the strength of this organization lies in its active support for new scholars and colleagues. I see membership – attracting new members, keeping members as members, and continuing to expand the diversity (defined broadly) of ASEH membership – as particularly important to our organization going forward. I would like to see the ASEH continue our efforts to diversify and expand our membership through mentorship, outreach to local environmental organizations, and other programs. Because environmental history has so much to contribute to larger public debates on environmental and social policy, I would also like to see the ASEH reach out to the larger community, perhaps as a source of expertise for community action groups, public officials and the media.

I attended my first ASEH conference in Houston in 1991, and have served several terms on the executive committee since 1998. I compiled the first environmental history syllabus collection (1998), have served on nominating, prize, site-selection, diversity, and development committees. I have always prized ASEH for its collegiality and intellectual richness; I would be honored to contribute further to the organization.

Secretary

Peter S. Alagona, University of California, Santa Barbara:

I attended my first ASEH conference as a graduate student in Denver in 2002, and I have considered the society my intellectual home ever since. I am honored to have been nominated to serve as Secretary.

For my day job, I am an associate professor of history, geography, and environmental studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. My work explores what happens when humans share space and resources (their habitats) with other species: how we interact with non-human creatures, how we make sense these interactions, why we fight so much about them, what we can learn from them, and how we might use these lessons to foster a more just and sustainable society. My first book, on endangered species in California, was published by UC Press in 2013. I am currently working on several projects, including a book about the history of wildlife in American cities. I am also leading a multipronged, collaborative, interdisciplinary project exploring the past, present, and potential future of grizzly bears in California—with an eye on the prospects for reintroduction. What could possibly go wrong?

For more, see www.peteralagona.com.

Executive Committee:

Vote for FOUR

Ellen Arnold, Ohio Wesleyan University:

I am an Assistant Professor of History at Ohio Wesleyan University, a small liberal arts college. I have considered the ASEH one of my most significant intellectual homes since graduate school, and I am honored to have been asked to help continue to support this vibrant and open community. I teach ancient and medieval history as well as environmental history courses, and would bring the perspective of the teaching-focused small schools to the board. My research focuses on the cultural history of the medieval environment. My first book, *Negotiating the Landscape: Environment and Monastic History in the Medieval Ardennes*, dealt with monastic interpretations of forests and woodland resources. My current research is a book on the cultural history of rivers in the Early Middle Ages, focusing on the stories that were told about rivers and how those stories reflected lived and imagined interactions with nature. As a pre-modernist, I would hope to add temporal breadth to the board's conversations about pedagogy, conferences, workshops, etc.

As a member of the Executive Board, I would work with members to have their concerns addressed and to grow and expand the reach of the ASEH community. One of the ways that I can contribute specifically in this second regard is my connections with

European and international environmental history organizations. I have attended ESEH conferences as long as I've been a member of the ASEH, and I've served on conference and prize committees with that organization, including being the chair of the program committee. I have also been an active member of the International Water History organization and am the current co-editor of its journal, *Water History*. I would work to use these connections to other networks to help amplify the voices of environmental historians and the ASEH.

Frederick “Fritz” Davis, Purdue University:

I am Professor and the R. Mark Lubbers Chair in the History of Science in the Department of History at Purdue University. For the current academic year, I am also serving as Interim Department Head. My interests lie at the intersection of the history of environmental science, environmental health, and environmental history. I recently published *Banned: A History of Pesticides and the Science of Toxicology* (Yale University Press). I also wrote *The Man Who Saved Sea Turtles: Archie Carr and the Origins of Conservation Biology* (Oxford University Press). My current research projects include “Making *Silent Spring*,” a study of how Rachel Carson wrote her bestselling exposé of the ecological and health risks of chemical pesticides. And I am writing on the continued role of the organism in biology as science has focused on the gene and the molecule as the key elements of life. I spent 2016-17 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong on a Fulbright. Before that, I taught environmental history and the history of science at Florida State University, where I co-created the Program for the History and Philosophy of Science.

I attended my first conference (and gave my first scholarly paper) at ASEH in Baltimore (1997). I served ASEH as Local Arrangements Chair for the 2009 conference in Tallahassee, Florida and I served on the George Perkins Marsh Prize committee and the Site Selection Committee. I also served on the editorial board of *Environmental History* (2013-17). Last (but not least), I have co-led the birding fieldtrip at the annual conference numerous times.

In addition to my service to ASEH, I have served on editorial boards for *ISIS: An International Review devoted to the History of Science and Civilization, Agricultural History, Endeavour*, and the *Journal of the History of Biology*. I also contribute to two organizations at the intersection of environmental history and the history of science: the Earth & Environmental Sciences Forum of the History of Science Society and the Earth & Environmental Science Working Group at the Philadelphia Area Consortium for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine.

If I am elected to serve on the executive committee, I would like to explore the important role of environmental history in offsetting the crisis facing history and the humanities.

Mike Dockry, US Forest Service, Research Forester:

Bozho nikanek (Hello my friends), I am honored to be nominated to serve on the ASEH Executive Committee. I have been a member of the ASEH diversity committee since 2011 and I served as committee chair from 2012- 2017. I believe that the strength of ASEH is the diversity of our scholarship and membership. As an executive committee member, I will work to highlight diverse voices, facilitate collaborative dialogue within ASEH, and increase membership by reaching out to students and scholars in related fields like American Indian studies and natural resources. This will strengthen ASEH and create a sustainable future that continues to ensure environmental history is relevant for our 21st-century society.

I am a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and work as a Research Forester/Social Scientist with the US Forest Service Northern Research Station. I am also an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Forest Resources and American Indian Studies departments at the University of Minnesota. My research is interdisciplinary and incorporates forest management, ecology, social science, Indigenous knowledge, and environmental history to understand changing human relationships to the land. I received the 2016 American Indian Science and Engineering Society's Most Promising Scientist award and the 2017 Early Career Scientist Award from the USFS Northern Research Station. I am a nationally recognized expert in tribal forestry and tribal relations.

Alan MacEachern, University of Western Ontario:

The ASEH has been intrinsic to the development of environmental history internationally, including next door in Canada. As the founding director of NiCHE: Network in Canadian History & Environment, I never felt obliged to replicate things ASEH was doing well, such as its annual conference, because we knew we were always welcome members of the American Society. It gave us the freedom to focus on different initiatives, such as fostering a digital (and digital-literate) community, promoting open-access research dissemination, and involving young scholars. I am an "insider" to the ASEH (having chaired its Nominating Committee and sat on its George Perkins Marsh, Leopold-Hidy, and Alice Hamilton prize committees) but also an "outsider" (not American born or trained), and so can bring a distinct and valuable perspective if elected to the Executive.

I am a professor of History at the University of Western Ontario. Since heading NiCHE for a decade, I have been a fellow of the Rachel Carson Center, a board member of ICEHO, and a visiting professor at Huazhong University of Science and Technology. I am editor of the Canadian History & Environment series at University of Calgary Press, and have co-written/edited textbooks on environmental history methodology, digital history, and Canada's history. My own environmental history research might be described as anything Canadian, and I have written books and articles on national parks, forest fire, environmentalism, back-to-the-land movements, size and territorial expansion, the Anthropocene, and Groundhog Day. (The full titles may be found [here](#).) My major current project explores Canadians' historical and contemporary weather and

nature knowledge, as found in the qualitative remarks of millions of Environment Canada daily weather observations.

Catherine McNeur, Portland State University:

I am associate professor of history at Portland State University where I teach courses on environmental history, United States history, and public history. I'm the author of *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City* (Harvard University Press, 2014) which won the George Perkins Marsh Prize and the Rachel Carson Prize (as a dissertation). I've also written on urban parks, livestock, and trees. Right now I'm working on a biography of two nineteenth-century female scientists who gained acclaim (and some notoriety) as experts of their local environment at a time when their male counterparts were on expeditions across the continent and globe. I've also been involved in some environmental public history projects, including [Canopy Story](#) and a variety of other place-based ways to tell stories about our environments.

The ASEH is my favorite community of historians and has been ever since I attended my first conference in Boise in 2008 as a very nervous graduate student. Immediately I felt like I had found my flock (as well as some of the best writing around). I have served on the George Perkins Marsh Prize committee and the Rachel Carson Prize committee, and since 2017 I've been a member of the editorial board for *Environmental History*. I would be delighted to continue to be a part of this community by being on the Executive Committee.

Laura A. Watt, Sonoma State University:

It is a great honor to be nominated for the ASEH Executive Committee; ever since I attended my first ASEH conference as a graduate student in 1995 (Vegas, baby!), this organization has been my intellectual home. I'm a professor in the newly formed (by a recent merger) Geography, Environment, and Planning Department at Sonoma State University in northern California, and Graduate Coordinator of our Cultural Resources Management masters program. This year I am also serving as Chair of SSU's Academic Senate, during a major transition to an all-new administration, as well as a complete overhaul of our General Education program. If elected to the Executive Committee, I would bring this recent experience of leading and representing an entire campus of faculty to my role.

My research brings together threads from environmental history, public lands policy, cultural geography, heritage studies, and the ecological sciences themselves—I'm about as interdisciplinary as they come. My book *The Paradox of Preservation: Wilderness and Working Landscapes at Point Reyes National Seashore* (2017, UC Press) examines the impacts of federal management on a working, lived-in agricultural landscape over time, and I am now deep into a new project, developing an environmental history of the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Colorado, which will trace how changing trends in ecological science and land uses—particularly

wilderness and outdoor recreation—have shaped both the landscape of the Lab and the science it produces. Given the uncertain, veering increasingly toward dangerous political climate of recent years, advocating for more nuanced understandings of people and their environments only becomes increasingly critical, and I believe our field can provide essential insight to the conundrums of climate change and the current atmosphere of “fake news” and denial of science.

Looking back over my CV, my involvement with ASEH stands out clearly: presenting papers and/or organizing panels at nearly every conference since 2001; publishing in *Environmental History*; serving on the Program Committee for the 2007 meeting in Baton Rouge and 2011 in Phoenix; and with Carolyn Merchant, co-chairing the Local Arrangements Committee (as well as serving on the Program Committee) for our 2014 meeting in San Francisco. I also chaired the Sam Hayes Research Fellowship committee in Fall 2016. While for a long time the ASEH seemed focused on environmental history’s role as a subfield of History, recent years have seen an explosion of interest in the environmental humanities more broadly defined, and growing links with geography, heritage studies, and the natural sciences. Given this more interdisciplinary context, as an Executive Committee member I would focus on expanding connections and collaborations (and hopefully membership!) with a wide variety of disciplines and organizations. As higher education itself is changing, and fewer of us work in traditional research-heavy tenure-track jobs, I would also look for avenues for increasing participation by and professional opportunities for graduate students and adjunct faculty.

Marsha Weisiger, University of Oregon:

I’m an associate professor of history and environmental studies and the Dixon Chair of U.S. Western History at the University of Oregon. I also co-direct the Center for Environmental Futures (UO’s environmental humanities center) and am co-organizer of the Cascadia Environmental History Collaborative, an annual retreat for environmental historians in the Pacific Northwest. Prior to moving to Oregon in 2011, I taught for a decade at New Mexico State University. Before that, I enjoyed a career as a public historian (specializing in historic preservation) in Arizona and Oklahoma. My rather eclectic scholarship has explored the histories of gender, Native Americans, agricultural labor, environmental justice, western rivers, wolf reintroduction, architecture, and Earth Art, largely in the American Southwest. I wrote *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (winner of the Hal K. Rothman Book Award, the Norris and Carol Hundley Book Award, the Caroline Bancroft Honor Book Award, and the Gaspar Perez de Villagra Award) and *Land of Plenty: Oklahomans in the Cotton Fields of Arizona, 1933-1942* (winner of the Angie Debo Prize), and am the co-author of *Buildings of Wisconsin*. Currently, I’m working on two manuscripts: *Danger River*, about whitewater adventures on the Colorado River, and *To Speak of Common Places*, a co-authored book about Oregon’s public lands.

Since 1997, when I first presented a conference paper in Baltimore as a graduate student, ASEH has been fundamental to my intellectual life. I was on the editorial board of *Environmental History* (and thus on the Leopold-Hidy Prize Committee) for seven years; chaired the Program Committee for the 2017 meeting; and served on the Advisory Board on Professional Development and Public Engagement and on the Rachel Carson Prize Committee. If elected to the Executive Committee, I would be especially interested in (1) helping to create a platform for greater public engagement regarding environmental policy, environmental justice, and the host of pressing issues around climate change; (2) helping to raise the visibility of women's scholarship within our field; and (3) addressing obstacles to conference participation by graduate students and public historians.

Chris Wells, Macalester College:

I am a professor of environmental studies at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, where, as the lone humanist in an interdisciplinary department, I get to teach widely across the field of environmental history. My first book, *Car Country* (2012), focuses on the proliferation of car-dependent landscapes in the U.S. before 1956, and my second, *Environmental Justice in Postwar America* (2018), documents the rise and evolution of the environmental justice movement, including its frequently uneasy relationship with "mainstream" environmentalism. Currently I'm finishing work on a co-edited collection (with George Vrtis) on the environmental history of the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota.

Ever since I scraped together enough pennies to attend my first conference in Providence, the ASEH has been my professional home. Over the years I have presented regularly at our annual meetings and have served the society in a variety of ways, including as a member of the local arrangements committee (St. Paul), the program committee (Chicago), the Samuel Hays Fellowship committee, and the ad hoc committee on the WEHN report on gender. I am both honored and delighted to be nominated for the executive committee. If elected, I would focus especially on being a good listener to ensure that the concerns and priorities of our membership are shaping the work of the society. I also have special commitments that I would bring to my work on the committee, including thinking about environmental history in the classroom, addressing issues of equity, access, and inclusion, and building stronger connections among environmental historians, environmental scholars in other fields, and environmental activists.

Nominating Committee:

Vote for TWO

Michael Egan, McMaster University:

I am an associate professor and University Teaching Fellow at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, and the series editor for the MIT Press list on “History for a Sustainable Future.”

I think I am a contemporary historian whose environmental research interests sprawl into the histories of science, technology, and the future. My first book, *Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival* (MIT Press 2007), tried to situate Commoner’s career within the context of the American environmental movement and the contemporary environmental crisis. I am currently completing a suite of projects that treat the history of chemical pollution. The first examines how and why Americans were so afraid of chemicals in the 1980s; the second is a global history of mercury pollution; the third is a translation from the French of François Jarrige and Thomas Le Roux’s *La Contamination du Monde* (co-translated with Janice Egan), a survey of pollution’s history through the industrial period. As these projects draw to a close, I am becoming increasingly interested in environmental arks: an examination of what is protected, why it is deemed worthy of protection, and how such preservation for the future is carried out. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault and the Galápagos Islands constitute the first two case studies of this new work.

My academic career has been deeply enriched by my participation in the American Society for Environmental History. I attended my first ASEH meeting in Tucson in 1999, and presented for the first time a year later in Tacoma before becoming the last member of the infamous Palouse School of the early 2000s. I have also appreciated the opportunity to serve the Society in multiple capacities. In addition to chairing the George Perkins Marsh Book Prize committee in 2008, I was the first Sustainability Committee Chair (2009-2014), and served on the Advisory Board for Professional Development and Public Engagement (2012-2017). I have twice been part of the Conference Program Committee (2011 & 2018), and once on the Local Arrangements Committee (2013). Happy 2019, everybody!

Phil Garone, California State University, Stanislaus:

I am very pleased to stand for election to the Nominating Committee. I’m an environmental historian and professor in the Department of History at California State University, Stanislaus. My research interests center on the environmental history of California and the American West, although my teaching extends more broadly to global environmental history. I have been an active member of ASEH since 1997 and have presented regularly at our annual meetings. I tremendously enjoy both the camaraderie and intellectual expansiveness of the ASEH—my primary academic home—and that has inspired me to serve the organization. I chaired the Samuel Hays Fellowship

Committee from 2010–13 and served on the Alice Hamilton Prize Committee in 2013–14. Since 2015 I have been serving a four-year term on the Editorial Board of *Environmental History*.

I bring an interdisciplinary focus to my research, having earned an M.S. in Ecology concurrently with my History doctorate. I am the author of *The Fall and Rise of the Wetlands of California's Great Central Valley* (University of California Press), which examines the ecological transformation of the valley since the nineteenth century. I co-edited a Forum on Climate Change and Environmental History for *Environmental History*, which includes my article on climate change and public lands management, and have published in other journals and anthologies. I have a strong interest in public history, and have written an environmental history of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for the California Delta Protection Commission. Currently, I am working on a book project on the history and ecology of the terminal lakes of the Great Basin from the late Pleistocene to the present.

As a member of the Nominating Committee, I would work to recruit officers and committee members from a variety of institutional backgrounds, as well as from diverse interdisciplinary environmental fields, to keep ASEH as vibrant and forward looking as ever. I would welcome the opportunity to serve ASEH on this committee.

Chris Jones, Arizona State University:

I am honored to be nominated for the ASEH Nominating Committee. I have been a regular attendee of the meeting for a decade and would be pleased to assist the organization in the future.

I'm an associate professor of history at Arizona State University, where my research focuses on energy, the environment, and economic growth. My first book, *Routes of Power*, studied America's first fossil fuel energy transitions—the rising use of coal, oil, and electricity between 1820 and 1930. My current project, *Immaterial Growth*, examines how economists have come to calculate economic growth without including the natural world.

As a member of the Nominating Committee, I realize it is important to cast a broad net to ensure we attract quality candidates that reflect and expand the organization's diversity. As editor of the H-Environment Roundtable Reviews for the past several years, I've needed to tap wide networks to find reviewers for books on topics far removed from my own areas of expertise. This experience has helped put me in touch with many members of our field, and more importantly, helped me learn how to discover new individuals when needed. If elected, I would look to use these contacts and skills to ensure a broad and deep pool of candidates for ASEH's positions.

Ling Zhang (張玲), Boston College:

It is my great honor to be nominated for the ASEH's Nominating Committee. I am an associate professor of history at Boston College. I am a historian of political ecology and political economy of premodern China. I come from an intellectual, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background different from the majority of fellow environmental historians and members of the ASEH, who are predominantly North Americans studying early modern and modern history of America and Europe. I believe I can serve the Committee by introducing a different voice, a different perspective.

As for my scholarship, I use the expression "environmental-economic-political trialectics" to describe my previous research. My first book, *The River, the Plain, and the State: An Environmental Drama in Northern Song China, 1048-1128* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), demonstrates how these three historical phenomena—the environmental, the economic, and the political—interacted to constitute an ever-evolving environmental world, a world of human and non-human relationships. In my current research, I am drawing inspiration from multispecies ethnography and New Materialism, and I am reeducating myself about ecology, biology, and climate science. I am currently writing a book tentatively entitled *13°C: Inventing A Temperature in South China and Its Global Comparison*. And together with Mindi Schneider (Erasmus Graduate School of Social Sciences and the Humanities, Netherlands) I am co-editing a volume tentatively entitled *Feeding China: Food Politics and Ecology*.

I was born, raised, and educated in China. In 2003 I went to England for postgraduate studies (Cambridge University), where I was trained in the fields of medieval Chinese studies, economic history, and history of science and technology. In 2009 I came to the United States for postdoctoral research (Harvard University and Yale University) and, for the first time, I encountered the field of environmental history and discovered the ASEH. Since then I have enthusiastically pursued my own intellectual reeducation and reinvention, which has led to my growing interest in various strands of environmental studies and my transformation into an environmental historian. As a relatively young member of the ASEH during the past ten years, I have come to see the society as my intellectual home. By participating in its annual conferences and utilizing its other resources, I have gained knowledge from its vibrant community, I have tested my ideas with its thoughtful members, and, most important, I have built friendships with colleagues of like minds who care about the future development of environmental history and the ASEH, especially in terms of their theoretical and methodological innovation and their geographical, cultural, ethnic, and gender diversification. In 2017, the ASEH awarded me the George Perkins Marsh Prize for my first book *The River, the Plain, and the State*. Since September 2017, I have worked for the Program Committee for the 2019 ASEH annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, which is chaired by Melissa Wiedenfeld. In summer 2018, I succeeded Edmund Russell as co-editor, along with John R. McNeill, of the "Studies in Environment and History" book series of Cambridge University Press. I am immensely grateful that the field of environmental history and the community of the ASEH have embraced me as a member and have offered me great support and opportunity. I would like to return such generosity by offering my service to the field and the community.