

# ASEH STRATEGIC PLAN, 2018: DRAFT

## PREAMBLE

Plan responds to maturation of the field of environmental history; shifting, and to some extent unpropitious, fiscal outlooks for non-profit organizations; an apparently narrowing horizon of opportunities for grant and foundation support; and the impending retirement, late in 2018, of ASEH's Executive Director.

## HISTORY & CONTEXT

Provides background on Membership, Conferences, Committees, Partnerships, the Journal, Finances

## VISION

*Environmental Historians seek to understand the complex entanglements of humans and the rest of nature over time. By fostering such inquiry, the American Society for Environmental History, aims to broaden debate about the desirability, possibilities and prospects of enhancing sustainability and reducing environmental and social injustice.*

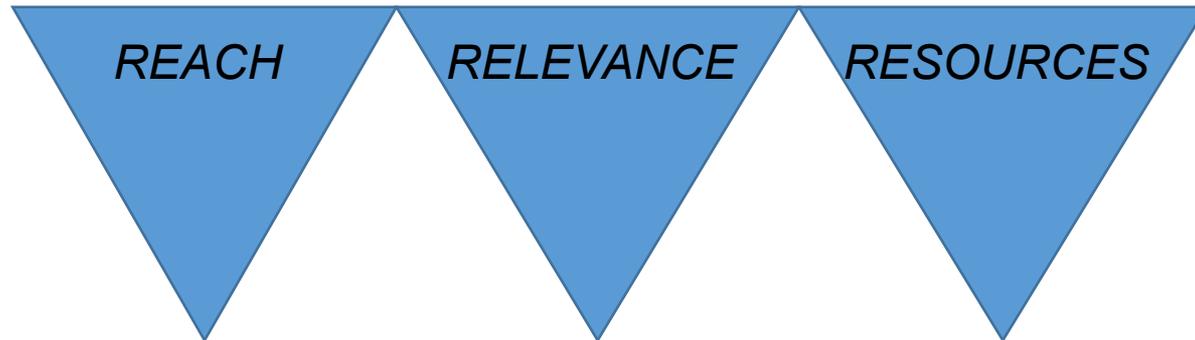
## MISSION STATEMENT -- Current version at <https://aseh.net/about-aseh/mission-statement>

*Proposed: The American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) increases understanding of current environmental issues by analyzing their historical background. Founded in 1977, ASEH promotes scholarship and teaching in environmental history, supports the professional needs of its members, and connects its undertakings with larger communities. Our organization advances a greater understanding of the history of human interaction with the rest of the natural world, fosters dialogue between humanistic scholarship, environmental science, and other disciplines, and supports global environmental history efforts that benefit the public as well as the general scholarly community. It promotes these activities through publication of the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental History*, annual conferences, scholarly awards and fellowships, online discussions, conversation with other professional societies, and public outreach.*

# GOALS & ASPIRATIONS

Action on three allied fronts is necessary to sustain global leadership in environmental history, while enhancing diversity, inclusiveness, and equity among ASEH members, and ensuring a robust future for the Society.

## GOALS



Subsidiary objectives flow from each of these goals. These objectives, styled as ASPIRATIONS, have been shaped by a careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Society (internal) and an assessment of the opportunities and threats (external) that lie ahead.

Summary discussion of each of these goals and aspirations is provided in three pages below. The full draft of the Strategic Plan is available at: <https://aseh.net/about-aseh/policies-and-guidelines/draft-strategic-plan-2018>

## *REACH: EXTENDING CONNECTIONS & IMPROVING VISIBILITY*

- As the field of environmental history expands, it becomes correspondingly more difficult for particular groups or organizations to identify their place within it and to ensure their continuing visibility. To retain a significant presence on the expanding global stage, ASEH will need to cultivate strategic links and improve its visibility. Rapidly evolving communication technologies offer opportunities and pose challenges.
- *Environmental History* has a digital face through OUP and its own webpage. Generally, it is a challenge to co-ordinate material on these sites. As the journal moves forward with a new editor assuming office in 2019, we should resolve this challenge of co-ordination and capitalize on opportunities to increase the digital reach of the journal and the Society.
- ASEH has a content-rich website, and Facebook and Twitter presences, but these sit in a fast-evolving landscape, and require regular attention and curation. Time and resources need to be found to attend to these media.
- Might ASEH take a lead role in promoting linkages and synergies among other similar organizations?

### **Aspirations:**

- ▷ **An improved social media presence.**
- ▷ **A revamped website for ASEH.**
- ▷ **Development of an active, web presence for, and by, the Graduate Student Caucus**
- ▷ **Appointment of a “Digital Communications Committee” (earlier established, no longer active) initially to advise and then (perhaps with expanded membership) to assist Executive Director in the above tasks .**
- ▷ **Consolidation and enhancement of web and social media presence of *Environmental History*, taking full advantage of capacities of new OUP platform.**
- ▷ **Development of fuller, more formal and productive links with other environmental history organizations.**
- ▷ **Creation of an integrated and reasonably seamless web- and social media-presence for ASEH and *Environmental History*.**

## *RELEVANCE: ENHANCING THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP*

- If baby-boomers habitually joined **associations**, whereas today's young professionals join **communities** built in digital space, through social media we need to disrupt this pattern by ensuring that people see benefit in, AND enjoy the experience of being part of, ASEH. Membership must mean more; it must offer privileges that go beyond the material and returns that are unlike those available on social media.
- There is an undeniable need to promote and nurture diversity, inclusiveness, and equity within ASEH.
- Much has been done to expand the tangible benefits, or privileges, of membership in ASEH, especially for junior scholars, but this remains a pressing priority. The Advisory Board for Professional Development and Public Engagement was established in the wake of ASEH's last Strategic Plan (2012); it should be well fitted to take the early lead in moving forward several of the aspirations listed opposite.
- The continuing commitment of existing members is essential to building a better Society.
- As ASEH transitions to a new Executive Director it is a good time to review and re-evaluate the tools and systems used by the Executive Director in fulfilling her/his tasks and serving the membership.

### **Aspirations:**

- ▷ Entrench diversity, inclusion, and equity as fundamental values of ASEH.
- ▷ Acquire data for evidence-based engagement with perceived issues relating to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- ▷ Implement strategies and steps to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusiveness, from stressing the importance of engaging, so far as possible, colleagues of all ages and identities in formal activities and casual conversations at annual conferences to actively reaching out to relevant groups, organizations and populations and enhancing support services (such as assisting with conference childcare)
- ▷ Increase activity and effectiveness of the Advisory Board on Professional Development and Public Engagement by improving communication with the Graduate Student caucus to refine and define goals for the Board and by providing it with the tools and resources needed to implement new strategies.
- ▷ Develop more transparent opportunities for professional service in ASEH.
- ▷ Expand programs that support junior scholars and other disadvantaged groups, such as the mentoring program, writing workshops etc..
- ▷ Increase support for travel bursaries, etc. especially for identified groups.
- ▷ Support (from ASEH funds) the activities and encourage the growth of regional clusters or nodes for the promotion of environmental history, the building of a broader constituency, and the introduction/ inclusion/ integration of "non-traditional" participants in ASEH activities.
- ▷ Evaluate tasks required of, and tools available to, Executive Director with a view to implementing changes as necessary to facilitate work of new incumbent in that position and respond to changing external circumstances.
- ▷ Acquire/ implement a Data Management System to facilitate record keeping and access to ASEH data.

## *RESOURCES: ENSURING THE CONTINUING VIABILITY OF ASEH:*

- Success in realizing the aspirations for Reach and Relevance itemized above will go a long way toward ensuring a vigorous future for ASEH, but unless they are matched by success in building a stronger financial base, all that is now solid might turn into air.
- The Society would be wise to anticipate a downturn in its financial picture, given the likelihood of stock market turbulence, the increasing restriction of US government agencies forming partnerships or entering agreements with third parties (the likes of which have benefitted ASEH in the past) and the inevitable start-up costs associated with the appointment of a new Executive Director.
- Further, it is increasingly difficult for conferences (once a source of significant revenue for ASEH) to do more than break even. Costs are rising, local-area university support is more difficult to secure and usually comes in diminished amounts, and Local Organizing Committees have mixed success in eliciting donations in support of meetings.
- New expenditures will also be necessary to enhance the benefits of membership in, and extend the visibility of, ASEH as outlined above.
- Fundraising and Development efforts have been undertaken, with limited return, but must continue. Stronger financial support from the membership at large would assist efforts to recruit external financial support, and is essential to achieving sustainability and our 2018 goals.
- The point here is to realize the Society's aspirations for greater reach and relevance, not to add to ASEH's financial reserves.

### **Aspirations:**

- ▷ **ASEH annual income (including returns on investments) increases by a minimum of \$35000 year on year for the period 2018-2025.**
- ▷ **Membership donations to ASEH increase year on year.**
- ▷ **Fundraising and Development Committee identifies and pursues productive fund-raising strategy/strategies.**
- ▷ **Executive Director develops a list (as broad as possible) of relevant foundations (and deadlines) for grant applications, and opportunities pursued.**
- ▷ **Establish formal operating reserve policy (specifying amount of reserve) with Executive Committee approval.**
- ▷ **Commit "surplus" funds to furthering Reach and Relevance of ASEH as per priorities above, and move on this front.**

**SUMMATION:** ASEH is in good shape to move forward. Yet work is required to maintain vitality as changing times necessitate adaptation and flexibility. Continuing success will depend upon the reformation of old-established habits, a commitment to more proactive outreach, and dedication to enhancing the benefits of membership in the Society. The Society should begin to move strongly toward its half-century mark immediately, but its long term health and vigor will depend on the success of necessary efforts to increase revenues.