

The local planning committee has put together an exciting program for the Environmental Studies Summit. The final session promises to provide a lively discussion with a diversity of views regarding the need for a new professional association to serve interdisciplinary environmental researchers, educators, and professionals. Below is additional information on this important session.

SATURDAY 2:45 p.m. PLENARY DISCUSSION: Is there a need or a niche for a new Environmental Studies organization? David Blockstein, NCSE; Will Focht, Oklahoma State U.; Bill Freudenburg, UCSB; Michael Reiter, Delaware State U.; Kimberly Smith, Carleton College. Facilitated by Susan Senecah, SUNY-ESF.

DAVID BLOCKSTEIN: Environmental Professional Confederation

In this session, I am intending to introduce the idea of a Confederation - an umbrella organization for environmental researchers, educators and professionals. The organization will have two components –

1. It will be a confederation of professional societies in the field, most of which are of subcritical mass and effectiveness.
2. It will be a professional society for individual scientists and practioners, many of whom lack a primary professional society, others of whom desire a secondary environmental society in addition to their home disciplinary society.

This could be an alternative to the Society that Bill is proposing, or it could be a compliment to a new society that would be part of the consortium.

(See attached file: Blockstein-Proposed Environmental Professional Confederation.doc)

WILL FOCHT: "Identities and Niches"

It is difficult to talk about organizational niches without first talking about organizational identities. Even more fundamentally, the articulation of an over-arching paradigm is a useful prerequisite to an identity discussion. I propose that sustainability conserve as the paradigm and that environmental studies is but one identity within this paradigm. I will also suggest a few niches that appear ripe for occupation within this identity domain within sustainability.

Suggested Outcomes:

1. Tentative agreement on a paradigm and identity
 2. Elicitation of important, though unoccupied niches
 3. Elicitation of alternatives for niche occupation.
 4. Agreement to continue discussion beyond this summit.
 5. Possible concrete steps for advancing the discussion through formation of discussion groups on various aspects of niche occupation and a mechanism for inter-group discussion.
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BILL FREUDENBURG: "Yes -- But How? An Invitation for Explorers and Pioneers."

Academics have professional associations for almost every field imaginable, from anthropology through zoology, but somehow, even more than a third of a century after the first "Earth Day," there has never been the same kind of professional association to for people working in more than a thousand interdisciplinary "environmental" programs that now exist at the college-university level.

At the end of the Santa Barbara Summit on Environmental Studies, the informal consensus was that we shouldn't rush into starting a new organization and should instead see what would happen. Part of what we've learned since then is just what organizational theory would predict: In cases where no one has any real authority or responsibility for getting things done, there have been some promising individual efforts, but organizational accomplishments have largely fallen through the cracks.

Particularly in light of promising work by a few key individuals -- significant progress on establishing a new journal, growing awareness of the need to put future meetings on a more systematic footing -- I believe the questions in this session's title have already been answered. Yes, there is both a niche and a need for new approaches to serve the faculty, students and staffs of interdisciplinary environmental programs. The key question is, what approach(es) will make the most sense?

Three main ideas have been expressed. One is that it would be best to join one or more existing associations, but to ask them to take on additional challenges that they have chosen not to take on in the past. (For a list of 25 organizations so identified, thus far, see [the website from the Santa Barbara Summit.](#)) The second is that we should put off any steps toward establishing a new organization until careful market research and planning can be done, providing better answers to the kinds of questions we can all imagine. The third is that the time has come to use the same "adaptive management" principles we sometimes recommend to managers -- to expect that there may be no real way to get complete answers to some important questions, at least in advance, and thus that we should move forward in the spirit of informative experimentation, adapting to what we learn, as we go.

Unless someone convinces me otherwise during the course of this Summit, I plan to invite those who are interested to join me in looking behind door #3 -- moving forward with at least the exploratory stages of a provisional or experimental association. I'm guessing that would mean modest dues, minimal bureaucracy, and a limited set of initial goals (e.g., developing future "Summits" and establishing an interdisciplinary journal). The actual decisions will depend on the views of the pioneers who are interested in exploring this new territory together.

I plan to argue against foreclosing other options -- including any later decisions to join forces with other organization(s), or to make other course corrections, based on accumulating experience. I will also argue, however, that it's high time to start accumulating that experience. The larger and more diverse the initial group of pioneers who care to join in the experiment, the more likely it is that our learning will truly reflect the terrain we need to explore, and to respond to the actual needs and desires of those who do interdisciplinary work on the environment

(See attached files: Freudenberg-AESS Target Practice Draft of Constitution.doc; and Freudenberg-Proposed AESS Const Bylaws v2.doc)

KIMBERLY SMITH

I'd like to say just a few words about the sort of association that people like me need: an organization not for administrators but for professors, where people working in various fields on environmental issues can share their research and talk about teaching strategies.

MICHAEL REITER: "Divide and Surrender"

I think the crux of the decision to establish any new endeavor (be it an academic organization, political party, or intramural softball team) is an understanding of the goals to be accomplished and whether or not they can be reached with existing resources. Therefore to me, stating that there is interest in forming a new professional Environmental Studies association to serve interdisciplinary environmental researchers, educators, and professionals presumes that such a society does not now exist and/or the goals for the new society cannot be achieved by any existing society. As the outgoing President of an international association of environmental educators, researchers, and professionals that has focused on transdisciplinary approaches to environmental issues for the last 13 years, this is disturbing to me.

While many people like to refer to themselves as environmental educators, I think that actual transdisciplinary environmental science/studies/whatever (if the field is truly transdisciplinary, the distinction between environmental science and environmental studies is at best artificial: call it what you will) is a relatively small field with relatively few people having the nerve and skills to blend disciplines effectively. To chop it up further based on shades of "interdisciplinarity" or type of "environmental" means following the model of the stove-piped disciplinary organizations within which we supposedly cannot find a home ("if there isn't a tiny little box for me, then I'll make my own tiny little box"). This group has the opportunity to step into an existing framework that shares most if not all of its philosophical perspectives, can support its efforts within an existing infrastructure, and can expand the scope of its work beyond stated horizons. So while it would be wonderful to have such a critical mass of people as participate in this Summit join the IEA in its efforts, either directly or through affiliation, instead I am left wondering if our geographically and disciplinarily broad approach to environmental scholarship will instead succumb to the mindset of traditional postgraduate academic training and be carved up into smaller and smaller pieces in direct opposition to the entire premise of the discipline itself.

However, this all assumes that the actual goal of the Summit is to build an academic association that will support and value a transdisciplinary approach to environmental scholarship; but perhaps the real goal has less to do with the field of study than to form yet another standard disciplinary organization for purposes such as tenure decisions and resume building. While the IEA could perform such a role, that was decidedly not our goal.

Forming a Confederation for Environmental and Sustainability Research and Education and Practice (CESREP)

David Blockstein

DRAFT June 4, 2007

Comments are welcome: David@NCSEonline.org 202-207-0004

There are perhaps 100,000 North Americans who are professionally engaged in **Environmental and Sustainability Research and Education and Practice (ESREP)**. Many of them belong to professional societies in their field. Most of these societies are small (less than 5,000 members) and are staffed by volunteers.

I propose that there be an umbrella organization for environmental researchers, educators and professionals. The organization will have two components –

1. It will be a confederation of professional societies in the field, most of which are of subcritical mass and effectiveness.
2. It will be a professional society for individual scientists and practitioners, many of whom lack a primary professional society, others of whom desire a secondary environmental society in addition to their home disciplinary society.

The closest model to what I'm proposing is the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), which serves this dual function, although it is more of a confederation than a professional society.

The functions and benefits of the organization would be:

1. As a confederation of professional societies in the field, it allows pooling of resources for services that each is unable to provide themselves - these include public policy (government relations), publications, and membership services. It could also include professional development, fundraising and seeking government grants and contracts. By coupling the confederation with a joint membership society (see next), it is very likely that membership in all of the constituent societies will rise as it becomes easier for a person to join - be it due to joint marketing, or because the existing societies become more like sections of the confederation.
2. As a professional society for individual scientists and practitioners, it provides a place for scholarly and professional exchange (through meetings, journals, and other means) - providing an opportunity for scholars and professionals in the environmental field to share ideas and experiences. I contend and many agree that the present collection of professional organizations is both inadequate (due to fractionation) and insufficient (due to lack of sufficient breadth) to serve the needs of many environmental faculty members (as well as professionals who incorporate science in their environmental work).

The potential member is professionally engaged in environmental and/or sustainability research, education or practice, either trained in a particular discipline and working at the boundaries of that discipline or trained interdisciplinarily and trying to maintain that approach in an organizational structure that may not value what they do. These people generally cross boundaries between organizations, including professional societies and may not be entirely comfortable in any one scientific field or association.

The potential members are worldwide and are often in great desire of colleagues who share their perspectives and who can be collaborators. They are also desirous of the increased

stature, professional recognition and credibility that comes from a professional society and peer-reviewed publications.

I see the need for a "home society" for individuals who do not fit within a single existing society. As we continue to grow the environmental field - be it environmental studies, environmental sciences or sustainability or something else - there will be an ever larger number of alumni from these programs who will be professionally employed in scholarly pursuits and in the application of scholarship, who will be served by such a group.

I also see the need for a "second society" for the environmental chemists and other physical scientists, environmental social scientists, ecologists and other environmental biologists, and environmental engineers to share ideas, develop joint projects and partnerships and to otherwise interact beyond their primary disciplinary professional association. This is largely what has happened already within NCSE's Council of Environmental Deans and Directors (CEDD) on a personal level as we have brought environmental leaders whose training and specialization has been in parts of the field together to learn from each other. We need to offer a similar opportunity to faculty members as well as interested professionals.

3. As a confederation and a professional society, it will advance the field, providing visibility and credibility, taking advantage of our collective strength to address a host of challenges where we are currently largely ineffective ranging from diversifying our own field to helping human societies to tackle our almost overwhelming environmental challenges and transform to sustainable pathways.

Individuals may choose to affiliate with one or more of existing professional societies, or could be simply a member of the confederation.

The confederation would provide common services such as a membership services, advancement of scholarship through publications, websites and meetings, career advancement services (including job bulletin boards and career counseling), and public policy representation.

I see this organization being complementary to CEDD, which serves the academic environmental leaders directly and their programs indirectly. This new organization would be aimed directly at individuals.

Brief background (from David Blockstein):

Environmental professionals (researchers, managers, lawyers, analysts, formal and informal educators, students) are a large but not well organized set of individuals. Some of them belong to a variety of professional organizations, most of which are small and lacking professional staff. Because these individuals are dispersed and their current professional associations do not work together, the community of environmental professionals is under-appreciated and often underserved.

There is no interdisciplinary scientific professional society for all environmental and sustainability researchers and educators. The emergence of sustainability science and education creates additional opportunities for participation and membership. Various environmental societies and some journals exist, but these are generally small – several thousand individuals at most, and completely disconnected. Working collectively, there is a potential membership pool of over 100,000 individuals who could be an effective force for increased professionalism, respect and resources for the field and for much better service in increasing science-based decisionmaking on environmental issues.

Professional Organizations that are potential members of the Confederation include:

- [North American Association for Environmental Education](#), Environmental Education Associations of various states (probably less than 3,000 individuals)
- Disciplinary scientific societies – many – some of the large societies, such as American Chemical Society, American Sociological Association, American Political Science Association have relatively small environmental sections; others such as American Geophysical Union, Ecological Society of America are entirely environmental, but not interdisciplinary.
- Interdisciplinary scientific and education societies - Interdisciplinary Environmental Association, Society for Conservation Biology Society, National Association for Interpretation, various small societies, particularly in the social sciences, these each attract only a certain segment of scientific community and none have sufficient mass or breadth – e.g. : Society for Human Ecology
- Associations of Environmental Professionals: National Association of Environmental Professionals – mostly people employed in environmental industry – e.g. consulting firms; Air and Waste Management Association, etc.

Discussion of Proposed AESS Constitution/By-Laws

Bill Freudenburg

Greetings. The proposed AESS Constitutional By-Laws (see Fruedenberg-Proposed AESS Const ByLaws.doc) is a HIGHLY preliminary but relatively fleshed-out "Target Practice Draft" of a Constitution and set of By-Laws of a potential new organization. Given that this note is going to quite a few people -- some of whom know more about the background, and others of whom know less -- I hope you'll forgive me if you're one of the people for whom the background explanation in this note is old news. Feel free to skip the parts you already know.

The idea isn't to present a *fait accompli*, but instead to offer one potential template of how an organization might be structured. Two considerations seem to me to be particularly important. The first is that, as several of you know, when Aldemaro Romero volunteered to host a third Summit, in the summer of 2009, what he heard was a deafening silence. Those of us who had worked on the Santa Barbara summit felt we had at least informal "authorization" to work with several of you in picking a site for a second summit (especially given that Syracuse was the only place really ready to move ahead in time for this week's meeting). But -- why was this a surprise? -- there wasn't really any person or organization having either the authority or the responsibility to pick the next spot. Fortunately, Al took the silence as indicating that no one objected, so thanks to his leadership, we can look forward to a Summit in 2009. Still, the experience taught me that there really, really needs to be at least some sort of organization/structure for developing a sensible schedule for future meetings. The second is more straightforward: As several of you know, Tony Rosenbaum has made excellent progress in developing a new journal, and it makes sense to develop the association and the journal in tandem, not at random.

To put things differently, those of you who attended the first Summit, in Santa Barbara, will remember that the predominant mood was to hold back rather than to formalize anything at that time. We have now held back for nearly a year and a half, and my sense is that the time has come for a cautious step forward. Taking the advice we sometimes offer to policymakers -- focusing on the advantages of "adaptive management" -- what I will propose is that we not wait until all the evidence is in, but instead favor doing an informative experiment. The proposed approach is to keep the initial costs as low as possible, to welcome those who are prepared to pay a few dollars in dues while not holding any grudges against those who are not prepared to do so, and to provide at least the minimum level of organization necessary to put the Summits and the journal on a modest-to-reasonable degree of organizational footing.

The file titled "Fruedenberg-Proposed AESS Const ByLaws" contains a document providing an organizational approach that is a bit more fleshed out than that "minimal" level of effort, though. The main reason is that people keep asking me, in one way or another, "how might that work?" In the grand tradition of fiction writers everywhere, I eventually went to work with Kimberly Smith (a prof at Carleton who made the mistake of volunteering at the wrong moment), putting together a "story" that seemed to me to make sense. Those of you who are familiar with other professional organizations will see that I have taken the liberty of stealing gleefully and adapting occasionally from the relevant documents of other, existing organizations.

...Kimberly and I have worked hard to make it clear that our intention is to work cooperatively with other organizations, not to develop hostile relationships with any of them. We're fully aware that there might be potential for mergers or collaborations in years ahead, and we see that as a good thing. The best way I can think of encouraging cooperation is to go beyond words and emphasize deeds, specifically monetary "deeds." Accordingly, as you'll see if you actually have a chance to read the document, although we propose that

dues be relatively low, we also propose that there be further discounts for folks who are already members of a very long list of other organizations that have at one time or another expressed an interest in working with us or having us join them. As the By-Laws are currently worded, that's a one-way offer, not a conditional one. In other words, we propose that if someone is already a member of (for example) AAAS, ESA, IASNR, IEA, NAEP, or bunches of other organizations, that someone can get a \$5 discount on membership in what we're provisionally calling the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences (AESS); then, we politely ask those other associations to reciprocate, but their reciprocating is not a precondition for continuing our own discounts. In the same spirit of avoiding any blood-on-the-floor, knock-down-drag-out fights, the document is worded as requiring only a majority vote of those who choose to join as the initial pioneers, NOT of everyone who attends the Summit in Syracuse. Do these kinds of details seem to you to convey the kind of cooperative spirit that was so much in evidence in Santa Barbara?

My own sense is that you may not want to spend TOO much time on the details, given that we may well decide at the Syracuse meeting simply to set up a couple of committees -- say, one to serve as a planning committee with actual authority/ responsibility for developing future summits, one to work with Tony Rosenbaum on developing the new journal, and one to iron out a better-developed Constitution/By-Laws than these and to use them to apply for non-profit status. Still, on the off chance that there's sufficient interest to adopt an initial set of Constitution/By-Laws, those of you who have the endurance are encouraged to look into the document in greater detail.

The basic thinking reflected in the document is that any such organization would need, in essence, a three-level arrangement for its policies: (1) a Constitution (including its mission statement), which should basically DEFINE the organization, and thus be hardest to change, (2) a set of more specific By-Laws, which should spell out HOW the organization makes decisions, and thus be medium-hard to change, and then, just as the U.S. Code is the "codified" version of the latest laws passed by Congress, (3) a codified set of adopted policies that should record what actual POLICIES/DECISIONS the Council has formally adopted by simple majority vote. ... [All] these items are here as a way of starting the conversation about what a future AESS ought to look like and work like, not ending the conversation.

Best -- Bill

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N.B. This letter was originally intended for the other presenters in the plenary session; it has been revised for broader distribution by the local Syracuse planning committee.