

Public History Education and Environmental Sustainability – Best Practices
NCPH Committee on Environmental Sustainability
Draft – Spring 2018

The NCPH Committee on Environmental Sustainability uses the broadly accepted Brundtland Commission (1987) definition of sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” as its working principle. As public historians, we accept the pursuit of social justice as part of our profession and issues of environmental justice are integral to these questions. In an era defined by climate change, a growing world population, and the need to live with finite natural and financial resources, the committee seeks to advance environmental sustainability as not only an essential value for preserving historic resources for future generations, but as a core principle of public history practice on par with shared authority and community empowerment.

Key areas for best practices in public history education and environmental sustainability include:

Public historians bring a set of skills, approaches, and training to issues of environmental sustainability:

- Research, analysis, and interpretative skills.
- Experience with communicating the complexities of everyday life and society through narratives.
- Experience with collaboration and shared authority.
- Training in creating outcomes aimed at general audience and communities.
- Knowledge of primary and secondary sources.

Knowledge, Skills, and Training in Environmental Sustainability include:

- Knowledge of environmental history.
- Interdisciplinary training: scientific literacy, remote sensing, hydrology, biology, architecture, engineering, and geographic information systems.
- Cultivation of a mindset of openness to multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary practice and knowledge of other disciplines related to environmental sustainability.
- Cultivation of a sustainability mindset that students will bring not only to their coursework, but also to their future positions as leaders in the field.
- Conversations with other public-facing academic fields such as public archaeology and public science.
- Continuing education.
- Field projects conceived in a way that address: environmental justice, landscape, environment, local history, interdisciplinary teamwork, and interdisciplinary conversations.
- Public historians are uniquely trained to communicate the historical dimensions of sustainability to public audiences.

Advocating and Exploring Sustainable Practices and Environmental Justice

- Living communities
- Indigenous communities
- Urgency
- Global warming
- Citizen science
- Consciousness, best options
- Precautionary principle

- Sarah Sutton – sustainability as an institutional undertaking

Environmental Ethics

- Encourage the creation of an ethics statement for your public program and classes.
- The statement should then be translated into action, including action by the administration.

Engagement, Activity, Activism

- Encourage colleagues who teach public history to incorporate environmental sustainability into their curriculum.
- Communication and collaboration with the public science community.

Regionally and Locally-Focused Projects

- Emphasize grassroots and local history as particularly public history
- Partnerships
- Site-based projects and research
- Alternatives to burning fossil fuels in visits to local sites
- Urban versus rural

Environmental Sustainability and Public History Education – Selected Resources
NCPH Committee on Environmental Sustainability
Draft – Spring 2018

Books - Environmental Sustainability and Public History

- Barthel-Bouchier, Diane. *Cultural Heritage and the Challenge of Sustainability*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013.
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Books – Environmental History and Climate Change

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- Lieberman, Benjamin and Nancy Gordon. *Climate Change in Human History: Prehistory to the Present*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
- Magnuson, Joel. *The Approaching Great Transformation: Toward a Livable Post Carbon Economy*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2013.

- McKibben, Bill. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: Times Books, 2007.
- McKibben, Bill. *Fight Global Warming Now: The Handbook for Taking Action in Your Community*. New York: Henry Holt, 2007.
- McKibben, Bill. *The Global Warming Reader: A Century of Writing about Climate Change*. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Moore, Kathleen Dean. *Great Rising Tide: Toward Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2017.
- Outwater, Alice. *Water: A Natural History*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.
- Ruddiman, William F. *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Seidl, Amy. *Finding Higher Ground: Adaptation in the Age of Warming*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012.
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Books - Urban Environmental History

- Dyl, Joanna L. *Seismic City: An Environmental History of San Francisco's 1906 Earthquake*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.
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Books - Eco-Feminism/Women and Gender in Environmental History

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- Musil, Robert K. *Rachel Carson and Her Sisters: Extraordinary Women Who Have Shaped America's Environment*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2014.
- Riler, Glenda. *Women and Nature: Saving the Wild West*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999.
- Scharff, Virginia, ed. *Seeing Nature through Gender*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003.
- Scott, Dayna N. *Our Chemical Slaves: Gender, Toxics, and Environmental Health*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014.
- Unger, Nancy C. *Beyond Nature's Housekeepers: American Women in Environmental History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
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Books - Environmental Health, Environmental Justice, and Environmental Racism

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- Davies, Katherine. *The Rise of the U.S. Environmental Health Movement*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.
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Books- National Parks, Public Lands, and Natural Resource Management

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Essays

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- Cafaro, Philip. "What Should NPS Tell Visitors (and Congress) about Climate Change?" *The George Wright Forum* 29:3 (2012): 287-298.
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Government and Organization Websites

Active History. <http://activehistory.ca/>

Climate History Network. <http://www.climatehistory.net/>

Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/>

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. <http://ipcc.ch/>

National Council on Public History. History@Work blog. <http://ncph.org/history-at-work/>

National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/index.htm>

National Trust for Historic Preservation. Preservation Green Lab. <https://savingplaces.org/preservation-green-lab>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. <http://www.noaa.gov/>

Preserve Nevada. <http://www.preservenevada.org/>

Public Lands History Center. <http://publiclands.colostate.edu/>

U.S. Global Change Research Program. <http://www.globalchange.gov/>

Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. <http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/>

Digital Projects

Climate Change and the Stories We Tell: The Making of a Digital Archive in Rural Maine.

<http://public.imagingamerica.org/blog/article/climate-change-and-the-stories-we-tell-the-making-of-a-collaborative-digital-archive-in-rural-maine/>

The Forest History Society. Repeat Photography Collections for Sustainability and Working Forests.

<http://www.repeatphotography.org/intro/>

The Forest History Society. Environmental History Bibliography Database.

<https://foresthistor.org/research-explore/archives-library/environmental-history-bibliography-database/>

Smithsonian Institution. Community of Gardens.

<https://communityofgardens.si.edu>