

Environmental Issues

Environmental Studies Program
Denison University

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Campus to be flooded with water experts in May

The Environmental Studies Program is excited to be bringing together an impressive and diverse group of water experts for its biennial Mellon conference in May. As part of the 5-year Mellon Grant received in 1999, the Program hosts a conference on an environmental topic of its choice. With water scarcity and quality issues becoming ever more critical—and 2003 being declared the International Year of Freshwater by the U.N.—the Program decided to focus this year’s conference on the topic of freshwater resources, from



Sandra Postel

local to global. Sandra Postel, Director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Massachusetts. There will also be presentations by sculptor Stacy Levy, geographer Frank Magilligan of Dartmouth College, ecologist Bill Mitsch of The Ohio State University, and philosopher Irene Klaver of the University of North Texas.

Like the successful 2000 Mellon conference, “Farming: People, Land & Community,” this year’s water conference is designed to allow ample oppor-

tunity for discussion. Small group and panel sessions each morning will encourage participants to discuss their vision for the sustainable management of water resources in Ohio and beyond. Participants will also enjoy field trips, choosing from a list of eight sites around central Ohio, including a walk through Raccoon Creek, canoeing Blackhand Gorge, and touring the Olentangy River Wetland’s Research Park at O.S.U.

Artwork, educational exhibits, food, and music will cap off the first day of the two-day conference at a reception at *The Works:*

Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology in downtown Newark. Participants can stroll the museum’s exhibits to learn about Licking County’s history, and view educational posters and distributional materials related to water. *The Works’*

Central Gallery will feature water-related artwork created by students in Ron Abram’s printmaking course. After dinner, attendees can unwind in the courtyard with some fine Midwestern music by Chicago’s JT and the Clouds.

Anyone with an interest in water is welcome to attend, including environmental scientists, grassroots and nonprofit groups, governmental organizations, public officials, artists, academics, and students.



Peter Gleick

We hope to see alumni and friends, as well as students, faculty, staff, and others May 7th & 8th!

More info and a registration form is on the conference website www.waterconference-du.org.

Or contact Sarah Beazley 740.587.5684, beazleys@denison.edu

Thanks to support from Mellon, the registration fee is very reasonable: \$85 standard, \$40 for students. (After April 9th, add \$25 late fee.) REGISTER SOON!

External reviewers report that ENVS is strong

Denison should be proud of the Environmental Studies Program, according to external reviewers that visited campus in November. Three reviewers—DeWitt John of Bowdoin College, Craig Davis of Ohio State University, and Karen Graves of Denison spent two days on campus learning about the program through individual and group meetings with administration and ENVS faculty, discussions with ENVS students, and a dinner with the ENVS Program Committee.

Through these experiences and from reading a self-study report written by Abram Kaplan and Tod Frolking, the reviewers produced a report that outlines the Program's strengths and offers suggestions for its improvement. The reviewers were very impressed with the Program's strong and dedicated faculty and its bright and motivated students. They report that ENVS "excels at teaching students to analyze complex problems,

think broadly, and express themselves effectively both verbally and in writing." They see the Program in a time of transition, and suggest several recommendations for the Program's future, including a call for more support from the administration, especially in providing incentives for more faculty to participate actively in the Program. They also suggest that the requirements for the major should be simplified, and that the ENVS faculty should consider ways to broaden the ENVS program to serve more Denison students.

ENVS looks forward to working with the administration toward streamlining and strengthening the Program. A Program Retreat is being planned for late spring/early summer to discuss a host of issues covered in the external review.

If you would like to view a copy of the Final Review Report, contact the ENVS Office.

Barney-Davis to house environmental science lab

The buzz and clanking of construction heard in Barney throughout fall and winter was not just from the "Campus Common" construction project on the new quad—Barney has some construction of its own, soon to result in the first environmental science laboratory for the McPhail Center for Environmental Studies. When it is completed this summer, the lab will be equipped with technology that will enable users to conduct water and soil analyses from samples collected during field studies. The lab will accommodate 6-8 users at a time, and will be

ideal for independent and summer research, and for small classes in ENVS and other departments.

Students and staff are anticipating the opportunities that the lab will bring to the Program. "I'm excited about the possibilities and potential of adding a science research facility to ENVS," said Dr. Doug Spieles, who looks forward to utilizing the lab for research with students and courses such as Environmental Assessment and Wetland Ecology.

Students create forum for environmental issues

Students interested in the environment now have another chance to discuss the issues important to them and the future of the planet. Fireside Chats is a student-formed discussion group open to any student with an interest in environmental issues. The chats were begun by a few ENVS students who wanted to provide a way for students to get together to talk about current environmental issues, as well as a way for first and second-year students to interact with more experienced students.

Students who attend like the Chats because they give them chances to interact with peers that they might otherwise not get the chance to talk to, in an informal setting that encourages thoughtful and open discussion. Often, students will gather background information on a couple of specific environmental topics for each meeting, but the discussions often expand to broader issues.

Lately, students have been brainstorming ways to draw a larger crowd. One hope is to bring guests from the community to lead the discussions. The Chats happen every other Wednesday at 8pm in Hibbs Library. For more info, contact Adam (klein_a@denison.edu) or Cari (ramsde_c@denison.edu).

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Newsletter of the McPhail Center for Environmental Studies
Denison University, Granville, Ohio.

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Human Nature makes climate change funny

Those who attended the *Human Nature's* performance of "What's Funny About Climate Change?" in February got the opportunity to take a light-hearted look at a situation that is usually no laughing matter. The hour and a half show used theater and comedy to scrutinize the way that humans are dealing with the global warming phenomenon.

The energetic cast of three kept the audience on their toes with a whole host of characters. The mobster, the evangelical minister, the ditzy trophy wife, the reporters with their references to unnamed yet reliable sources, the schmoozing politician, the general, and others – illustrated the ignorance, apathy, and selfishness of humans regarding the state of the planet. The edgy and engaging raven appeared throughout the show pleading with people to do something to fix the environment that they are destroying.



Simpson and Lapiner

While some audience members wish the show would have been more broadly educational about climate change, or given some more specific direction for action, the show's message was important and lasting. The show left the audience with a mission. Cari Ramsden ('05) states "I felt as if I had been challenged to make a difference." Others appreciated the unique way that the comedy group is educating people about the importance of environmental issues.

Human Nature, of Petrolia, California, has toured comedy and musical comedy shows about pressing environmental and social issues throughout the United States and in Europe. David Simpson, the writer of the script, and Jane Lapiner, the artistic director, have four children, and were joined on stage by their 22-year old daughter, Joyful Simpson.

Students get down and dirty with compost

The worms in Barney's basement are hard at work turning campus food scraps into a gardener's gold. The vermicomposting project began last fall with the ideas of first-year student Sarah Broderick, compost aficionado Ross Studlar ('04), and Program Manager Sarah Beazley ('02), with the support of ENVS and others around campus.

Start-up was inexpensive and fairly simple. A plastic bin (~3'x4'x2') with lid was purchased for little cost, and aeration holes were punched in the top and bottom to allow air circulation and drainage. The following contents were added: shredded, moistened newspaper for bedding; food scraps from Curtis Dining Hall (a big thanks to the Curtis staff for their cooperation); and redworms--about one pound graciously donated from Joe Kennedy, a veteran vermiculturalist from Denison's Service Learning program, plus ~2 pounds from a farmer/vermiculturalist in Athens, Ohio.

Little up-keep is needed as the worms do most of the work. Food scraps are added twice a week. Scraps include mostly vegetables, non-citrus fruits, bread products, eggshells, and coffee grounds. The worms break down the food and leave behind castings.

Two forms of excellent fertilizer are produced. The drainage, or compost tea, collected from the bottom of the bin (average 1 gallon/week) is used on Barney's indoor plants. The humus produced will be used on outdoor plants around campus and in the Homestead's garden.

More, bigger, and better composting ventures will hopefully result. This working system can serve as a model for others who want to start composting (info sheets will be handed out at an Earth Day dinner at Curtis Dining Hall and at the harvesting of the compost), and can directly aid other composting projects (i.e. some worms will be given to the Homestead's compost pile to speed up its productivity). The hope is that campus food waste will be further reduced and more compost will be produced, while increasing campus awareness of ways to take care of the earth.

This is not ENVS's only composting project. Dr. Goland's Senior Capstone class is teaching 5th-graders at Granville Intermediate School about the environmental benefits of composting, and has helped them start composting their lunch scraps. Keep your eye out for more info on that project toward the end of the semester.

Alumni Spotlight: Shannon Varley ('99)

In 1999, Shannon Varley graduated from Denison University with a major in Environmental Studies and a concentration in Agricultural Policy. It was a desire to improve the quality of our land, our water, and our health that set her on her way.

After graduation, Shannon took on an internship at Malabar Farm State Park, in Lucas, Ohio, where she worked under the guidance of Dr. Trish Mumme, a previous Denison professor rejuvenating Louis Bromfield's original organic gardens. While working for Malabar Farm Gardens, she also was assisting with Helping Hands: Garden of Hope- a project in Newark that serves court-appointed youth in a rehabilitation community garden program. While working these two jobs, she was hired by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as a naturalist for Malabar Farm State Park.

Shannon's passion for agriculture and the skills she had acquired during her time at Denison and beyond enabled her to begin her own organic farming venture outside of Mansfield, Ohio. Over the winter of 2000, Shannon and her business part-

ner, Shoshanah Inwood (Oberlin '99) rented 7 acres of fallow farmland and called it Silver Tale Farm. They began a small CSA (community supported agriculture) group in Columbus, built profitable produce relationships with Columbus restaurants, and secured a spot at the Saturday farmer's market at the North Market in Columbus. In Fall 2003, Shannon enrolled in Vermont Law School where she earned a Master's of Science in Environmental Law.

Currently, Shannon is the Farm Manager at the Red Wiggler Foundation, a non-profit community farm located outside of Washington, D.C.. The Red Wiggler Foundation was founded and is directed by Woody Woodroof (Denison '88). Their mission is to "cultivate" meaningful employment for adults with developmental disabilities, provide educational and service opportunities for area youth, and promote environmental stewardship.

To learn what other grads are doing, check out the Fall 2002 *ENVS Alumni Update* (www.denison.edu/enviro/alumni_update).



Shannon and Shoshona on Silver Tale Farm

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