

News Release

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University of Pittsburgh to host return of Society of Environmental Journalists' Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, October 2017

PITTSBURGH (October 20, 2016) ... The Three Rivers and their role in the evolution of the region will be the backdrop for “**Rivers of Change**,” the Society of Environmental Journalists’ 27th annual conference in Pittsburgh, October 4-8, 2017. Hosted by the University of Pittsburgh and its Swanson School of Engineering, the conference is expected to attract 600 to 700 attendees, half of whom are journalists from top U.S. and international media.

Reporters, writers and producers will engage with Pitt faculty and hundreds of community leaders, government officials, representatives of industry and environmental groups, scientists, educators, and students for panel discussions and workshops at the Wyndham Grand Hotel in downtown Pittsburgh. Participants will also experience the city’s evolution through tours of environmental sites. The group last visited Pittsburgh in 2004.

“The Society of Environmental Journalists is excited to partner with the University of Pittsburgh on the 2017 conference,” noted former SEJ Board President Jeff Burnside. “Our long-term members are especially looking forward to returning to Pittsburgh and experiencing firsthand the sustainable challenges and solutions that have given the city an international reputation.”

“Pitt and the Swanson School are pleased to welcome the Society and its members and to help them explore the region,” said Patrick D. Gallagher, chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh. “They’ll be able to help us celebrate Pitt’s 230th anniversary as the longest established institution of higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains, and learn about the University’s significant role in Pittsburgh’s success through continuous self-reinvention.”

The conference theme, Rivers of Change, reflects the impact that the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio rivers have had on the city and surrounding region, which encompasses ten counties.

Several post-industrial renaissances transformed the city once known as “Hell with the lid off” into an internationally recognized destination. The city is celebrated for first-of-its-kind green and living buildings, and the presence of leading research universities like Pitt has made environmental health a priority. The riverbanks, once used only for transporting materials and disposing waste, have been reclaimed by high-tech companies, university research centers, public parks, boating, and a bike path that runs from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C.

At the same time, the shale-gas boom and coal-industry bust are changing the physical and socioeconomic landscape. While Pittsburgh's downtown core and its neighborhoods are experiencing an urban renewal, some cities and towns along the rivers never recovered from the collapse of industry in the 1970s and 1980s. These and other issues relevant to environmental journalists will be explored in-depth during the conference, which is co-chaired by Jennifer Bogo, Deputy Editor of *Audubon* (and former Pittsburgher), and Don Hopey, Environment Reporter for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

"Pittsburgh is proud to once again welcome the Society of Environmental Journalists annual conference, and I would like to thank the SEJ board and the University of Pittsburgh for making their return possible," said Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto. "We hope they will experience the environmental success stories in our region, but also see where we are still a work-in-progress. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn how Pittsburgh can be a model for a 21st century sustainable, urban environment in America."

About the Society of Environmental Journalists

Founded in 1990, the Society of Environmental Journalists is a global nonprofit based in the U.S. and dedicated to improving environmental coverage in all forms of media. SEJ's members advance public understanding of critically important environmental issues by strengthening the quality, viability and reach of environmental journalism. Every day SEJ member reporters, editors and freelance writers reach millions of readers and viewers around the world.

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