

Peter Thomson, Mentor
Morgan Robinson, Mentee

Post-New Orleans Narrative

Attending the 2014 SEJ conference in New Orleans as an Elyssa Rosen Fellow was a terrific experience for me. Although my mentor Peter Thomson was unfortunately unable to make the conference, I nevertheless met a large number of journalists who care deeply about the environment and are devoted to telling compelling stories about environmental issues. My main reason for joining SEJ in 2013 was to connect with a community of people who are as concerned as I am about climate change and other environmental problems. In New Orleans I did just that. I wasn't able to advance my project about Fossil Fuel Divestment, but I was able to make significant strides on a second project I'm working on about climate change and public health. At the conference I met Linda Marsa, an acclaimed journalist and the author of "Fevered, Why a Hotter Planet Will Hurt Our Health." Linda's work is very impressive and connecting with her has been a game changer for me in my knowledge of the topic.

In addition, the chemical corridor tour organized by Lizzie Grossman and Amy Wold was fascinating. It was interesting to hear perspectives from representatives of the fossil fuel industry, government regulators as well as activists trying to fight industry abuses and members of the community affected by toxicity in their neighborhoods. The tour focusing on legacy lead pollution in New Orleans (organized by Brian Bienkowski and Lynne Peeples) was also a really interesting look into a topic I knew very little about. I'm hoping to connect with some of the New York-based journalists I met during the conference soon at a local meetup in the Big Apple. Finally, I learned at the bowling alley party that a group of environmental journalists really can boogie surprisingly well. Overall the experience was a blast, good people doing good work and I'm really glad I could connect with this community. – Morgan Robinson