

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### **Fifth Biennial Conference of ASLE: "the solid earth! the actual world!" sea-city-pond-garden**

**3-7 June 2003**

**Boston University**

The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) invites proposals for its Fifth Biennial Conference, to be held 3-7 June 2003 on the campus of Boston University. Taking as our theme a phrase from Henry Thoreau's "Ktaadn" ("the solid earth! the actual world!") we seek proposals for papers (15-minute presentation time), panels, roundtables, poster sessions, workshops, and other verbal performances that pertain to relations of language and place. As always, we welcome interdisciplinary approaches and readings of environmentally inflected creative nonfiction and poetry. Proposals are especially encouraged on (but not limited to) the following topics:

Coastal Literature/Literature of the Sea  
Urban/Suburban Nature and Nature Writing  
Environmental Justice, Activism, Literature, and Ecocriticism  
The Emersonian/Thoreauvian/Transcendentalist Influences on Nature Writing  
Literature of the Park and Garden/Landscapes with Figures  
Environmental Issues of the Northeastern United States  
The Place of Science in Ecocriticism/of Ecocriticism in Environmental Studies

Send one-page proposals for papers, poster sessions, workshops, or roundtables by 31 January 2003 to:

Ian Marshall  
Penn State Altoona  
Ivyside Park  
Altoona, PA 16601-3760  
ism2@psu.edu

Pre-formed panels and roundtables are acceptable and encouraged. Audio-visual requests must accompany the proposal. Electronic submissions accepted, but no attachments, please. Participation is limited to one session per person. All presenters must be ASLE members.

#### **Conference site:**

ASLE comes east! On the bicentennial of Emerson's birth in Boston, we will be on the campus of Boston University, for our first conference in an urban center and first time on the coast. We are also not far from settings that have inspired classic works of nature writing, such as Henry Thoreau's Walden. Lodging will be in dormitories on campus and at selected hotels near campus.

#### **Conference Themes:**

To quote from Thoreau's "Ktaadn": "the solid earth! the actual world!" By this we mean to suggest that our concerns are with the world most of us are living in today, amid landscapes with human figures. To

take advantage of our setting, we will feature readings and academic sessions on the topics of "sea-city-pond-garden."

### **Plenary Speakers:**

A debate on ecocriticism by Leo Marx (*The Machine in the Garden*) and Lawrence Buell (*The Environmental Imagination*); a dialogue on finding common ground between the sciences and humanities by Pulitzer Prize-winning biologist Edward O. Wilson (*Naturalist, Consilience, The Ants, Sociobiology*) and literary critic Laura Walls (*Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth Century Natural Science*). Readings and presentations by urban environmental historian Sam Bass Warner (*The Urban Wilderness: A History of the American City*); novelist Barbara Neeley, author of *Blanche Cleans Up*, set in Boston; poet and nature writer Cynthia Huntington, author of *The Salt House*, set on Cape Cod; Abenaki storyteller, poet, and critic Joseph Bruchac; nature writer John Hanson Mitchell (*Living at the End of Time, Walking Towards Walden*); ecologist Sandra Steingraber (*Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer and the Environment, and Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*); and fiction writer and environmental activist Grace Paley.

### **Paper Sessions:**

Generally, paper sessions will have three to four presentations, strictly limited to a maximum of fifteen minutes each. Proposals will be subject to a refereed review process. Pre-formed panels (either paper sessions or roundtable discussions) are encouraged; we invite those wishing to organize or join such sessions to post notices to the ASLE listserv and/or to allied lists: Diversity-L, ASLE-CCCC (the ecology and composition list), and others listed on the ASLE web site.

### **Roundtable Discussions:**

In order to better engage with issues relevant to our membership, to encourage presentation alternatives to the paper-reading format, and to reduce the number of concurrent sessions while at the same time welcoming as many participants as possible, we encourage roundtable submissions on the topics listed at the top of this CFP. These roundtables, or issues forums, can accommodate anywhere from four to a dozen participants. Send a one-page position paper on the topic in order to be considered. Note, however, that the position papers will not be read as part of the roundtable. Rather, they will be reviewed by the roundtable chair, who will cull from them pertinent issues and discussion questions. As ASLE grows, we face an increasing tension between keeping our conference inclusive and keeping our program schedule manageable. To maximize the number of people who can present and to enhance the interest of sessions and the attention-spans of attendees, we encourage session formats in which several presenters discuss their work and engage in conversation about it rather than read papers verbatim, making that work otherwise available to those who wish to read it in entirety.

### **Poster Sessions:**

Most of us in the humanities have had little experience preparing poster displays, but they have been used to great effect in other disciplines. Poster sessions provide another alternative, a potentially lively and powerful one, to the paper-reading format of most literature conferences.

### **Workshops:**

We will kick off the conference on Tuesday afternoon, 3 June, with workshops--everything from hands-on demonstrations of environmental studies lessons to a poetry writing workshop. The emphasis will be on active learning and participation. Proposals for workshops should follow the same format as paper and roundtable proposals. Preformed workshops accepted and encouraged.

**Field Sessions:**

In what is becoming an ASLE conference tradition, on Thursday afternoon we will head outdoors for field sessions--to the Boston Harbor, Arnold Arboretum, Boston's "Emerald Necklace" of urban parks, the Olmsted National Historic Site, the Harbor Islands, a visit with the environmental justice group the Dudley Street Initiative. Sign-up sheets for these will be available at the conference.

**Field Trips:**

On Saturday afternoon most of us will head out to Concord by bus for a walk around Walden Pond, visits to the literary sites of Concord (Emerson and Hawthorne homes, Sleepy Hollow graveyard), a gathering at the Thoreau Institute. Others may visit Plum Island Nature Reserve or ferry to Provincetown. We will also have information available about other trips you can take on your own. Those who want to get in some hiking may want to climb Monadnock or take "a walk to Wachusett," both about an hour's drive (or so) from the city.

**Registration:**

Registration materials will be sent out on or about 1 January 2003. We will also have a website available and linked to the ASLE website.