



## Call for Papers

### The Heart of the Gila: Wilderness and Water in the West

Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE)  
2016 Off-Year Symposium, June 8-11, 2016  
Western New Mexico University  
Silver City, NM

[asle.wnmu.edu](http://asle.wnmu.edu)

**[Deadline Extended to March 15, 2016](#)**

Letting our location be our guide in focusing the theme, the Gila Wilderness was established as the nation's first wilderness area 91 years ago and continues to define our regional identity. The Gila River remains the last free-flowing river in the Southwest, but there is a current proposal in the state legislature to dam the river; local activists have been organizing to fight the proposal. Drought, compounded by climate change, has greatly affected our area, with the largest fire in New Mexico state history occurring in the Gila during 2012. The Gila was the northernmost region of the Mogollon People a millennium ago, and our region remains very culturally diverse with its close proximity to the Mexican-U.S. border.

We invite papers, roundtables, presentations, creative work, video presentations, and discussions from a range of disciplines and academic backgrounds that explore the past present, and future of wilderness, mythology of the West, Old West, New West, water, drought, climate change, desert, wastelands, atomic testing sites, military and western space, rivers, dams, tourism, fire, forest management, native cultures, migrant cultures, borders, activism, rhetoric of place, writers of place, writers of the West and Southwest (Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, too many to name), wilderness philosophy, and diversity in the West. We invite participants to interpret the theme broadly. We especially welcome creative writers, activists, graduate students, and academics working in the humanities and beyond to consider submitting to the symposium.

Symposium sessions will be 90-minutes long. Both scholarly and creative submissions are welcome. Pre-formed panels are encouraged.

- proposals for pre-formed panels must include at least four presentations (papers, readings, provocations, responses, etc.), 15 minutes-max each, plus a chair; panel organizers must submit the proposal on behalf of all panelists (500 word abstract for the panel outlining topic, format, participants' roles; 300 word abstract for each contribution as relevant to the format; all contact information)
- proposals for panels may also include roundtables (five or six 10 minute-max presentations plus discussion)
- individual paper/reading/performance submissions are for 15 minute presentations; 300 word abstracts should describe both form and content and include all contact information

**Please submit your proposal by March 15, 2016 on-line at [asle.wnmu.edu](http://asle.wnmu.edu). We will notify you of its final status by March 21, 2016.**

For questions about submissions, the program, the symposium site, or field trips, please contact the symposium organizer Dr. Michaelann Nelson at [Michaelann.Nelson@wnmu.edu](mailto:Michaelann.Nelson@wnmu.edu).

## Plenary Speakers

Our list of invited speakers includes writers and scholars that are inspired by the people, culture, and landscape of our region in the Southwest.

- David Gessner is the author of nine books, including *All the Wild That Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner and the American West*, as well as, *My Green Manifesto*, and *The Tarball Chronicles*, which won the 2012 Reed Award for Best Book on the Southern Environment and ASLE's award for best book of creative writing in 2011 and 2012.
- Sharman Russell, author of *Diary of a Citizen Scientist: Chasing Tiger Beetles and Other New Ways of Engaging the World* (WILLA Award Winner), as well as a dozen other books, writes primarily about nature and the southwest. She makes her home in the Gila.
- Dave Foreman, founder of the direct action environmental group EarthFirst!, has written several books, including *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* and *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*. He is currently the director of the Rewilding Institute, a think tank dedicated to promoting conservation and species extinction.
- Lucy Tapahonso, Navajo Nation Poet Laureate, and author of several books of poetry, including *The Women are Singing* and *Blue Horses Rush In*. Her poetry is inspired by the idea that the feminine is a source of balance and power in the world.
- Priscilla Ybarra, author of *The Good Life: Mexican American Writing and the Environment*. Dr. Ybarra's work investigates Mexican American literature and environmental issues. She is a professor of English at the University of North Texas.
- Phillip Connors, author of *Fire Season: Field Notes From a Wilderness Lookout* (National Outdoor Book Award, Sigurd Olsen Nature Writing Award), has spent the last decade as a fire lookout in the Gila National Forest. He previously was an editor at the *Wall Street Journal*.

## Travel Awards

We will offer ten awards of \$250 each to graduate students and independent scholars to help defray the cost of attending the symposium. Information on how to apply can be found on the website.

## Symposium Location

Western New Mexico University is a diverse, public, regional university with about 3,500 students. Silver City is located in southwestern New Mexico at 6,000 feet elevation. It is the gateway to the Gila National Wilderness Area, the United States' first wilderness area, as well as Gila Cliff Dwelling National Monument. It is known for its vibrant art community, locavore food scene, and all-around funky downtown. It has been recently named one of the top 20 small towns to visit by *Smithsonian Magazine*.