

Call for Papers

Disasters Wet and Dry: Rivers, Floods, and Droughts in World History

An international conference to be held in Beijing, at Renmin University of China,
May 23-26, 2013

Co-Sponsored by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU
Munich, and the Center for Ecological History, Renmin University of China

Too much, too little of a good thing? Water is one of the basic elements of life on earth, yet again and again it has been either in short supply or overabundant plenty. The result has been a string of environmental disasters that have prompted bursts of migration and adaptation, along with projects of flood control or water enhancement. It seems that societies can never find the perfect balance.

This small workshop-like conference will explore across national boundaries and throughout the human past the social, political, cultural, and economic effects of flooding rivers and cycles of drought. We invite scholars in history and related disciplines to submit paper proposals on such questions as these: How have different societies understood drought and flood, and how have traditional knowledge and modern science shaped social understanding of those phenomena? What strategies of coping have societies pursued, and where did they succeed and where did they fail? What kinds of community relief have they devised, short-term or long-term? How have natural disasters influenced the development of civilizations? How may human actions have created conditions for disastrous floods and droughts?

Paper proposals for individual submissions should be one-page long (or about 300 words) and include a title and a one- or two-page CV. ***The deadline for consideration is 1 January 2013.*** Successful proposals will be announced by 1 February, and complete drafts of papers will be required by 1 May.

Travel expenses for scholars living outside of China will be paid for by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. Scholars living within China should depend on their own universities for covering travel expenses. For all participants, hotel expenses for four nights will be covered by Renmin University of China.

The last day of the conference will be devoted to a field trip to the Hai River, once the site of severe, destructive flooding and now reconstructed as the centerpiece of the city of Tianjin's burgeoning tourist industry.

Send proposals in Chinese or English to all of the conference organizers:

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Mingfeng Xia is Director of the Center for Ecological History, Remin University of China, and professor of history in the Qing Institute. Christof Mauch is Director of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, LMU Munich, Germany. Donald Worster is Hall Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA, and Distinguished Foreign Expert, Renmin University of China, Beijing. The conference secretary is Professor Shen Hou, Deputy Director of the Center for Ecological History and assistant professor of history at Renmin University of China.