Reclamation and Restoration Professional Interest Group: A Brief History

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Landscape architects have been active in the specialization of surface mine reclamation since the years after World War II. The late Ken Schellie, a surface mine reclamation practitioner and author of numerous formative surface mine reclamation publications during the 1960s and early 1970s, assisted the University of Illinois in training many landscape architects for surface mine reclamation. After Ken's death, one of these graduates, Anthony (Tony) M. Bauer, continued Ken's activities by teaching reclamation planning and design, organizing reclamation conferences, and assisting in the formation of the National Stone Association's "about-face" program and the reclamation competition (open to landscape architecture students).

At ASLA annual meetings, Tony organized education sessions, such as the one in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1985. At that time ASLA did not publish proceedings. Tony and other landscape architects engaged in the reclamation education session would prepare materials/handouts for attendees. It was specialist activities such as those illustrated by the landscape architects interested in surface mine reclamation that led to the idea that there should be open committees specializing in various professional practice areas. It was believed that at the ASLA annual meetings, education sessions and publications did an adequate job for entry-level professionals, but that these resources lacked the technical depth for advanced professionals. Thus, there was a push for greater involvement at the advanced level.

In 1985, Anthony M. Bauer (Michigan State University) served as the first chair of the ASLA Open Committee on Reclamation. Besides Tony Bauer, several other landscape architects were influential in the development of the Open Committee on Reclamation, including: Georganna Collins (Extractive Landscape Vice Chair and newsletter co-editor) from Texas A&M University, Larry Happle (Non-extractive Landscape Vice Chair) of the New York State Electric & Gas Corporation, Norm Dietrich from Iowa State University, Todd Lewis of AMAX in Indianapolis, Indiana, and Jon Bryan Burley, who at that time was at North Dakota State University (and served as the committee's newsletter co-editor). The committee newsletter was called LARS: Landscape Architectural Reclamation Supplement, and was published three times in 1987.

Norm Dietrich was the second chair, beginning in 1987. Todd Lewis was the third chair, serving from 1988 to 1989. Jon Bryan Burley was the fourth chair, serving from 1990 to 1992. Gary L. Ruyle from California was the fifth chair, serving from 1993 to 1995. Anthony M. Bauer and Jon Bryan Burley, now both at Michigan State University, were co-chairs from 1996 to 1998, with Jon remaining as chair until 2000. Bernie Dahl (Purdue University) became chair in 2001, adding Lee Skabelund (VPI&SU / Virginia Tech) as a co-chair in 2002.

From 1987 until 2000, there were 19 newsletters produced with an electronic newsletter (literally a collection of articles prepared by group members after the 2002 Annual Meeting), published in 2003. The committee also hosted education sessions in 1985, 1988, 1989, 1990 (Reclamation Diversity), 1991 (Reclamation Visions and Realities), 1992 (Reclamation & Restoration), 1993 (Ecology & Restoration Projects & Issues in Landscape Architecture), 2002, and 2003. The committee often published proceedings of its education sessions. In addition, the committee held reclamation tours in 1989 (Florida phosphate mines), 1990 (California sand and gravel mines), 1993 (Chicago wetland restoration), and a restoration tour in 2003 (focusing on restoration and ecology in coastal Louisiana).

The committee also managed a budget, using funds for the publication of newsletters, proceedings, a yearly roster and membership survey, hosting participants in the education sessions, and providing

mailings of pertinent printed materials published by others. The membership rose to over 100 members in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then the membership has held steady at around 80 members.

Beginning in 1991, the ASLA Open Committee on Reclamation discussed changing the name to the ASLA Open Committee on Reclamation and Restoration. The committee membership thought that the name change was a good idea as many of the members were also interested in landscape restoration. The Spring 1992 newsletter 6(1), announced the name change as approved by ASLA. Then, in 1998, the "Open Committee" title was changed by ASLA to that of "Professional Interest Group".

Starting in 1997, ASLA initiated a program where all of the newsletters were produced at national headquarters, including the Reclamation and Restoration P.I. Group's newsletter. Then in 2002, ASLA desired that all newsletters be published on the Internet. Lee R. Skabelund led the development of the Professional Interest Group's website during 2002 and 2003, and was assisted by Allegra Bukojemsky (the group's web-mistress from 2002 to 2004; refer to http://host.asla.org/groups/rrpigroup/index.cfm).

At times, there have been members who have been liaisons to other organizations: American Society for Surface Mining and Reclamation, International Erosion Control Society, Society for Ecological Restoration International, the Wildflower Research Center, and the International Association of Landscape Ecologists. Reclamation and Restoration P.I. Group members (Norm Dietrich of Iowa, Georganna Collins then of Illinois, Tony Bauer of Michigan, Todd Lewis of Utah, Sue Massie of Illinois, Craig Johnson of Utah, John Ellsworth of Utah, Gary Ruyle of California, Tom Nieman of Kentucky, and Jon Bryan Burley of Michigan) contributed chapters to a book concerning environmental design for surface mine reclamation published by Mellen Press in 2001.

From 2000 to 2002 Bernie Dahl chaired the Reclamation and Restoration Professional Interest Group. At ASLA's 2000 Annual Meeting in St. Louis, Bernie led a discussion about who to invite to speak at the following year's group-sponsored educational session. Subsequently, working with Lee R. Skabelund, Michael Hough (of Toronto, Canada), and Fred Phillips (of Arizona), Bernie developed a restoration and reclamation session for the 2001 Annual Meeting in Montreal (cancelled due to 9/11 attacks in the US), and the 2002 Annual Meeting in San Jose, California (where Bernie, Lee and Fred presented student and professional reclamation and restoration planning/design work from sites and landscapes in Indiana, Michigan and Arizona). Brief case study reviews (from a "stream restoration" field trip) were developed by Jon, Lee and Mark Eischeid (see: http://host.asla.org/groups/rrpigroup/newsletter.htm).

In San Jose, Lee R. Skabelund was elected as Co-Chair of the group, while Allegra Bukojemsky (of California) volunteered to help place group information on the Internet. Lee began initiating plans for the 2003 Annual Meeting in New Orleans, where two back-to-back educations sessions and a group-sponsored "Coastal Restoration Ecology" field trip were held. In New Orleans, Lee moderated a restoration ecology panel discussion while formal presentations were given by local experts in restoration ecology and cultural geography (including Don Davis of LSU's Applied and Educational Oil Spill Research and Development Program, and Greg Grandy and Kenneth Bahlinger, landscape architects working with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources). Keith Bowers of Bio-Habitats in Maryland also discussed the Nine-Mile Run stream reclamation and restoration project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Greg and Kenneth led the group's field trip to the USDA-NRCS Plants Materials Center in Golden Meadow, Louisiana as well as to a number of wetland and shoreline restoration sites.

For 2004, the Reclamation and Restoration Professional Interest Group will host an education session and a tour at the ASLA Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah. Both will consider the linkages between restoration, landscape ecology, and landscape planning. In addition, contributions to the web site will continue to be made. Discussions have already begun for the 2005 Annual Meeting in Florida. Papers in the Annual Meeting Proceedings/Abstracts have been prepared four years running (from 2001 to 2004).