

Waterfront News

The newsletter of *Changing Urban Waterfronts*, an SSHRC-funded research project hosted at York University
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Waterfront News is a newsletter about the researchers in Toronto and around the world who are working together to better understand changing urban waterfronts

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Reclamation of Ashbridge's Bay (Fisherman's Island behind), 1915

2007 CONFERENCE EDITION

Changing Urban Waterfronts researchers are taking part in two major conferences this spring, each of which reflects important aspects of the research focus of our project.

Gail Fraser, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York, is off to Penn State University in May with Research Assistant Dave Andrews for the [50th Annual International Association of Great Lakes Research Conference](#), where they will present their findings on the diets of double-crested cormorant chicks on Toronto's Leslie Street Spit.

Gail and Dave's research highlights important links between socio-political and natural processes. The findings of their study particularly highlight the processes through which "problems" with nature are socially constructed.

In addition, their findings could have a direct bearing on the decision-making processes of wildlife managers facing concerns from the fishing and aquaculture industries about rising cormorant populations both on the Spit and throughout the Great Lakes.

Their presentation is part of a special two-day symposium entitled [Double-crested Cormorants of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin: Recent Studies, Movements, and Responses to Management Actions on Their Biology and Ecology](#).

Other members of the research team are also busy at conferences this spring. Gene Desfor, Professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York, Dr. Tuna Tasan-Kok of the Catholic University of Leuven, and FES PhD student Jennefer Laidley

have organized three paper sessions at the [Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting](#) being held in San Francisco in April.

The sessions, entitled [Quays to the City: Critical Perspectives on Urban Waterfront Transformations](#), include papers that explore a wide variety of perspectives, including governance, heritage, sustainability, ethnicity, sexual politics and nature, in cities across North America, the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean.

One of the themes running through many of the papers is the impact of urban waterfront development on the natural environment of these waterfronts, and the interdependence of nature and society in waterfront transformations, both historically and in contemporary context.

[Other members of the CUW research team are also presenting at the AAG, in other sessions:](#)

Scott Prudham will present a paper entitled *Hybrid Neoliberalism or Small Scale Socialism: What is Community Forestry Exactly?*.

Tenley Conway is co-author with her graduate students on two papers: *Use of Ancillary Data in an Object-Oriented Classification of Urban Land-Cover*, and *Alternative Geomatic Approaches to Developing Spatially Disaggregate Data on Exurban Development*.

Paul Jackson will present *Funding Biodefense: Public Health, Bioterrorism, and the Emerging Infrastructure of Biosecurity Research*.

More information on both conferences can be found online - the IAGLRC is at www.iaglr.org, and the AAG is at www.aag.org.

Calling All Waterfront Researchers: The International Network of Urban Waterfront Research Needs You!

AAG attendees with urban waterfront research interests are invited to attend the second meeting of the INUWR at 7pm on Thursday, April 19 in Room Union Square 14 of the Hilton Hotel.

This meeting will build on a very successful two-day workshop held in Copenhagen in June 2006, which generated lots of enthusiasm for establishing a research network and set out a broad range of research themes for pursuing urban waterfront research around the world.

We look forward to seeing you there! For more info, contact Gene Desfor at desfor@yorku.ca.

Our Project: 'Changing Urban Waterfronts'

In April 2005, we began a three-year research project funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

We are a [multi-disciplinary group](#) of seven faculty members from four universities in North America and Europe. As well, several PhD and Masters students are associated with the project and their research is vital to our work.

Drawing on the ideas of [social nature and political ecology](#), we are studying Toronto's waterfront as an interactive space in which the social and the natural are constantly remaking one another. That is, urban waterfronts are always both social and natural and need to be studied as such.

The overarching question this project seeks to address is: How have various discourses and practices combined to produce and regulate Toronto's [waterfront as a socio-economic and ecological place and space](#)?

This question is framed temporally through an investigation of a hundred year historical period, and spatially by focusing on the eastern part of Toronto's waterfront, including the Port Lands, the Don River Valley and the Leslie Street Spit.

Political Ecologies of Waterfront Transformations: Special Issue of *Cities* - July 2007

CUW researchers Gene Desfor and Susannah Bunce have 'guest edited' a special issue of *Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*.

The issue features papers presented at the 2006 AAG, and its theme is 'political ecologies of waterfront transformations'.

Be sure to look for *Cities* in July!

CUW Researchers Activities

Scott Prudham recently published a new book entitled [Knock on Wood: Nature as Commodity in Douglas-Fir Country](#) in which he explores the contested and complex relationship between nature and society in the battles between industry and environmentalists around old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest. The book received great reviews, and was the subject of a review symposium in the November 2006 issue of the journal *Antipode*.

At a recent conference on [Diversity and Culture in Global Cities](#) held at Fudan University in Shanghai, Gene Desfor presented a paper entitled "The Spirits on Toronto's Waterfront." The conference brought six York University faculty members together with a group of scholars from Fudan. The conference raised a lot of interest in comparing Chinese and Canadian cities, and a follow-up meeting is planned for Toronto in September 2007.

Jennifer Bonnell, a PhD student at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, is writing her dissertation on the [social and environmental history of Toronto's Don River](#). Her work was featured recently in a *Toronto Star* newspaper article on local graduate students, which generated positive feedback from local environmental activists and historians.

Michael Moir, York University Archivist, was engaged by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority [to serve as an historical consultant](#) during a site walk in October as part of the Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project, as well as during its public forum at Metro Hall on December 3. The events revealed a high level of public interest in the changing configuration of the mouth of the Don River, as well as in the long-term environmental impact of industrial land use in the Port Lands.

More about the CUW project can be found on our website at www.yorku.ca/wfronts.