

#SEJ2023 Post-Conference Evaluation – Summary of Results

Top-Line Results (from survey of 255 respondents):

- 98% of survey respondents would recommend the conference to their colleagues
- 94% said the conference made them better equipped to cover environmental issues
- Respondents said networking offers the most value to attendees, followed by a deeper understanding of the issues, and speakers.
- 32% said they would file stories from the conference.

About the Attendees (from registration data):

Total Attendees: 850

- **682 General Attendees**
 - 29% identified as non-white
 - 59% identified as female or non-binary
- **168 Speakers and Organizers**
 - 28% identified as non-white
 - 55% identified as female or non-binary

Conference Events:

- **Workshops:**
 - Covering Biodiversity: Saving All the Parts?: 91% Excellent or Very Good
 - Covering Watersheds As Connected Systems: 72% Excellent or Very Good
 - Community-based Environmental Journalism Listening Session: 100% Excellent or Very Good
- **Plenary Sessions:**
 - Opening reception and dinner: 76% Excellent or Very Good
 - Clean Energy and the Land — The High-Stakes Battle Over Climate Solutions: 85% Excellent or Very Good
 - The American Buffalo: 70% Excellent or Very Good
 - Interior Secretary Deb Haaland Keynote and Q&A: 77% Excellent or Very Good
 - Covering Gender and Environment Connections, at Home and Abroad: 59% Excellent or Very Good.
- **Thursday tours:** Every tour received mostly Excellent or Very Good rankings. Three tours received 100% Excellent or Very Good ratings: Sagebrush Country; Saving Raptors; Food Production and Water Quality in the Magic Valley.
- **Networking Events:**
 - Exhibit Tables: 69% of attendees visited them and they received great comments.

- Independent Hospitality Receptions: 64% attended and they garnered good reviews.
- Networking Happy Hour: 63% attended and 84% rated them Excellent or Very Good.
- **Concurrent Sessions (panels):** mostly Excellent or Very Good ratings.
- **Saturday mini-tours:** 34% participated, mostly Excellent or Very Good reviews
- **Saturday dinner and dance party:** 85% Excellent or Very Good reviews
- **Sunday Books and Authors at Zoo Boise:** 20% attended and 94% rated it Excellent or Very Good.

Selected Open-Ended Responses:

“It is the best networking opportunity in our field - above any other. People are kind, helpful and open to welcoming new members and nurturing early career journalists.”

“SEJ's conferences are the best journalism conferences I've ever attended.”

“The SEJ conference is, by far, the most valuable event I have ever attended to support environmental journalism. It is full of content and networking and is FUN.”

“The conference broadened my perspective on environmental reporting. It gave me new ideas to explore and motivated me to dig deeper into issues that I frequently cover.”

“Great selection of speakers and themes. Deep expertise around every corner — very helpful over time w/ sources and background info.”

“This conference brings together all of the journalists who cover the same themes, providing an excellent opportunity for networking and exchanging experiences. This was an excellent conference for networking, learning tools for researching issues, focusing on solutions, and holding the powerful accountable.”

“Really appreciated the field trips, I have not encountered something like this in other conferences I've been to and it was great to really go in depth into a topic with experts like this and see a ‘behind the scenes’ on a particular issue.”

“I have no doubt that the knowledge I acquired from the panels I attended, along with the new contacts I made in the conference will make such a difference not only for my work but for everyone who attended such a great event!”

“Every panel session I went to was fantastic! Great experts to connect to on a range of topics.”

“Great panels on fire, rights of nature, and wildlife corridors, appreciated the wide-range of experts, and especially including indigenous perspectives — absolutely essential to most topics discussed.”

“As a student, the biggest benefit of attending was being able to meet journalists from very diverse backgrounds. I now know that there are several pathways to cover the environment, and that gives me hope for the future.”

“I come to SEJ conferences for story ideas, perspectives and contacts. This conference met that goal.”

“The SEJ conference is an incomparable opportunity for me to sharpen my skills, learn about new issues, learn new things about issues I'm already covering and to make contacts that push my reporting forward to new heights.”

“The sheer improved diversity of this conference was inspiring. Also, the number of young journalists gives hope to this SEJ vet for the future of environmental journalism.”

“It's a great opportunity to find community within the environmental journalism field. It did not feel competitive at all even though we all do the same sort of reporting. I can't wait to go back next year.”

“As an editor, it is a valuable opportunity to develop relationships with existing and potential contributors. It's also a reliable source of story ideas. And not only ideas, but inspiration; being in the room with so many talented journalists at the top of their game and hearing how they work and what they're working on, always brings me fresh excitement and energy for the work. Plus, the tours are always a wonderful break from routine. Lots of networking and relationship-building happens on the bus, and the itineraries give journalists up-close exposure to beautiful places, imperiled wildlife, impressive engineering feats, powerful speakers from frontline communities, and other experiences that you can't replicate from a newsroom or home office.”

“SEJ's annual conference provides great opportunities for meeting journalists and editors, meeting potential sources, and getting story leads. I always leave with a renewed sense of professional passion and curiosity.”

“Best run down on latest environmental issues. Best place to meet reporters/editors with similar interests. Bus tours often provide opportunity for packaged stories with great sources, info. Great place to meet new sources, learn new reporting, data techniques.”

“SEJ conferences offer new and experienced journalists an outstanding mix of background and contacts on environmental issues in the news (or that ought to be) and of tools and techniques for improving reporting and story telling. The networking with other journalists also offers inspiration and support to what can often be a lonely undertaking.”

“SEJ's annual conference offers inspiration and hope for the future on a beat where that can feel difficult to find at times. In Boise, I was thrilled to see so many younger journalists charging hard into sustained coverage of complex stories. It felt a bit like a changing of the guard, and that's a good thing.”

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“Great networking and learning opportunities. And FUN.”

“This is by far the best conference that I've been to as a journalist. The workshops were genuinely informative and the field trips really helped me get a deeper understanding on issues I'd like to cover in ways I did not know previously.”

“Such a wealth of expertise, fellowship, and networking all in one location! I have never been to such a dynamic conference... if there were three of me, I would be lucky to make all the connections and

sessions I would have wanted to. I will absolutely recommend the conference to all my friends and colleagues, and I will be sure to attend again next year!”

“SEJ is the conference where I've always gained the most contacts, leads, networking and skills.”

Responses from Non-Journalists/Public Relations Professionals

“Gave me insight into what env reporters are interested in covering and their current challenges.”

“I came to network with environmental journalists and learn what types of stories they were interested in, to find common vocabulary, and to better understand the perspective of journalists.”

“I have had multiple calls and emails from journalists as follow ups, and appreciate the opportunity and exposure to speak to many.”

“As a representative of a large forest land owner in the US, I met many journalists who did not have any contacts similar to the company I work for.”

“I met some new reporters that might be interested in our expertise.”

“I was able to connect our organization to a larger national audience through the mini-tour.”

“I am not a journalist, but I am optimistic that I can better facilitate interactions between journalists and scientists.”

“Great resource to network with environmental journalists who can amplify the message of environmental justice work done by my organization and others like us.”

“As a sponsor/exhibitor looking to engage reporters on our mission and area of focus, SEJ is very valuable. Well organized and thoughtful programming.”

“It was a phenomenal event! The variety and spectrum of speakers was over the top wonderful. Deeply knowledgeable; broad spectrum of topics; accessible even if you are not a journalism professional.”

“I always recommend this conference to enviro journalists and PR folks. It's incredibly valuable: the connections you make with people in the same field are worth their weight in gold and are absolutely essential to being able to sustain a commitment to this difficult, exhausting, and depressing work. The people are fantastic, the conference is always great, and I always leave feeling hopeful and buoyed.”

“The SEJ Conference is really a high-level opportunity to both engage with the most urgent environmental issues and to connect with top environmental journalists.”

Concrete Outcomes Reported by Attendees:

“In addition to what I learned about various issues I made several excellent contacts, including one potential funder and a colleague working on the same material who is interested in collaboration.”

“At SEJ, I've made friends, gotten gigs, developed book promotion contacts, kept abreast of what's happening in a wide range of topics and fields. Each conference has been different; each very rewarding.”

"I walked away with a much better idea of some of the issues facing the Mountain West and with specific story ideas for my beat."

"I felt my vocabulary for covering the intersection of environmental threat and impacts and social issues was expanded."

"The small events (i.e. beat dinner) and networking time were the most useful. That's where I met editors, had conversations, and was invited to pitch them."

"The conference was very helpful for connecting with sources, experts and authorities. In particular, I have struggled to get Tribal sources on the phone through cold calling to discuss wildlife management and land politics. At SEJ, I met many, and had valuable face-to-face interactions that have allowed me to get in better touch."

"I was able to network and meet other journalists as well as potential sources. The plenary sessions helped focus some ideas into pitches as well."

"I pitched an editor and gained confidence talking with reporters"

"Two stories underway, including one that is in partnership with another SEJ member."

"Getting to know experienced journalists in person, receiving mentorship and having a fitting space/time to analyze and reframe the work I am doing, is something that cannot happen in a webinar or a one-day event. I also heard from senior reporters that conferences are where they come to renew themselves, even if they don't get new 'tools and skills' from it."

"I met several people who I plan to work with in the future, including freelancers I would like to hire."

"I met someone who is now interested in teaching my book in her university classroom."

"I've never been to a conference with so many book writers before. I met a book editor who encouraged me to write a book as did another SEJ attendee."

"I've scheduled background interviews with sources I met during my Thursday tour to explore potential stories."

"I got some excellent face time with important people in my field, who I'd otherwise only interacted with on Twitter."

"Met a great group of scientists we may feature in a future production; networked with potential partners and fellowship candidates; met and interviewed the SHERF fellows; premiered our latest series for SEJ participants, and got valuable, in-person feedback."

"I made a contact with an editor for a publication I wasn't familiar with and am now likely to do freelance work for."

"I made a connection with an academic studying pesticide exposure for farmworkers — this is a story I've been working on but would not have known about this expert source."

“I made a lot of new contacts at other newsrooms to do future partnerships with, and I was also able to reconnect with some people I hadn't seen since before the pandemic that I'd like to work with. I also came away with several story/project ideas.”

“I'm working on a story about Salmon in Idaho based on one of the fieldtrips!”

How did attendees pay for the conference registration and travel?

- 49% by their employers
- 37% by self
- 13% by SEJ waiver or fellowship
- 6% by other fellowship or grant

Comments from Attendees Receiving Fellowships/Waivers:

“I would not have been able to attend without the SEJ/Uproot diversity fellowship, and I am truly grateful for it as this is easily the best conference I've been to as a newer journalist. I am truly grateful for the program and hope it can be expanded so even more people, who otherwise would not be able to, can attend.”

“I pitched a proposal for a grant after learning about it through SEJ emails related to the conference and met the sponsors. I was granted the funding last week and I believe that couldn't have happened without the support of the SEJ diversity grants that paid my way to the conference.”

“I really couldn't have afforded to go to the conference without SEJ support. The reimbursement procedure was quick and straight-forward! Everyone that was in contact with me was nice and super friendly. I don't have any complaints regarding the fellowship :)”

“As a Diversity fellow, I attended the conference. I wouldn't have been able to attend such a great conference without the fellowship.”

“I have never attended SEJ or any conferences because of limited funds. If I had not received a fellowship this year I would not have attended the conference. Absent a significant improvement in my finances, I will probably never attend another conference. I am grateful for the opportunity to have attended this one.”

“The diversity fellowship was a unique opportunity to attend the wonderful SEJ Conference 6 years after attending the 2017 conference in Pittsburgh also as a fellow! I couldn't have attended without it and I feel very motivated to help the SEJ conference being more global. I'm really thankful for this opportunity and looking forward to the next one!”

“As an emerging freelance photojournalist in the midwest I have limited resources and opportunities to attend conference. This limits my ability for professional growth and networking. I would not have been able to attend the workshop without the Uproot Project Fellowship.”

“I was so grateful to receive the money and I really could not have attended the conference without it as a student journalist.”