

#SEJ2022 Houston Post-Conference Evaluation – Summary of Results

Top-Line Results (from survey of 153 respondents):

- 99% of survey respondents would recommend the conference to their colleagues.
- 99% 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 story ideas.
- 40% said they would file stories from the conference.

About the Attendees (from registration data):

- **572 Total Attendees**
 - 29% identified as non-white
 - 52% identified as female or non-binary
- **185 speakers and organizers**
 - 33% identified as non-white
 - 46% identified as female or non-binary

Conference Events:

- Workshops:
 - Covering Biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples: 75% Excellent or Very Good
 - Covering Oceans and Coasts: 85% Excellent or Very Good
 - Tracking Toxics Data Training: 95% Excellent or Very Good
- Plenary Sessions:
 - Opening reception and dinner: 90% Excellent or Very Good
 - Reporting on Oceans in 2022: 78% Excellent or Very Good
 - Energy Transition and Environmental Justice: 72% Excellent or Very Good
 - EPA Press Conference: 58% Excellent or Very Good
 - Solutions Journalism and Environmental Justice: 85% Excellent or Very Good.
- Thursday tours: Every tour received mostly Excellent or Very Good rankings. Four tours received 100% Excellent or Very Good ratings: Sustainable Fishing; Flood Protection; Superfunds; and Highway? No Way!
- Networking Events:
 - Exhibit Tables: 70% of attendees visited them
 - Independent Hospitality Receptions: 72% attended and they garnered good reviews.
 - Networking Happy Hour: 69% attended and 86% rated them Excellent or Very Good.
- Concurrent & Breakfast Session (panels): mostly Excellent or Very Good ratings.
- Saturday mini-tours: 57% participated, mostly Excellent or Very Good reviews
- Saturday dinner and dance party at Rice University: 89 percent Excellent or Very Good

Selected Open-Ended Responses:

“It's a must for anyone pursuing career in environmental journalism.”

“This conference is unparalleled in its scope and depth in terms of the environment and intersecting issues, and also organizers' understanding of what information/skills/experiences journalists most need and value.”

“I would recommend to anyone who is interested in reporting on the environment because it is a WEALTH of information that makes you better equipped to handle reporting out in the field.”

“The SEJ conference is a fantastic networking event. It's professionally energizing, highly informative, and gobs of fun.”

“Not only did I develop useful connections, get numerous story ideas, and learn about many new resources, I found kinship with fellow journalists at the SEJ conference. Any one of those alone could be reason enough to recommend the conference; all of them together are fantastic.”

“It was a great opportunity to network and a fun conference. I also left with sources and story ideas -- as valuable as gold.”

“I would absolutely recommend the SEJ conference to colleagues, and already have to many after I returned! It was so much fun and absolutely worth attending. It was great to meet other journalists from around the country that are as passionate and excited about covering the environment as I am. I just felt inspired and energized being at SEJ's conference.”

“Great value. Efficiently run. Good programming.”

“The conference balances expert speakers who put emerging environmental issues in context; accomplished journalists whose real-world insights and hands-on instruction can help spark story ideas about those emerging issues; and field trips that make those issues feel real and urgent in a way that can't be accomplished within the walls of the conference center.”

“The inclusion of justice framing of environmental issues (example, panel on responsibility to/for indigenous community partners and audiences; or, plenary on environmental justice) was an important, necessary feature of this year's conference. Now, more than ever, journalism will have to be knowledgeable on and legible to the justice conversation.”

“I always have incredible conversations with journalists, students, frontline community members and others before, during and after SEJ, this conference was no exception.”

“The conferences allow attendees to choose their own adventures according to what they need most in their professional development. The ability to choose sessions that fit your beat and field trips that are most relevant to the topics you cover tends to help journalists who are doing similar work connect with each other while developing their capacity to tell better stories.”

“Workshops and tours were exceptionally well designed, planned, and executed.”

“It's a fantastic opportunity to network, learn, and explore a new part of the country that you haven't been, all while getting outdoors!”

“It was incredibly comforting to be in rooms full of people whose work is so similar to mine. Not everyone understands the demands and stresses of reporting on environment/climate, and it was nice to meet people who can commiserate. I was inspired by the accomplishments and insights of peers!”

“It's great to see that many of us are working toward the same thing/struggling with the same challenges. Makes me feel less alone!”

“It's a wonderful combination of collegiality and knowledge building, as well as invaluable experience, relative to advancing the field of environmental journalism.”

“I would recommend it to both seasoned and rookie journalists alike. There's something for everyone to gain at this conference, regardless of career level.”

“Only at SEJ conferences do I find myself pulling out my reporter's notebook not only during panels but just as frequently as I engage in conversations with fellow journalists, editors and speakers during all the in-between moments: on the bus heading to a field site, over drinks at the hospitality reception, during a breakfast meetup. It's a place for sharing and learning, all fueled by our curiosities as journalists, and I always emerge a more-informed person.”

“The SEJ community in general does an excellent job connecting reporters with resources and helping them do their job better, but the SEJ conference is clearly a labor of love for many dedicated people, and the value of that hard work will be immediately apparent for anyone who has the good fortune to attend.”

“It's a wonderful combination of collegiality and knowledge building, as well as invaluable experience, relative to advancing the field of environmental journalism.”

“The conference is a great way to acquire substantive knowledge, practical journalism tips, and network with colleagues and potential sources. Plus, the attendees are a fun, friendly and welcoming group.”

“It's a great learning experience as well as an opportunity to meet and make friends with many other folks in the field. That latter bit might not sound very important, but it helps make environmental journalism feel like less of a solitary struggle and more like a combined effort of many smart journalists.”

“It's a great, fulfilling experience that opened my eyes to the world of science journalism and got me excited to join the field as a new college graduate.”

“This was my first conference, but an opportunity where you can meet new people who are either at the same level as you or people who have more experience is always great. This is especially true when meeting people who you have been reading (about them or their stories) for a while or in class.”

“The perfect balance of information and fun was heavily emphasized at the beginning, and the conference went beyond that! To have back-to-back workshops with breaks in between where people can grab refreshments and connect was everything I could want in a conference. I loved how there was always something to do, and by the end of the day from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. at night I wasn't exhausted but satisfied because I knew I learned so much information and made memories.”

Responses from Non-Journalists/Public Relations Professionals

“It's just so hard to meet so many journalists to meet under one roof. Only conferences like that of SEJ make that possible.”

“Great chance to connect with environmental reporters and learn what issues are important to them as well as getting the word out about our company.”

“I'm not a journalist but it was great to network and learn how reporters see environmental issues. Made me feel more comfortable working with them on projects.”

“great platform for networking with journalists”

“It was fun. Got to meet a lot of cool journalists and get a better understanding of the environment you're in and the challenges the people face.”

“An awesome experience that was wholly worthwhile. Would recommend to any environmental PR folks.”

Concrete Outcomes Reported by Attendees:

“The conference helped me realize that I really *do* want to cover the environment and climate change in the long run. I came into the conference unsure and in the middle of applying for a job on an unrelated beat that I felt ambivalent about. After the conference, I withdrew that application and applied to other climate-focused jobs.”

“I'm pretty confident that I cover my specific beat really well, but there were a number of sessions and plenaries when I attended on Friday and Saturday that spurred new story ideas and prompted me to find some new sources.”

“I pitched an editor and got a commission. I met more freelance colleagues. I had a great time. And felt part of a journalism community. It made me want to participate more in SEJ.”

“I got an interview on the sidelines with a NOAA scientist that produced a story. Also shared short news items from the conference in my weekly climate newsletter. I got plenty of other story ideas and background that will help me with my ongoing coverage.”

“I was in the process of doing reporting on a story about gas stove emissions and indoor air quality and I was able to find sources thanks to the “Luncheon Plenary: The Energy Transition and Environmental Justice.” I reached out to Jamal Lewis and Alex Breckel for my story.”

“I pitched an editor who encouraged me to follow up with two stories, discussed a grant with a funder, connected with a future speaker.”

“Getting in touch with comms folks at key agencies & NGOs has been faster/smoothen after meeting them in person at SEJ.”

“I made connections I wouldn't have otherwise made. I was approached for a job.”

“I made new or deeper contacts with 90 people, including 70 journalists.”

“I had a bunch of journalists, whom I met at SEJ, pick up stories that my organization was eager to pitch.”

“I pitched my editor oil and gas stories based on sources I met at SEJ and published stories including government database info I learned about at an SEJ panel.”

“I would not see many environmental stories that are happening right around me in my community. There are stories everywhere that I previously didn't see. And now I have better ideas about where to pitch them, too.”

“I got three internship opportunities and one interview. This was HUGE considering I was the only freshman at the conference.”

“I received several freelance pitches, some of which my outlet is biting on, and met with several people interested in job openings we have or will have in the future. I also met several people I work with but had never met face-to-face.”

“I connected with other journalists about republishing and collaboration possibilities at outlets I wouldn't previously have thought of.”

“I met up with reporter/friends I hadn't seen in a while and was able to generate story ideas with at least one so far that I am currently working collaboratively with on a new story.”

“Quick response from Region 6 officials on post-conference questions.”

“I came away with so many ideas for story pitches.”

“I met a lot of new people that I would not have been able to network with in person. I learned networking skills in a large environment.”

“I met a lot of people who could help me explore audio and I was able to learn new skills through the workshop.”

“Learning Tableau and finding out about databases I can use for my data stories I found mentors that I wouldn't have known of otherwise.”

How did attendees pay for the conference registration and travel?

- 48% by their employers
- 23% by self
- 23% by SEJ waiver or fellowship
- 10% by other fellowship or grant.

Comments from Attendees Receiving Fellowships/Waivers:

“SEJ is the best! I felt super supported, listened to, etc. I could not have attended the conference without it. SEJ staff were highly responsive and communicative. So grateful for the support all around.”

“I wouldn't have been able to attend this conference without the support of the Diversity Fellowship, and I am eternally grateful to have this experience at a pivotal point in my early career.”

"I definitely wouldn't have attended the conference without SEJ's support which would have been a huge bummer. The conference was the professional and personal highlight of my year so far!"

"I couldn't have attended the conference without financial support, and I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity. Only those I interacted with can testify to the value of my presence at the conference, but I worked in earnest to be a benefit to SEJ and the field of environmental journalism."

"I couldn't have attended without it! I would have missed out on life changing information I needed especially on data and to give me a bigger vision of what I might accomplish and one plenary was 80% female and 50% of that was WOC! I nearly fainted from delight like a total #Bridgerton! WOW such amazing women with insightful thought provoking questions! WOWOWOWOWO!"

"I really could not have attended the SEJ conference without it and am so very grateful for this fellowship opportunity."

"I couldn't have attended without it due to the financial cost of travel, lodging, meals, and conference registration fee(s)."

"I could not have attended without the SHERF fellowship!"

"I wouldn't have attended all the days and all the workshops I was able to attend had it not been for the hotel room being covered by SEJ."

"I honestly couldn't have attended without the fellowship and I was able to help one of my classmates who paid for her registration and travel but stayed with me in my room to help save money."

"I couldn't have attended the conference without the fellowship and I'm really grateful to SEJ and the sponsors for this opportunity. It gave me such a wonderful foundation for covering and reporting environmental stories."

"I couldn't have attended without it. Thank you SEJ!"

"I 100% would not have been able to attend without it; Hope to be in a better financial position next year to attend again."

"I would not have attended the conference without the Science/Health/Environment Reporting Fellowship. It was a fantastic opportunity for which I am very grateful."

"I couldn't have attended the conference without the SEJ Diversity Fellowship. I am grateful to that opportunity and I hope such opportunities continue in the future."

"The SEJ diversity fellowship was incredibly valuable and I'm grateful for the support -- I wouldn't have been able to attend the conference without it."

"I don't believe I would've been able to attend the conference without the financial support of SEJ."

"I couldn't have attended without the SEJ/Uproot diversity fellowship! The application process was easy."