



SXSW ECO

# SXSW Eco: Interview With Chris Sonnier

By Jordan Gass-Poore'  
*Web Content Manager*



Chris Sonnier, SXSW Eco producer and program manager. Courtesy photo.

Just call Chris Sonnier the mastermind behind **SXSW Eco**, an annual conference that brings together people from around the globe to discuss and collaborate on solutions for a sustainable planet.

The native Texan and University of Texas at Austin alumnus initially became involved with SXSW as a seasonal employee. It was during this time that Sonnier said he realized that the company's March events had limited potential growth because of their already overwhelming popularity.

So, Sonnier brainstormed how he could help grow the SXSW brand outside of the annual festival's film, music and interactive spheres. To his surprise he said SXSW was receptive to his idea of an annual solutions-based environmental conference. In a couple of weeks this idea was put into motion, that is, after he condensed his 50-page report about why what was to become SXSW Eco should exist. Sonnier said he “widdled” the report down to one page after “a painstaking month” and, like they say, the rest is history.



This year SXSW Eco celebrated its fourth anniversary. Sonnier may no longer be an Austinite – he’s pursuing a master’s in sustainability at Harvard – but he continues to produce and manage the conference’s content.

**Jordan Gass-Poore’: How did the idea for [SXSW Eco] come about, especially the collaboration with you and SXSW? How do you pitch an idea like this to SXSW?**

**Chris Sonnier:**



**JGP: What hurdles, if any, did you have to overcome for the inaugural SXSW Eco?**

**CS:**



**JGP: What countries did people come from to attend the inaugural SXSW Eco?**

**CS:**



**JGP: What other yearlong efforts or collaborations does SXSW Eco partner with?**

**CS:**



**JGP: How many people are on [the SXSW Eco] team?**

**CS:**



**JGP: Prior to your involvement with SXSW, what was your environmental background?**

**CS:**



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JORDAN GASS-POORE'

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