

Proposed GLTHEC Meeting Strategy: Pre-Meeting Preparations and Group Seminar Topics

We are bothering you now with this mailing to help us all do pre-meeting preparation for the upcoming *Global Human Long Term Ecodynamics Conference* at Eagle Hill Maine Oct 15-18. We want to involve everyone in the final preparation for the conference and to draw on your impressive collective reserves of experience in organizing conferences and attending both successful and unsuccessful meetings of many kinds. Advice and counsel is very welcome at all stages.

We now have approximately 50 participants and three days to work together, so we do need some structure to make sure we accomplish our goals and maximize the time available. We desperately want to avoid a traditional “endless 15 minute papers from hell” sort of meeting, and we also want to avoid the sort of cognitive game playing “let’s all hold hands and pretend we are in a helicopter crash” that we have all survived in other meetings. Instead we are trying to work with you now to organize a set of **group presentations** on a series of broad topics that are clearly of general interest and then move to **general discussions** of how to move forward to do better work with help from our friends, ending with a well considered **community statement** and some immediate **deliverables**.

This is why we have asked everyone to post readings, links, and short biographies on the conference site ahead of time. We hope that everyone will have a chance to see the range of excellent work that is being done by the participants and their teams, and so that none of us are total strangers to each other when we all meet at Eagle Hill. As with any seminar, the more prep time we all put in beforehand the better the class will go on the day- a familiar situation for all of us.

Before the meeting we would like to work with you all so that we can make the most of the short time we will have together in Maine, and to provide everyone with a good heads up now on what tasks we will ask of you when you arrive. Here is what we propose to ask of you:

- **Short introduction** of yourself and your working group: 2-3 minutes and 3-5 slides. This will take place early on the first day and serve to get us all well introduced.
- **Working Group Caucus and Presentations:** In an effort to make the most of the time we have available and to foster the maximum degree of interaction and collaboration across teams, areas, and disciplines we are asking you to participate in one of seven working groups each tasked to produce a collaborative power point and presentation and be ready to lead general discussions of the topics. We would like to suggest two group leaders for each topic (names flagged in red in the spreadsheet), but of course everyone will join in and make the presentation a success. We are asking you to begin thinking about the group presentation and to contact each other ahead of time, but we have reserved the first evening session (after dinner) as group organization time (see spreadsheet for schedule). Most of these group presentations will be allocated 1 hour and 45 minutes (approximately) with time for wide discussion. If you feel strongly that you’d like to be in a different group please let us know, and we are very open to altering the proposed groups, but realize that these are mainly vehicles to aid general

discussion; everyone will participate in everything. These group presentations will take place on the first two days of the conference.

- **Group Discussions:** The last day will be taken up with a group discussion driven by the prior days' work, and will focus on common problems, potentials, goals, and new and expanded tool kits, and will be aimed at getting to a good community statement (see below) and some collective plans for the future.
- **Draft Community Statement:** One of our objectives will be to produce a *sense of the community* statement which can be useful as both a benchmark (where we are now) and a guide to where we want to go in the near future (problems, resources, priorities, opportunities). We are spamming you with the community statement produced by the last NABO meeting in Bradford 2008, and we would be very happy to circulate and post similar regional or topical community statements your groups have produced to get us all thinking about how to go global. We are circulating a rough blank bulleted outline now for you to mark up and think about (on the spreadsheet attached), but of course this can and will be much altered during the discussions.
- **Story Telling Time:** Since we are all camping out in the Maine woods, we thought it would be fun and productive to have two later evening sessions of less structured relaxation and storytelling. We thus ask you to bring your favorite power point slides for a 15 minute chat about any aspect of your work or current projects (Viking Age Duck Conservation, Best Outreach Day Ever....your choice). This is intended to give everyone a chance to communicate their work and provide a less structured and completely informal chance to chat. This is of course totally optional but we do ask that you let us know if you want to tell a story so we can juggle schedules.
- **Deliverables:** As outlined in earlier mailings, we will ask your help in reviewing and improving a digitally-aided community outreach project (informally called "GPS+ Camera= Empowerment") which NABO is working on with our host communities in Iceland, Greenland, Barbuda, Faroes, and Orkney and which we'd like to expand and improve with your help and offer the resulting upgrade as an immediate deliverable from our meeting in Maine.

Working Groups

We are proposing seven working groups composed of six to nine participants. While we are trying to group you by interest and background, we are deliberately mixing areas, periods, disciplines, nationalities and age grades so that you actually have a chance to talk to different people about common topics, and work together to produce something both useful and familiar to academics: a power point- led discussion for a seminar class. The groups are:

- **Models, Visualization, & Digital Resources:** we have some talented and innovative modelers in the group and several participants skilled in both managing and presenting data sets in ways that make our often immense and dense output comprehensible and accessible to ourselves, each other, and the wider public. This will be a chance to showcase some impressive new digital products and to get us all thinking about sharing applications and best practice.
- **New Methods, Data, Tools:** The past few years have seen some impressive advances in both field techniques and laboratory results, and several innovative approaches have clearly achieved “critical mass” and are now transforming our disciplines. We are fortunate to have some participants with wide and deep experience in getting the most out of such new approaches.
- **Who Cares What We Do?** This group will focus on the wider potential and implications of our work for modern resource management, outreach, heritage, education, and involvement of local communities as active partners in global science. A major concern of the workshop will be to share and improve approaches to communicating our specific results and the wider importance of a combined social science/ natural science approach to understanding and attempting to manage oncoming rapid global change. We also want to use the excitement of field science to widen horizons of young people both in our study areas and at home, and get them directly involved in global change science while helping to preserve and mobilize TEK.
- **Hazards and Impacts:** Humans have had profound impact on landscapes and seascapes for millennia, producing cases of genuine long term sustainability, serial unsustainability, “near miss” failures, and a disturbing number of “rape, ruin, and starve” scenarios in the management of resources. Some of the failures (and successes) in the long term have resulted from reaction to natural hazards (flood, fire, drought, erosion, volcanism, storminess, sea ice....) and many members of our group have considerable expertise in the study of such interactions. One of the core missions of the archaeology of global change and the value of the long term perspective for understanding modern and future human ecodynamics is to bring our understanding of such processes and connections to resource managers and the general public.
- **Scale and Coping, Hunter Gatherers to Urban States:** Core strengths of social sciences (esp. history, anthropology, archaeology) have been in the study of a wide range of human societies (hunter gatherer bands to modern state systems). A recurring question is the effect of social scale and complexity on coping and response strategies through time. Are larger scale societies more or less vulnerable to change? Are there important lessons about preserving resilience and flexibility to be passed along from prior human societies?
- **Climate Change:** All of our diverse past cases of human ecodynamics have changing climate as a key variable in long term outcomes. As a species we are now facing a future that will certainly be shaped in large part by rapid climate change. Our contribution thus far has often been in bridging the disciplinary divides and creating teams capable of documenting and connecting climate to humans and to make full and effective use of the many high resolution paleoclimate indicators now available for the long term view. Participants include leaders in such interdisciplinary adventures.
- **Ecodynamics of Modernity (c 1300 – 2000 CE):** Many participants have made articulate calls for the better integration of the rich historical, archaeological, and environmental record of the

complex dynamics of the creation of the modern world over the past 500-700 years. Guns, ships, germs, monsoons, ENSO, “little ice age”, volcanism, mass migration, translocation of plants, animals, and economies all have shaped the world we now inhabit and have built the stage on which current and future human ecodynamics plays will be produced. While environmental historians have actively explored the complex ecodynamics behind these historic processes archaeologists and natural scientists can certainly contribute far more than we have to our collective understanding.

Scheduling and Preparation

We recognize that much is being asked of participants, and that we are packing a great deal of activity into a short meeting, so pre-conference preparation will be a key to success. We will be contacting the proposed working groups and will work with you all as the conference nears to help you get in touch with each other and begin planning the group presentations. Note that large files (like big power points) can be sent for free via *yousendit.com* or similar web utilities. If anyone wants to post on the conference website please feel free- send materials to Anthony Newton direct and we will get your material, ideas, blogs, and links up ASAP.

Because they will be going first and because of the highly visual nature of the topic (and the tendency for even the best laptop to hang up occasionally) we are allowing the **Models, Visualization, & Digital Resources** extra time (approximately 3 hours) to make their presentation. The other groups will be encouraged to fit their presentations into about an hour and three quarters. Nobody will have a buzzer, and we will be happy to keep any discussion going far into the night, but of course we all know that conferences need to progress, and we do have to fit in meals and breaks.

Practicalities

Food: Please have a look at the proposed menu. If you have any dietary restrictions please let us know now and we will try to adjust. Note that vegetarian options are provided throughout.

Travel: Please check your arrival and departure times. *If your name is flagged in RED we do not yet have your travel information.* We will be in touch with you individually as we finalize ground transport and pick up. Note that Portland is about 2 hours from the conference center, Bangor is about one hour.

Computers & Internet: We will have computers and internet access available, plus CD's , data sticks, and printers. We STRONGLY recommend that you bring your own laptop to limit any compatibility issues and to provide access to all your data you may want. All presentations should be power point.

Resource Room: We will have a resource room with space to lay out papers and other information you may want to bring along. We will be happy to help you display any books, off prints, fliers or other materials you wish to share.

Posters: We have some limited space for posters, and we do encourage you to bring any that you want (we can rotate displays as needed). We will be bringing some of our best grad student posters too, and we encourage all of you to bring posters and materials that best represent your group.

Recording and Note Taking: We plan to record the sessions, and will provide note-takers for any group meetings you organize. Let us know as far ahead as possible and we will help. We will provide large tear-sheets for big ideas and will curate these for the conference report.

Digital displays: If you need any digital display not covered by a power point projector please let us know now and we will try to accommodate you.

Dress: Think casual, warm, waterproof, sturdy. This is the Maine woods in autumn, no black tie and tails are required.