



# Global Human Ecodynamics Alliance – Founding Meeting

April 18, 2010; 8:00 - 10:15am  
St. Louis (Renaissance Grand Hotel)

## **Meeting participants**

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## **Agenda:**

Introductions

Brief orientation – What is GHEA? Where did it come from? What might it become?

Discussion: Is GHEA a good idea? What do we want to achieve (vision, mission, focus)?

What else is going on in this arena? Resilience Alliance, IHOPE, IPCC, etc.

Next Steps

## **Background:**

Participants came to the meeting, having read three pre-circulated documents:

1. Background (GHEA –SAA Background.doc)
2. Meeting materials and Agenda (GHEA SAA meeting – April 18 – Agenda.doc)
3. GHEA Organizational Ideas.doc – proposal from Dugmore, McGovern, and Perdikaris

## **Meeting Notes:**

The meeting started with introductions. Ben thanked everyone for attending, with special thanks to those who traveled some distance just to participate in this meeting!

I. As part of the introductions,

- Ben presented an overview of the background as well as draft Vision, Mission, and Focus statements
- Tom discussed the Maine LTGHE workshop that initiated formal interest in GHEA
- Peggy summarized the ASU brainstorming meeting
- Andy discussed the NABO-SAGES meeting.
- Anna discussed the role of NSF and her program (ASSP) and division (Arctic, in OPP) in supporting GHEA's global organization efforts and possible funding opportunities for coordination and collaboration as well as GHEA type science proposals. She particularly pointed out a coming RFP on "Research Coordination Networks" (provisional title), for which we might seek up to \$500K for 3-5 yrs to facilitate community networking. She also drew attention to the current Climate Research Initiative, that includes room for social science, but has very short deadlines (May 24 letter of intent; June 25 full proposal).

II. Tom summarized the proposal for a bottom-up GHEA organization (see "GHEA Organization Ideas.doc"). The proposal is to create a well supported GHEA web site (the NABO web master, Anthony Newton in the UK is primed to work on this and NABO has some IPY funds to support the initial start up). Founding members will sign onto the web site agreeing to basic terms of (free) membership: 1. must supply basic biographical and research information; 2. must agree to post GHEA results, publications, etc. as appropriate and available (GHEA clearing house); 3. can network with 4 or more additional members to register a project and brand it "GHEA".

III. We briefly discussed potential overlapping organizations (IHOPE, etc). It was proposed that we not worry too much about overlap. We seem to have an enthusiastic base of potential members who obviously see a need for GHEA. Given the 'bottom up' organizational structure we are aiming for (see above), proof of concept will be in who joins and what they do with it.

#### IV. Discussion

*Everyone thought GHEA was a good idea and the bottom up organizational strategy was the right way to proceed. The discussion quickly turned to issues of recruitment and possible sponsored activities.*

Having just come from the American Association of Geographers annual meeting in Washington, D.C., Andy reported that GHEA-like activities are of great interest to many members of that organization (including Karl Butzer).

Following a suggestion from Tom, Peggy noted that she is interested in trying to organize a GHEA session at "Resilience 2011" in March 2011, in Arizona. This is an interdisciplinary conference put on by IHOPE and hosted by ASU.

Jeff Quilter noted that he would like to organize a GHEA session in Panama in association with the SAAs planned Committee on the Americas (COA) Latin American meeting in 2011 or 2012.

Discussion of student exchanges noted that we might tap into REU support for existing NSF projects to support undergraduate student participation in GHEA member programs.

Tony reported that he had helped organize an interdisciplinary Summer Academy for advanced graduate students for the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security and the Munich Re Foundation. We've done four SAs, of which I organized one on environmental change and migration. You can learn more about the format if you go to the UNU-EHS website at [www.ehs.unu.edu](http://www.ehs.unu.edu) and in the left hand column click on events and then on education in the topic bar that will appear at the top of the page. He noted that this has been a very effective form of professional development and he sees graduates of the program wherever he goes. Tony offered to help develop a similar Summer Academy for GHEA beginning in Fall 2010, when he will have more time to put into it. These cost upwards of \$25,000 or so to run. Anna Kerttula suggested that this would not be hard to fund through the Research Coordination Initiative or other RFPs at NSF.

Lisa noted that she is engaged in a 200+ group on paleoenvironmental change that might be a good source of interested future GHEA members. This group includes biogeographers, geoarchaeologists, geomorphologists, climatologists, etc. They have a listserv that she could post to in order to advertise GHEA.

Lisa also offered to start a GHEA facebook page to try and recruit younger scholars and students to our efforts.

Lisa has ideas for workshops going forward (see below). She will share these via email. She had to sign off to check out of her D.C. hotel.

Peter noted that the IPY (International Polar Year) community remains connected and plan to keep momentum going forward. We should tap them to participate in GHEA.

Tony noted that he is a member of the "Social Studies Network for Disaster Prevention in LatinAmerica" (La Red: <http://www.desenredando.org/>; <http://www.desinventar.org/>), which is a bottom up organization founded by a core group in Peru in 1992. He noted that it has been very successful with a bottom-up form of organization for almost 20 years, ebbing and flowing with the interest of the community, though it has always needed some core group to keep it moving. This is a very successful model for GHEA. He suggested we might want to pursue funds for graduate students to help manage GHEA activities so it does not get lost when busy academic members get drawn into other activities.

Peter supported the idea of a bottom-up organizational structure, noting that he, like others on the committee, had been involved in the management of top heavy, top-down organizations that were very hard to make successful.

Payson noted that he would like to add "population" as a keyword/theme to the vision statement. He was encouraged to take this on and propose a wording revision.

Mike noted that public outreach will be critical and Tony pointed out that our challenge will be reaching past the “choir” of converted GHEA practitioners and enthusiasts to those who don’t know anything about human-environmental dynamics research. Jago and Payson’s edited book on “Hazards and Impacts in the past” is attempting to do just that.

How do we push GHEA projects? It was suggested that we set up interest groups and get the growing GHEA community to self-select, organize, and pursue support for any projects of interest. Andy, Tom and Sophia Perdikaris’ precirculated proposal suggests that this would be allowed as long as any 5 or more registered GHEA members sign onto such a project.

*It was suggested that the web site could have a number of key GHEA theme areas or interest groups (with potential to create new ones at the discretion of the user community). Those themes would then attract members to form sub-communities and develop appropriate GHEA activities (e.g., Research; Student exchange; Public education; Policy). Members of interest groups could then self organize to generate financial support to run appropriately themed workshops, symposia, sessions, book projects, public media development, etc.*

Workshops: when asked what possible workshop ideas committee members had, almost everyone volunteered a suggestion. Anna argued that these should be international as well as interdisciplinary.

- Tim proposed a workshop on “climate, culture, and migration in the American Southwest” that would have a methodological focus on melding low to high frequency proxy data. He expressed interest in inviting global climate modelers and hosting it possibly at SFI.
- Tony volunteered a more theoretically workshop theme on “Migration as Adaptation”
- Peggy proposed three possible themes: 1. “Rigidity trap: does it play out similarly in different places and contexts”; 2. Climate change and Human response”; and 3. “Diversity” (climate change and role of social diversity).
- Jago proposed “Atlantic Climate – People and Policy” – comparing past and present in circum-Atlantic contexts”
- Peter suggested the theme of 'Colonialism' in relation to human ecosystem dynamics: obviously, colonial ways of interacting with the environment often constitute a radical break with indigenous ways. It was remarked that such a theme would be close to the Maine topic of 'Ecodynamics of Modernity' (although colonialism broadly speaking is older than modernity)"
- Payson offered “Failures of Sustainability” to focus on what might work better
- Tom (drawing on SAGES) suggested a workshop involving environmental historians on “Bridging Environmental Science, Environmental History, and Modeling” looking at globalization from present back into the past.
- Several others did not volunteer suggestions that had been previously proposed. E.g., Mike’s proposed session on Climate and North South connections perhaps to

be held in the Yucatan; Jeff's suggestion to have a modeling workshop at SFI; Ben's interest in developing comparative workshops on North Pacific Rim (Japan, Kurils, Aleutians, Kodiak) or bigger, North Pacific/North Atlantic islands comparative.

**Summary:**

When the committee adjourned around 10:15am, we had an easy consensus for the following:

1. GHEA is a good idea and we should make it official, set up a web site and encourage participation.
2. Anthony Newton should be tasked with setting up the web site drawing salary from an existing IPY grant while Tom, Andy, and Anthony submit a small proposal to NSF for additional funding to support this ongoing web development and management.
3. The bottom-up organizational model outlined in Andy, Tom, and Sophia's "GHEA Organizational Ideas.doc" proposal should be implemented.
4. Members of the committee are ready and eager to help guide the establishment and success of the GHEA organization, and can be tasked with reviewing draft web content and responding to draft protocols as they are developed.
5. One of the first orders of business will be reviewing a draft logo design that Tom has in mind [see header of these minutes]. Others can be submitted as well.
6. Activities of GHEA will be driven by the members, channeled into pre-defined and emergent themes, and supported by the organizational efforts of the membership.
7. Ben will continue to serve as head cheer-leader (amply backed up by Tom, Andy, and Sophia) until the web site is launched and initial members are invited to participate. After that, leadership should emerge organically. The founding "organizational committee" that participated in the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting will serve as "board of directors" advancing the GHEA cause through the active promotion of GHEA activities (i.e. as active members). This leadership will evolve as additional members join and become active. There will be no long term "select group" or board of directors unless it becomes apparent that such is needed.
8. Once the web site is established with clearly articulated statements about what GHEA is and how/why to participate, a message will be sent to members of this committee and to participants of the October 2009 workshop, inviting enrollment. Each enrolled member is then encouraged to circulate invitations to any other listservs, student groups, etc. that might be interested.