

GeoHab Planning Meeting 2009

NGU, Trondheim, Norway

May 7, 2009

www.geohab.org

[Editor's note: Thanks go to Jessica Sameoto, Peter Lawton, Heather Stewart and Gary Greene for contributing to the GeoHab 2009 business meeting notes. – B.J. Todd]

The **2009 GeoHab business meeting** commenced at 16:00, following a general discussion period, chaired by Gary Greene, which marked the close of the 2009 conference program. On behalf of the conference attendees, Gary congratulated the local organizing committee, and in particular Kim Picard and Terje Thorsnes, for managing a very successful meeting.

The business meeting was chaired by Brian Todd and covered six principal agenda Items:

1. Meetings
2. Budget
3. Publications
4. Students
5. Website
6. Workshops

Under each agenda item, opening remarks by the chair and points for review are indicated by bullets. Comments made during discussion, as well as action items (in bold) are listed following each bullet.

1. MEETINGS

2009 Trondheim – Terje Thorsnes and team

- excellent work and very successful

There was a further round of applause for the Trondheim team.

- first use of credit card for payment – a great leap forward

The general consensus was that payment option by credit card during the meeting was very convenient. The meeting organisers commented that there had been many problems with international bank transfers for payments made in advance of the meeting. More extensive use of credit card payment options was recommended for future meetings.

- review successes to be copied in future years

The conference abstract book, which included full color pages, was considered a very professional product that sets a new standard to be followed in future years.

- note problems to avoid or solve in future years

Kim Picard noted that collation of the initial hotel selections, transfer of information to the hotels for the block bookings, as well as follow-up on individual booking questions was time consuming.

Brian Todd thanked Kim on behalf of the attendees for the extra attention paid to ensuring that hotel reservations were completed.

2010 Wellington – Geoffroy Lamarche and team

- “extreme” is the suggested theme for next years meeting with plans and outline presented by Geoffroy during session

Geoffroy’s coining of “extreme” habitats as an overall theme for GeoHab 2010 during his presentation captured the imagination of conference attendees. On the final day of the Trondheim workshop, following Geoffroy’s presentation, several speakers made references to “extreme” habitats during their presentations.

- Any aspects to add or amplify? (e.g., planning based on 85 attendees)

There has been a start made on seeking sponsorships, but additional ideas are welcomed.

Action: GeoHab members to send in additional suggestions for possible meeting sponsors to the local lead for the 2010 organizing committee – Geoffroy Lamarche.

Wellington 2010 planning is well underway as of this date. There has been discussion on efficient ways to handle registrations and hotel reservations. The local conference planning agent is very familiar with organising scientific conferences. It is expected that registration and accommodation booking will be available online and that hotel bookings will be able to be made directly by attendees with specific hotels.

Financial planning for GeoHab 2010 is proceeding on the basis of an anticipated 85 attendees, and with an initial budget of \$10K NZ.

There has been a generic email address set up to facilitate communication about GeoHab 2010: Geohab10@niwa.cri.nz

Action: Brian Todd to provide Geoffroy Lamarche with the full GeoHab email list for broadcast emails about the 2010 conference.

- Any questions from Planning Meeting participants?

For participants from some countries and some organizations, scheduling of GeoHab in May makes for difficulties in spending funds due to fiscal year end. Compliments to the Trondheim organizing committee for accommodating specific financial requirements.

Action: The 2010 committee should build in flexibility in financial arrangements to accommodate specific requirements for advance (or delayed) payments.

- Terje Thorsnes will act of Chair of student selection committee

2011 Helsinki – Aarno Kotilainen and team

- Geoffroy Lamarche will act of Chair of student selection committee
- Select likely dates in May (how about 3rd, the 6th?), Aarno to guarantee good weather

GeoHab 2011 will be held at the Geological Survey of Finland in Helsinki. General consensus to plan around the “normal” program of Tuesday to Thursday for the full day GeoHab conference schedule, organized around plenary sessions. Aarno remarked that the early May dates would coincide with a major national holiday in Finland.

Action: Brian Todd and Gary Greene to confirm GeoHab 2011 dates with Aarno Kotilainen.

2012 Location to be selected

- Are there any volunteers who are fairly sure of a successful venue?

Andrea Fiorentino offered ISPRA (Department for Soil Defense, Geological Survey of Italy) to host the 2012 meeting at its office in Rome.

Jacques Populus (IFREMER) offered to look into the possibility of holding GeoHab in France at a future date. As Jacques is the current chair of the ICES Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping, there may be a possibility of arranging a joint meeting. A number of GeoHab attendees are also working group members.

- To quote Peter Harris, somewhere that is “generally pleasant”

There was widespread acknowledgement that Rome would amply fulfill Peter’s specification.

- Comment from Gary Greene regarding a possible future meeting location

Gary Greene informed the group that he had undertaken preliminary discussions with a Director of the Circum-Pacific Council (who is based in Ecuador) about the possibility of scheduling a future GeoHab meeting on the Galapagos Islands. When asked about the potential year this might occur, Gary did indicate that 2012 may be an option.

Andrea Fiorentino was willing to move his offer of Rome as a venue to 2013, should the Galapagos 2012 option materialize.

2. BUDGET

- How much money does GeoHab have?

Gary Greene provided a budget synopsis (amounts in USD unless otherwise stated). The intent is to run the GeoHab account over multiple years on a non-profit basis. The Sitka meeting brought in some extra funds, leaving the balance at \$27K. A subsequent donation of \$10K (UK Marine Aggregate Sustainable Levy Fund) left a balance of ~\$37K prior to the 2009 meeting; expenses from the meeting will be deducted from this amount.

- costs associated with 2009 GeoHab

The organizers indicated that sponsorship income and registrations, as well as meeting expenses appeared to be in line with initial projections. There were 4 exhibitors at GeoHab 2009 and so some additional income will be received. A financial summary should be available within a month. There was provision of \$5300 in student support for the attendance of four students at the Trondheim meeting.

- financial issues associated with 2010 GeoHab

There has been an initial advance from the GeoHab account of \$1.5K to help with initial planning activity.

There has been a \$10K NZ commitment from the New Zealand government to support GeoHab 2010 in Wellington.

The organisers are moving forward with an estimated registration cost of \$270. Depending on final arrangements for the conference dinner (included within the registration cost) the final fee may be higher. As with previous GeoHab meetings a field trip will be arranged for which attendees will be charged separately.

- So, how much money does GeoHab need?

Gary Greene proposed that holding a balance of approximately \$30K in the account should provide sufficient funds to enable meeting organizers to start their planning for the annual conference series, to maintain the approach to providing travel support for a

limited number of students, and to provide capacity to fund a series of publication projects.

- relationship of GeoHab “organization” with Circum-Pacific Council

The GeoHab account is handled by the Circum-Pacific Council for an overhead of 10%. A number of GeoHab participants are members of the council and so it has proved to be a useful vehicle for managing GeoHab funds, and there was general agreement from the floor to continue this arrangement.

3. PUBLICATIONS

- *Journal of Continental Shelf Research* – Andrew Heap and Peter Harris
- Authors and contribution titles established over a year ago
- Submission deadline is end of May 2009, i.e., now

Andrew and Peter reviewed current status of the project that came out of discussions at the 2007 meeting. To achieve fast turnaround the papers will be published as a sponsored issue – total cost is estimated at about \$30K USD. There is already \$10K USD towards this cost. (Andrew Heap thanked Ceri James for securing an extra €10k from the ALSF towards this special publication.) There was an initial pledge of 22 manuscripts; none have been received to date.

Action: Andrew Heap to identify a website link to the journal’s submission page and Brian to reference this publication process on the GeoHab website.

It is expected that there will soon be a specific entry for the GeoHab special issue on the journal’s submission page.

Question: would there be any other page charges for authors if the special issue is a sponsored one? Peter expected that an extra charge may be placed for colour figures.

Action: Peter or Andrew to confirm with the journal the situation with respect to overall charges for manuscripts included in the special issue, and provide information on the GeoHab website.

Question: Can additional papers be submitted to the special issue? Andrew and Peter are willing to extend the submission deadline a little beyond the end of May, due to the current lack of submissions. They are also willing to accept new submissions, with the caveat that the special issue could not go much larger than 22 articles in total. As some of the originally offered papers may not come forward, there should be some flexibility to accommodate new papers if these can be submitted promptly.

- *GeoHab Global Atlas* – Peter Harris and editorial team (members yet to be identified)
- Submissions will begin to be accepted in May 2010

- Possible format presented in NGF Abstracts and Proceedings
- Need to confirm publisher (and deadlines and requirements of that publisher)

There was clear and general agreement to proceed. Peter noted that he had received two suggestions for extra headings/content within the template:

- A section titled Naturalness or Anthropogenic influences.
- A standard table to appear in each chapter with a set of tick boxes in terms of what research/mapping/ocean management topics are able to be addressed within each case study – this would provide a quick way for readers to evaluate content in different chapters, as well as convey how much information is required for complete coverage of issues.

The publication format has not yet been finalised. There was discussion on emerging publication options offered by web-based and open access journals (e.g. PLoS ONE). The Census of Marine Life is currently considering using this new medium during its synthesis phase. There was an overwhelming vote to move forward with the Atlas project as primarily a traditional journal publication, but also to further evaluate options for hybrid publication, such as publishing maps onto a map server, to look at the experiences of MESH and MAREANO of publishing habitat mapping projects online.

As 2010 marks the release of the first Census of Marine Life, there will be significant experience with open access publication available for the GeoHab community to evaluate and the open access publication option could be considered for future projects.

Peter Harris announced that Elaine Baker had agreed to join him as co-editor. He will follow through on discussions with others on the need for any additional editors.

There has been an initial contact with Elsevier, which has a good series of publications on environmental subjects. Editorial support within Elsevier is considered to be very good, which will be a key criterion for the final selection of publication outlet.

Question: Quality of maps that would need to be prepared and the level of consistency in layout/colouring being adopted? Peter acknowledged that prior to the final selection of publication outlet it would be difficult to give precise requirements for map preparation. In terms of consistency, although the project is an atlas, in the sense of covering a range of habitats, it is not intended to be fully consistent as in a formal map series. The extra effort required for full consistency could not be applied within the scope of the project, which will rely heavily on volunteer efforts.

During discussion on the general introduction to the Atlas, a prior global map of marine geological landscapes was referenced. There is no plan to update this earlier map with new findings. However, there was support for having an introductory contextual map at global scale with the locations of the contributed case studies.

Regarding submission details there will be some upfront resources placed on the GeoHab web portal once the journal has been selected. That page will have specific directions on map and other image requirements.

- Any suggestions for future publications?

None were presented.

4. STUDENTS

- Review of 2009 GeoHab experience
- Very gratifying to see so many students presenting outstanding science; grey hair being replaced
- Providing that funding levels allow, GeoHab plans to provide financial assistance to selected students for 2010 GEOHAB
- See website (www.geohab.org) for student eligibility and application details
- Any recommendations for approach for 2010 students
- Chair of 2010 GeoHab student committee – Terje Thorsnes (will have small team)

The 2009 experience of student representation was very good. There were 14 – 15 applications reviewed by the 2009 committee for travel support; many applicants qualified. A set of criteria were used: First pick student(s) from the country where the past conference took place. So, for New Zealand, students from Norway or an adjacent area will receive primary consideration. This year, as there was no application from Alaska, a student from Canada was selected. With an overall amount available of approximately \$5K, it was decided to also fund three other international travel requests, from Iran, Germany and Spain. Selection criteria and other application information are posted on the GeoHab website.

The general guidelines are:

- Students will be preferentially picked from the one year previous GeoHab host country, then cascading out radially from that country. For example, last year GeoHab was hosted by Alaska/USA. No student applications were received from the host, next nearest country for consideration was Canada and so on.
- Guidelines for the selection committee will be formalise and circulated.
- All students must contribute an oral presentation; poster presentations only will not be eligible.
- Students are asked to estimate expenditure for return travel to conference only. The host country will add costs for local travel, accommodation and food.
- Future GeoHab conferences will make more of a show of the GeoHab studentship presenters during their introduction immediately prior to their presentation.
- Picture and name of successful students are to go onto the GeoHab website.

Action: An additional criterion should be added: that applicants should be aware that they will be expected to personally give an oral presentation at the conference, and not a poster, or a paper that is read by a supervisor.

In terms of costs that are covered, students are asked to estimate their cost for international travel to the meeting location. The student selection committee then estimates the in country cost – in the case of Trondheim as many meals were provided on-site, only a few extra meals, hostel accommodation and help with registrations was required to establish the per student rate for in country costs.

For the total of \$5.3K expended, four students were sponsored. One student gave a poster; a graduate supervisor presented a talk on behalf of another student.

Action: The 2010 Committee should look at ways to give more profile for the successful students, such as introducing them at the start of the conference.

5. WEBSITE

- Rapid response to “client” (2009 GeoHab organizers) – what is the feedback?
- coming year will see addition of all legacy planning meeting minutes, all legacy photographs (via Picassa)
- call will go out to all attendees over the years for photographs
- most important addition will be all *available* legacy presentations (in PDF format), but all authors must be contacted for permission
- web master (Phil Spencer) requires payment for the upcoming fiscal year; Brian Todd submitting invoice to Gary Greene
- ISP service provider paid by Brian Todd (\$97.70)
- relationship to 2010 GeoHab organizing committee to be defined

The 2009 organizing committee thanked Brian for his assistance in ensuring timely additions to the conference webpage.

Depending on the final planning approach selected by the 2010 conference team, the GeoHab website may function more as a portal, with web links directing potential attendees to other sites for registration and hotel booking information.

There was a recommendation to have a section on the website where a list of successful student applicants for conference attendance support could be listed.

Other suggestions for evolution of the GeoHab website were floated, such as providing a means to conduct discussion groups through the websites, and other social networking approaches (e.g., Facebook, Vanessa to investigate).

Brian Todd, who has guided the maintenance of the current GeoHab site, indicated that there were possibilities for incremental features to be added, but that the costs for website development and maintenance would certainly increase. He also advanced the point that

the GeoHab website had been successful in meeting the needs of the GeoHab community in large part due to its simple architecture and focus on meeting basic needs. The currently planned enhancements involving a retrospective compilation of resources from prior meetings will provide a legacy site outlining the role of GeoHab in the emerging field of marine habitat mapping. Development through to social networking was not considered a high priority.

6. WORKSHOPS

- Periodically, scientific developments in certain fields among a number of workers suggest that a focused workshop is appropriate. The imaging workshop held this week is an example.
- It is convenient, at times, to hold such workshops at times adjacent to GeoHab meetings, but they could be held at other times.

Backscatter Processing

- suggested at 2008 GeoHab in Sitka that worldwide recognition of increased need for backscatter rigour would best be addressed in a separate backscatter processing workshop
- this has been done before in various guises
- for example, the multibeam course offered by Larry Mayer et al includes a healthy dose of the math and physics of backscatter
- a users group backscatter meeting was convened by Craig Brown a couple of years ago

Map product delivery

- government geological surveys around the world obliged to deliver map products to tax payers (and managers)
- map products are either “traditionally” published, citable product, or on-line, downloadable GIS-compatible layers (hopefully with associated metadata)

Of the two tabled workshop options the backscatter processing workshop received most discussion, in large part because of the potential to work effectively with the 2010 conference. It was felt that the field had progressed significantly since the 2006 workshop convened by Craig Brown. That meeting had approximately 40 participants, but the scheduling as a standalone workshop was a problem for some workers.

As a general point, scheduling focused technical workshops adjacent to the 3 day GeoHab conference provides a greater chance of travel approval for some workers. The Imaging workshop was pointed out to be a good example – the meeting was well-focussed, opened up new perspectives, and created a more cohesive community among researchers that use imaging techniques in their habitat mapping programs.

Geoffroy Lamarche offered to make available a Cook Strait dataset in advance of the proposed workshop for testing of different technical approaches to backscatter processing that could then be reviewed at the workshop. Geoffroy himself acknowledged that adding

this additional meeting to his existing commitments was a concern. There was encouragement for Geoffroy to seek a colleague to act as co-convenor. It was recognised that attendees would need to have access to data several months in advance of the meeting. This would also require establishing data sharing agreements. Taking this approach, a cap of 15 attendees for full workshop participation (with data access rights) was suggested. As with other GeoHab events it is acknowledged that there should be access to the actual workshop for observers. Workshop results and recommendations should also be reported back at the GeoHab conference, as was done at Trondheim with the imaging workshop.

Questions from the floor on the backscatter workshop:

Would there be additional information made available in the data set, such as oceanographic data and video and grab sampling? – Geoffroy indicated that this was planned to be included to assist with the backscatter interpretation.

Would there be opportunities to learn about backscatter processing techniques? Geoffroy indicated that it was not the intent to structure the workshop as a teaching-oriented event.

As the new chair of the ICES Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping, Jacques Populus (IFREMER) was in attendance, Brian Todd asked for his thoughts on the potential for a joint workshop to be held with that group in the future.

Jacques briefly outlined the composition and terms of reference for his Working Group (WG). The membership partly overlaps with GeoHab membership from North America and Europe. As the WG group meets annually in April, there is sometimes competition for attendance between the two meetings for WG members.

Although the WG has defined terms of reference and annual reporting tasks it must meet for ICES standards, there is not a lot of top down control, and the group has considerable flexibility in how its agenda develops over time. The WG is expected to produce position papers on marine habitat mapping topics of relevance to the provision of scientific advice by ICES.

It was acknowledged that in recent years the WG had placed more emphasis on developing reporting mechanisms for overview on marine habitat mapping projects underway within the ICES sphere. Jacques is planning to move back to assignments that will lead to position papers on scientific aspects of marine habitat mapping.

Accepting that the ICES Working Group on Marine Habitat Mapping (WGMHM) is government-oriented, in that the core membership is government-nominated science representatives from ICES member countries, Jacques did feel that there could be the possibility of having a jointly-planned workshop one year, possibly at Rome, or if the proposal for a venue in France is taken forward.

7. RELATIONSHIPS

Discussion on the relationship between the GeoHab community and the ICES working group on marine habitat mapping (WGMHM).

- Some view that the WGMHM is in competition with GeoHab, but this is not the case.
- WGMHM was developed as a response to concern that the previous focus of working groups had been the fisheries industries. Many disparate ICES working groups had a degree of overlap in the realm of habitat mapping (for example benthic ecology and acoustic imagery working groups), so the WGMHM was developed.
- The WGMHM is currently developing a working paper on mapping.
- Roger C adds that the working groups are a way for GeoHab to feed directly into Europe. What do we, as scientists, need in order to map habitats/protect species/substrates? This will in turn be reported to our governments as necessary research and reporting and our governments in turn will fund us. The scientists, to provide that information.
- The WGMHM needs to move away from a group seen to only 'report' but needs to become a driver for marine habitat mapping.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business raised from the floor, the meeting closed at 17:10.