

# Engaging the Social Sciences to LTER Network-Level Science & Synthesis

Athens, GA August 3-5, 2005

Workshop sponsored by NSF-SBE and  
attended by social scientists and others  
(anthropology, economics, geography,  
political science, rural sociology, sociology)  
from 23 of the 26 LTERs

# Workshop Goals: Addressing the Coupled Human-Natural Ecosystem Challenge

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- To make recommendations for how sophisticated social science concepts and approaches can help fulfill the goal of moving LTER science to a higher level of research collaboration, synthesis, and integration.
- To provide a concrete set of recommendations and associated costs to Tom Baerwald (SBE) and Henry Gholz (DEB) for advancing the social sciences in the LTER network with long-term support.

# Present State of Social Sciences in LTER

(based on 19 LTER survey responses)

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- 51 social scientists in several disciplines currently participate in LTERs across the Network
- Maximum number at a single site = 20
- Eight sites have none
- Typical ratio of biophysical-to-social science ratio = 20:1
- Research at 11 sites has produced core social science datasets (but biophysical scientists use them at only 3 sites)
- Social scientists play a significant role at 3 sites

# Significant Barriers to Mobilizing Social Science Capacity in the Network

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- Funding: only nominal, short-term, ad hoc funding available
- Lack of incentives (disincentives) to participate in interdisciplinary research
- Non-specialists carry out social science research
- Social sciences not institutionalized in the LTER program

# Participants Identified Collaborative Foundations for LTER Social Science

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- Fundamental cross-cutting research questions
- 25 core social science datasets that should be constructed for LTER sites
- Measures and indices that draw upon the conceptual sophistication of the social sciences
- Methodologies and procedures to ensure comparability of practice and results

# Incubating Success through Integration of SS across LTER Sites (NSF \$\$\$)

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- Establish and maintain a threaded listserv (LTER Network)
- Create a digital archive of information and data that can be queried (Network \$300k)
- Sponsor a thematic social science meeting (Luquillo LTER \$65k)
- Establish long-term funding for interdisciplinary science (\$300k per year per site)