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

- 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)

- 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

- 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

- 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 $$$)

- 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 inter-disciplinary science ($300k per year per site)