

## **Environmental Sustainability Study Group Report for 2004-6**

The Environmental Sustainability Study Group (ESSG) was approved by IAG Council in April 2003, drawing on an earlier initiative by Graeme Aplin. The first meeting of the group was held during the Adelaide IAG conference in April 2004. Office bearers were appointed during a business meeting, and 15 papers were presented by members of the Group.

The next meeting was a special workshop (with 12 participants, from the Universities of Adelaide, Flinders, WA, Melbourne, Wollongong, NSW and James Cook), held at the University of Adelaide in December 2004 and kindly supported by Nick Harvey and Alaric Maude in particular. Themes discussed were: environmental issues; geographers' roles in environmental sustainability; spatial units/scales (for environmental management); communities' roles in environmental sustainability; and future directions, including suggestions for the Adelaide IAG and Brisbane IGU programs. It was agreed that the group should focus on the following themes over the next several years:

- sustainable regional development (bringing together economic, social and environmental geographers);
- the crisis in water management (encompassing integrated catchment management);
- interpretation and communication of environmental issues (including environmental education);
- the roles of communities in maintaining environmental sustainability;
- 'governance' (the range of formal and informal policy and decision-making process and practice that inform and characterise environmental/NRM groups. This includes institutional frameworks and power relations between groups and interests), and
- the dynamics of landscape change and the environmental implications of global changes (including indicators, measurement, mapping, GIS).

Only a few ESSG papers were presented at the IAG conference in Armidale in 2005: several universities were still teaching during the conference dates and the environmental sessions were timetabled for the morning of the Friday at the end of the meeting, when some people need to leave in order to return to their home State on that day. The convener was unable to attend, but the fort was staunchly held by Alaric Maude.

Thirteen ESSG papers will be presented at the Brisbane IGU, plus several others that have been grouped in joint sessions with COMLAND (the IGU Commission on Land Degradation and Desertification). There is a new theme on Sustainable Urban Environments; plus themes on Community Involvement and the Dynamics of Landscape Change, from the above list; plus the combined session themes, Measuring Land Degradation for Management, and Managing for Environmental Sustainability.

Members of the ESSG committee are:

Hugo Bekle (ECU)

Bill Boyd (Southern Cross)  
Kath Broderick (program planning, UWA)  
Arthur Conacher: convener (UWA)  
Megan Farrelly (deputy convener, newsletter, website: UWA)  
Nick Gill (Wollongong)  
Kersty Hobson (ANU)  
Lesley Hodgson (LaTrobe Bendigo)  
Natalie Marshall (UNSW)  
Alaric Maude (Flinders)  
Phil McManus (USydney)  
Tim Perkins (ECU)

Some momentum has been lost, probably because the convener took on more than he could handle comfortably. Some of the actions flagged at the Adelaide workshop have not been implemented. Kath Broderick and Megan Farrelly have now submitted their PhD theses and have moved on: their roles urgently need to be filled. Further, Nick Gill was appointed the second deputy convener, with a view to replacing Arthur Conacher as convener in 2005; but he is now overseas, evidently for some time. Arthur would like to hand over to someone with a more youthful spring in the step (i.e. not retired).

All/any offers to fill any/all of these positions will be received with effusive gratitude.

Council allocated \$1500 to ESSG in 2004. Of this, \$590 were expended on a return Perth-Adelaide air fare for Megan Farrelly (postgrad, deputy convener, newsletter compiler, workshop assistant organiser, presenter of one of keynote theme addresses) to participate in the 2004 Adelaide workshop. The remainder is still available to the group.

Arthur Conacher