

**China-U.S. Relations: Trade Diplomacy, and Research**  
**November 14-17, 2005**  
**Beijing, China**

**Research Summary**

**Session Title:** Wetland Conservation, Nature-Based Tourism, and Rural Economic Development

**Co-Chairs (name and affiliation):**

U.S.: Jianbang Gan, Texas A&M University; Andrew Skadberg, AdventGX;  
Yongxia Skadberg, Texas A&M University

Chinese: Bihu Wu, Peking University

**Other Collaborators:**

Rick Giardino, Texas A&M University

**Session Summary (include summary of field of research):**

The proposed research roundtable (RRT) focused on the opportunities and challenges that face both China and the U.S. related to wetland and other natural resource conservation, rural economic development, and sustainable strategies for tourism development. The roundtable topics included: (1) opportunities and challenges for protecting wetlands and their associated habitats (terrestrial and aquatic); (2) creation of technical assistance and access to information and services to enhance rural economies through diversification into nature-based tourism; (3) development/integration of information technology and GIS-based tools for decision-making; (4) development of research approaches for socio-economic and environmental impact assessments; and (5) policies and management strategies for environmental and economic sustainability.

Our RRT session drew 20 scientists/scholars from six U.S. institutions/organizations and seven Chinese institutions/organizations. In addition, about a dozen of graduate students from Peking University attended. Twelve papers were presented. These presentations covered a wide range of topics related to the RRT theme.

This roundtable provided an arena for promoting (a) exchange of research work among Chinese and U.S. participants and (b) development of partnerships for future research in natural resource conservation and rural economic development.

**Submit to Julie Barker (j-barker@tamu.edu) no later than Wednesday, February 1, 2006**

## **Findings/Recommendations:**

### Major findings:

- Rapidly increased demand for natural-based recreation has created tremendous pressure on natural resources, which calls for interdisciplinary research to identify management strategies and policy for sustainable natural resource management and rural economic development.
- The role of market-based approaches to promoting natural resource conservation in China has been recognized, yet much research needs to be done on how to properly and effectively incorporate these approaches into policy-making.
- Information technology and decision-making tools have become necessities for sustainable natural resource management and nature-based tourism development. There is great potential for collaboration between the U.S. and China in this area.
- There is a lack of education programs to the public on natural resource conservation in China. U.S. experience and know-how would be helpful to China.
- Although the U.S. and China share many similarities in terms of natural resource conservation and nature-based tourism development, some unique features of China such as coexistence of residents and tourists in national parks or reserved areas, different land tenure systems, and different decision-making processes entail special attention and represent opportunities for research cooperation.

In lieu of these findings, we formed several working groups to continue dialogue and foster future cooperation in the following focal areas:

- Water and other natural resource management
- Market-based or incentive programs for natural resource conservation
- Decision-making models for natural resource management
- Human dimensions of natural resource management and rural economic development
- Technology and applications
- Education

Key persons for each group were identified to lead future efforts. We also proposed to publish proceedings of the papers presented at the RRT.

## **Future Collaborations and Justification:**

While we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with Peking University, we propose to expand our collaboration to other institutions and regions in China. Potential collaborating institutions include Beijing Normal University, Beijing Forestry University, and Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University. Some collaboration has already been underway. For instance, our Chinese counterparts are working with us in planning for the 2006 National Forest Economics Forum in China to bring scholars together to discuss some emerging and important forestry issues in China such as land tenure and incentive systems for private/community forest landowners, impacts of China's wood product imports on global markets and forest conservation, trade and invasive species management, and carbon sequestration in forests, among others. In addition, our collaborators have inquired about the possibility for short-term training of their graduate students and scholars at Texas A&M University. Building on the linkages established in the China-U.S. Relations conference, we hope to develop long-lasting and mutually beneficial research collaboration with Chinese institutions in selected natural resource areas that are vitally important to both countries.

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**Other Information:**



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