

China-US Relations: Trade, Diplomacy, and Research
November 14-17, 2005 Beijing, China

Research Summary

Session Title: ALERT-2: Altered Landscapes and Environmental Response to Transformations (ALERT), China University of Geosciences (Beijing)

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Session Summary:

A series of organizational and programmatic presentations were provided by the various participating groups to set the stage for in-depth discussion of future partnerships. A series of projects for collaboration were presented by the Chinese partners. Discussions were concluded agreeing to develop a strategic plan organized around a series of action items. Areas of mutual interest include: monitoring and prediction of natural hazards in coastal regions; evaluation of offshore China oil and gas resources (including gas hydrate); integrated studies of coastal wetland ecosystems; human impacts and disturbances along coastal margins; construction, synthesis and utilization of geological databases (including modeling of all types); and coastal impacts due to water diversion projects.

Findings and Recommendations:

Based on the common interests and needs of both countries, previous intergovernmental agreements and a series of exchanges and planning activities the China-US ALERT team proposed the following actions to advance a common research agenda.

- 1) Amend the “Agreement of Sino-US Intergovernmental Scientific and Technological Cooperation” to include all aspects of research on coastal environmental issues that will support sustainable development.
- 2) Form a China-US ALERT Coordinating Committee to lead further development of partnerships and programs – It was agreed that membership would initially be Mahlon C. Kennicutt II (Chair), Texas A&M University; Qiming Peng (co-Chair), China geological Survey; Dawn Lavoie, US Geological Survey; and J Liu (Secretary), Qingdao Institute of Marine Geology, China Geological Survey.
- 3) Develop and sign a Memorandum of Understanding between Texas A&M University and the China University of Geosciences (Beijing) to establish them as a full team partner.
- 4) Form groups to focus the efforts of core research areas of mutual interest to initially include Working Groups on Coastal Processes, Geochemical Processes, and Geospatial and Information Technologies and Databases.
- 5) Develop projects to synthesize existing data especially targeting comparative studies in China and the northern Gulf of Mexico.
- 6) Plan for joint peer-reviewed publications, joint sessions at scientific meetings, and convening of workshops and training sessions.
- 7) Continue exchange visits and work on more formal exchange programs at all levels including scientists, students, technicians.
- 8) Explore opportunities for joint field programs and collection of new data in support of common research interests.
- 9) Plan for ALERT-3 to be held in 2007.

Future Collaboration and Justification:

It was recognized by the team that the generation of new, large cooperative data collection/field survey programs was the most challenging activity to pursue as funding for such programs is difficult to attain. The team agreed that in the short-term (1-3 years) many less costly activities such as those outlined above could be more readily organized and conducted. It was also considered that activities that built on existing programs had the potential to bring added value to all partners. Short-term activities will deepen and strengthen partnerships setting the stage for more complex programs in the longer-term (3 – 10 years). In the meantime all partners will be exploring a variety of avenues for attaining funds to support both short – and long-term objectives and programs. Based on these discussions the following actions are planned:

- 1) Determine what is necessary to propose an amendment to the 1979 the “Agreement of Sino-US Intergovernmental Scientific and Technological Cooperation” during its next renewal in 2006.
- 2) Each organization will confirm its representative to the ALERT Team Coordinating Committee.
- 3) Texas A&M University and the China University for Geosciences (Beijing) will jointly negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding that includes a definition of roles of each institution in regard to the China-US ALERT Team
- 4) Each Organization will name representatives to the Working Groups and each working group will select a Chairperson.
- 5) Working groups will identify available data sets and develop a short list of potential joint data synthesis projects that could lead to publications.

- 6) Working Groups will identify a short list of potential joint projects and venues for sessions at national and international meetings.
- 7) The Coordinating Committee will develop formal mechanisms to facilitate exchanges among programs and identify financial resources to make exchanges feasible.
- 8) The Coordinating Committee and Working Groups will identify and explore potential sources of funding for joint projects
- 9) The Coordinating Committee will begin preliminary discussions about the format and content of ALERT-3 to be held in the fall of 2007.

Other Information:

Partnerships between the USGS and Texas A&M University in the Gulf of Mexico are being further explored and more information will be available after several scheduled meetings in January to February, 2006 take place. These meetings include internal planning meetings at USGS and a USGS visit to the Texas A&M University campus. There are also opportunities expected from the return of federal dollars related to offshore oil and gas exploration and exploitation activities to the State of Texas for research on coastal issues and mitigation of environmental impacts. Potential funding opportunities for projects in China are also being explored through the US AID Program, the Asian Development Bank, and other organizations including Foundations with an interest in the region.

Further details of the ALERT-2 Research Roundtable can be found at our China-US ALERT Team web site including the agenda for the Roundtable and the power point presentations that were presented (<http://iaf.tamu.edu/uschinaalert>).