



Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

NOTES ON STAKEHOLDERS' WORKSHOP ON GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PEATLAND MANAGEMENT

Date & Time: 18 September 2006 (Monday)
0900 – 1700

Venue: Hilton Hotel, Kuching (Kenyalang Room)

Participants:

1. Dr Henk Ritzema (Alterra/Project Leader)
2. Dr Susan Page (UNLEI)
3. Rupert Simms (UNLEI)
4. Prof Wan Sulaiman Wan Harun (UNIMAS)
5. Assoc Prof Dr Mustafa Abd Rahman (UNIMAS)
6. Assoc Prof Dr Gabriel Tonga Noweg (UNIMAS)
7. Assoc Prof Dr Lau Seng (UNIMAS)
8. Assoc Prof Dr Lee Nyanti (UNIMAS)
9. Assoc Prof Dr Spencer Empading.) (UNIMAS)
10. Dr Siti Rubiah Zainudin (UNIMAS)
11. Dr Harwant Singh (UNIMAS)
12. Mohd Nasrudin b Mohd Salleh (student)
13. Angela anak Goberan (student)
14. Manaffery b Madham (student)
15. Suziani bt Sulaiman (student)
16. Mohd Jefrin Azlan b Abdullah (student)
17. Sapheri bin Rosli (student)
18. Yumin Sura (student)
19. Mr Chong Ted Tsiung (Consultant)
20. Mr Alan Tan (Department of Irrigation & Drainage - DID)
21. Mr Justin Jok Jau (Natural Resources & Environment Board – NREB)

Agenda 1: Welcome Remarks

Welcome remarks were made by Prof Wan Sulaiman on behalf of UNIMAS and by Ir Henk Ritzema, the Peatwise Project Leader elaborating on the aim of the workshop, namely, to discuss and obtain stakeholders' feedback on the conduct of the programme, the level and adequacy of the course modules, achievement in terms of learning outcomes and other relevant issues related to the Graduate Diploma in Peatland

Management programme offered by UNIMAS. The programme was advertised in December 2005 and launched on 14 January 2006 with an initial intake of 11 students and 'GIS and Remote Sensing' as the starting course. The programme was offered in modular form where each course was conducted in turn over a period of 4-5 weekends. All six instructional courses were completed by the end of August 2006. Students would be embarking on their Research Project or mini-dissertation in September 2006.

Agenda 2: Course Presentation by Course Coordinators and Feedback

The highlights of the discussion following the presentation of each course by the respective coordinators are summarized below:

2.1 STP 5114: Ecology, Natural Resources and the Environment

- For candidates with background in biology this was a refresher course with the added component of peat ecology and the environment. For non-biology candidates the course provided a good overview and enhanced their knowledge in the subject area while one candidate indicated that this was an entirely new exposure.
- The contents were comprehensive but there were overlaps on the topics/subjects of peat characterization and case studies with those dealt by STP 5124 and STP 5134.
- Suggestions for inclusion into the course:
 - Mechanisms by which important ecological and environmental issues could work upwards and find their way to decision makers.
 - More fieldwork and ground exposure to peatlands
 - Audit on the effectiveness of measures adapted from elsewhere
 - The concept that EIA should be dynamic and not merely following the published guidelines

2.2 STP 5124: Water Resources and Peatland Hydrology

- The course was not designed for engineers and the candidates were able to follow the contents at the level delivered by the instructors
- The possibility of splitting the course into two parts – the Hydrology and the Modelling
- Candidates generally wanted more time to “work on models”

2.3 STP 5134: Peat Soils And Land Use

- The contents and the level at which these were delivered were generally adequate
- Inclusion of more case studies from Sarawak should be considered, especially the success stories.
- The present state of knowledge and guidelines revolve more around “what not to do” rather than “what we can do” with the peatland. Can the issue of peatland be viewed from a more positive angle?

2.4 STP 5144: Human Dimension and Resource Economic

- Like STP 5124, this module primarily was composed of two parts, the Human Dimension and the Resource Economics. Consequently, the contents were considered somewhat excessive for postgraduate diploma level.

- Both the above components were regarded as very important aspects when dealing with the utilization and management of peatlands.
- Candidates desired more examples or case studies.
- There was a suggestion to focus more on 'Project Evaluation' and 'Project Analysis'

2.5 STP 5154: GIS & Remote Sensing for Peatland Management

- All candidates found this to be a very useful basic module. It helps them to communicate with GIS operators and experts.
- The course helps to define better what information can be extracted from the GIS and RS capabilities.
- There was strong desire to spend more hands-on time on the softwares and the systems.

2.6 STP 5113: Cross-disciplinary Research Methodologies

- The contents were all useful but a longer duration for the field activities would have benefited the candidates more.
- Even though the principles are the same, conducting this module in a peatland location would have been more desirable than at the "Rancan Pool" located on mineral soil.

Agenda 3: General discussion & recommendations

UNIMAS was suggested to consider the following:

- Offering the programme during night sessions instead of on weekends.
- Offering the programme on distance mode with internet interactive learning or off-line plus limited face-to-face interaction.
- Targeting at an ideal number of 15-20 candidates
- Inviting more guest speakers from industry (peatland users)
- To include land use other than forestry, agriculture and nature conservation, eg. urban use
- Articulation of the first cohort to a higher degree, specifically, to a full MSc. One suggestion was to incorporate the programme or the modules as part of the SLUSE-M (Sustainable land use) masters programme presently being offered by UNIMAS. All the candidates found the programme useful and very rewarding, however, from career perspectives, wished it not to be terminal, instead to be part of an articulation system to a higher academic qualification.