



My Community, Our Earth PARTNER UPDATE Spring 2006



Introducing the 2006

MyCOE YOUTH CADRE WORKING IN THE GREATER CARIBBEAN & US GULF STATES

The My Community, Our Earth program is providing the opportunity for a limited number of students to work with local community projects using geographic tools and concepts for sustainable development. Students will gain critical workforce and educational experiences through their 4 to 6 month terms starting this month in Puerto Rico, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, and the US Gulf States. Linkages among the distributed project universities, community organizations, and governmental agencies will include online networking and peer-to-peer mentoring. The youth receive modest stipends.

Project activities at individual sites have been developed in conjunction with local host organizations, local community groups, and the MyCOE program, as described in this update. Activities focus on using geography/GIS for sustainable watershed/natural resource management, planning or education in both urban and rural settings. AAG manages the initiative with grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Agency for International Development, and with support from the U.S. Geological Survey, ESRI, and other MyCOE Partners.

Local projects were selected by circulating a call for proposals and identifying those with the greatest capacity to accommodate students according to MyCOE goals. Priority was given to projects with ongoing activities during 2006 that could benefit from the collaboration in a way that otherwise would not be accomplished.

Students were selected from among applicants responding to broadly and locally distributed calls for participation within many different universities and disciplinary departments. Selection committees chose each student, balancing their ability to contribute significantly to the projects as well as their potential to benefit and learn from the MyCOE experience.

Development of additional projects for the last half of 2006 is underway in targeted locations. For more details, contact Dr. Patricia Solís at psolis@aag.org.



Courtesy M.Rodriguez & IITF.

◀ Vista onto the Central Mountains in Puerto Rico, site of a MyCOE Project with the new regional initiative that examines the ecosystem services within such landscapes under sun and shade coffee agriculture. Read more, next page.



Special Session in Chicago

A special lunchbreak session at the AAG Annual meeting in Chicago, **Thursday, March 9**, will feature an update on the current cadre and outline the opportunities for geographers and youth to become involved in this and other initiatives. The panel will be held from **11:50 am to 12:50 pm in Salon V**.

Panelists and Special Guests include:

Patricia Solís - AAG
Eugene Fosnight - USGS
Angela Lee - ESRI
Evan Notman - AAAS/USFS
Carrie Stokes - USAID
Gregory Crosby - USDA/CSREES
Adela Backiel - USDA Director of Sustainable Development

For more information on the AAG Annual Meeting in Chicago, click on:

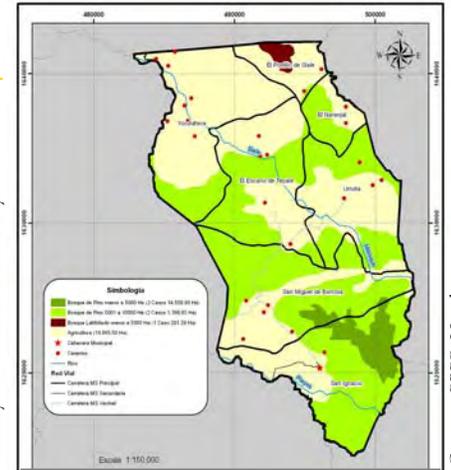
<http://www.aag.org/annualmeetings/>

See Project Descriptions, Page 2

Interested persons conducting ongoing community projects in the US Gulf States, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Jamaica or Panama, and who wish to host an undergraduate or graduate student related to this program should contact Dr. Patricia Solís (psolis@aag.org) for further details. **Interested university students** should send an email expressing interest in participating in the program along with a current CV and dates of availability to Dr. Patricia Solís (psolis@aag.org). For more information about MyCOE, visit our website at www.geography.org/sustainable.

HONDURAS Integrating Community Mapping into Land Use Planning

Jointly implemented by the Ministries of Agriculture and Justice, local municipalities, and local organizations, the Project for Forests and Rural Productivity (Proyecto de Bosques y Productividad Rural) welcomes Nohemy Romero Ventura of the Escuela Nacional de Ciencias Forestales to participate in integrating participatory community mapping with ongoing development of legally required local land use plans. ▶



PANAMA

Web Mapping Watersheds for Small Agricultural Producers

The Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario ▶ (Ministry of Agriculture) is developing a national-level project to compile and serve data on watersheds and natural resources for public access and use via web-based mapping tools. Targeted beneficiaries include small agro-producers undertaking sustainable development activities.

Luis Antonio Domínguez Baso, working on his masters in Environmental Engineering at the Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá will help with first phase spatial database building.

Guiding Teachers' Use of GIS as Core Tool

Didactic resources in Spanish for middle and secondary school teachers will be produced through this project spearheaded by Panama's Ministry of Science & Technology. Besides improving the quality of basic science education by employing GIS as a core integrative tool, the project encourages students to address local issues by relating theory with practical action focused toward sustainable development. Oscar Alexis Torrez Ríos of the Universidad Latina Panamá will combine his technological fluency with experience working in schools to participate with the effort.



JAMAICA

Exploring Urban Environmental Problems

The Ministry of Land and Environment is conducting a community-based project to map urban environmental problems in anticipation of major development in key Kingston parishes. Undergraduate student in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Technology of Jamaica, Stephanie Linton will help the effort to formulate planning strategies and guides that enhance the communities' historical character and safeguard their environmental integrity.

PUERTO RICO

Coffee Agriculture and Biodiversity

The International Institute of Tropical Forestry (USDA-Forest Service) is working with Casa Pueblo and others toward better practices of land stewardship in the central mountains of Puerto Rico. The project explores sun and shade coffee agriculture through analyses of landscape attributes, ecosystem services, and affects on biodiversity. Mario Flores Mangual, a graduate student with the University of Wisconsin's Department of Soil Science and Nicole Anderson, master's student in Environmental Science at Washington State University will team up with another student volunteer –Lindsay Cray of New York – to work on the project.

US GULF – TEXAS Rural & Urban Sustainability through Regional Natural Resource Management

Aiming toward sustaining the quality and health of natural resources in Texas' "Hill Country," this project seeks to understand the dynamic relationship between rural land use, sprawling cities, and a changing environment in a place growing with tourists, homeowners, high-tech industry, and – more recently, refugees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In conjunction with the National Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), Noah Hopkins joins the MyCOE cadre while completing his honors thesis in Geography/Environmental Resource Studies at Texas State University, San Marcos. ▼

