

Environmental Special Interest Group Meeting, Bonus Day and Carbon Neutral report

Allyson Beall August 31, 2009

The environmental special interest group welcomed everyone to join us in an important discussion about the challenges surrounding the use of system dynamics for natural resource modeling. Issue for discussion included: Natural resource modelers often need to use data to create model behavior; moreover our clients often expect to see their data and how it fits into a model. What are the challenges of managing the data driven nature of environmental while still designing system dynamic models. The discussion was lively and many attendees did not see a problem with models that were driven by large amounts of data. It was noted that there were many system dynamics models that were networked through interfaces with legacy models. Many interfaces that connect multiple models do allow for the models to feed one another information at every time step that allows for the integration of feedback.

A second important topic of discussion was how to communicate more effectively between meetings. The group decided to move the Environmental SIG discussions from our old list serve to a LinkedIn group. Invitations have been sent out from the member list however anyone who has not been contacted and wishes to join our discussions please contact Allyson Beall at abeall@wsu.edu and she will add you name to our LinkedIn group.

We also secured officers for the next SIG meetings. Ali Saysel, will act as President for the 2010 conference then will hand activities over to Mats Svensson for 2011. Allyson Beall will continue to coordinate the Carbon Neutral program.

Our bonus day activity directed discussion around projects and challenges faced by individual attendees.

The Env-SIG has helped develop the System Dynamics Society partnership with Carbonfund.org as a means of offsetting the carbon emissions associated with the conference. Carbonfund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, helped us estimate our conference emissions at 900.9 metric tons and created a website for us as a manner to pay for offsets (http://www.carbonfund.org/site/pages/land/sds_conference) Carbonfund.org supports three types of carbon offset projects: renewable energy, energy efficiency and reforestation. We managed to offset approximately 11% of our carbon footprint that includes the initial contribution from the Society and the participation of 30 conference attendees. Although some have voiced disappointment that participation was low, Carbonfund.org has noted that for a first time voluntary program we did quite well. This program will continue and we look forward to increasing participation for our Seoul Conference in 2010.