

DesertNet International



DesertNet International Newsletter n. 2/2010

This quarterly electronic newsletter is intended to inform the scientific community about dryland-relevant research matters. The **deadline** for receipt of material for the next issue is **15.09.2010**. Please send your contributions (1000 characters max, including spaces) to czanolla@uniss.it

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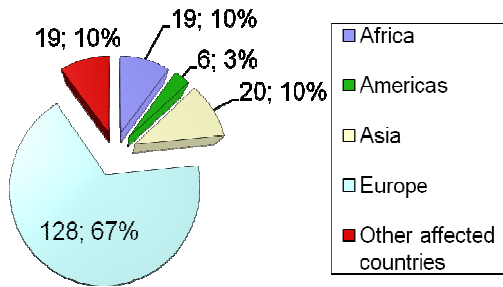
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1. DesertNet updates on DesertNet International (DNI) and the forthcoming elections

Some figures of the recently created DesertNet International

Currently members of Desertnet International (DNI) are mainly European. This is understandable taking into account the origin of this Association, which first developed in Germany in 2001 (Desert*Net Germany). Membership was later broadened in 2005 by the compilation of the Declaration of the European DesetNet by scientists from Belgium, France and Germany.

Nowadays the participation of scientists from regions outside Europe is required to meet the International scope of DesertNet International. One of the objectives of DNI is to increase the participation of researchers from the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia.

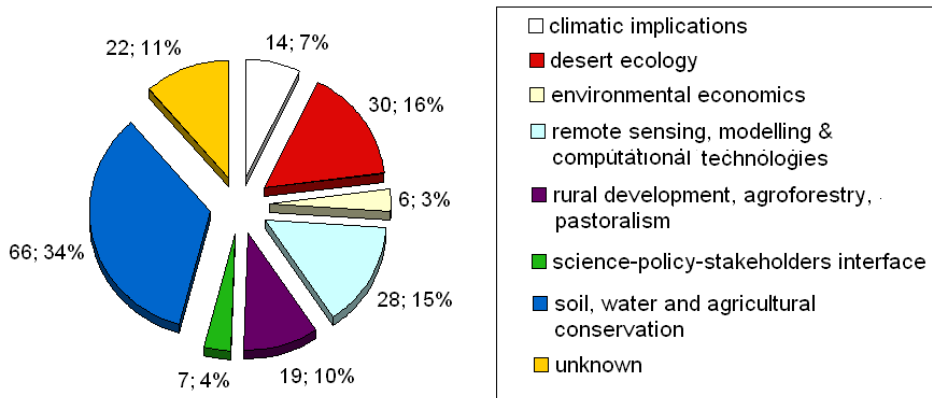


Regional Distribution of DNI members. 204 members in May 2010.

(Other affected countries: Australia, Canada, Israel).

Obviously the European majority of researchers does not mean that research in desertification is concentrated only in the countries of Europe. Researchers based in Europe also carry out their work in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Australia.

With regard to the range of research expertise of scientists involved in DNI, focus on conservation is remarkable, as 34% of the members study soil, water and agricultural conservation. Other disciplines are more evenly distributed, which is considered a success. However, there is a clear lack of researchers working on economic and social issues, and researchers working at the interface of science and policy.



Areas of expertise of DNI members

Since the economic and social aspects are of vital importance in combating desertification, increased participation of scientists working in these areas would be desirable. In the next election of members of the Steering Committee and Advisory Board of DNI, we will address these two challenges for the network, taking into account nationalities and research expertise in the DNI election procedure.

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

DNI-election process

A DNI Task Force is meeting in Gent on 18 June 2010 to finalise the procedure for the first elections of the DNI Steering Committee and DNI Advisory Board which will be due in summer 2010.

The DNI Bureau will be providing all members of DNI with a list of candidates, a list of members of DNI and the roadmap of the electronic elections. The newly elected Steering Committee and Advisory Board of DNI will commence with work at the first General Assembly in Rome in September 2010.

All documents for this important process will be provided to you in time. We hope to have a dynamic election process with numerous DNI members expressing their interest in participating as candidates for the Steering Committee and Advisory Board.

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

CST Secretariat request to DesertNet International (DNI) for a list of dryland relevant networks

The UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology Secretariat has asked DNI to provide a list of national and international scientific networks, networks of networks and institutional networks on desertification research. DNI has started preparing such a list and will be providing a preliminary draft to the CST Secretariat by 10 June 2010.

We would like to invite all members of DNI to provide us with names and contact details of relevant dryland networks by **30 June 2010 at the latest in order to provide the CST Secretariat with an advanced version by the mid of July 2010**. Your input is vital for achieving a more complete global assessment of existing relevant networks and institutions. Please send the information to: Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (makhtar-schuster@botanik.uni-hamburg.de)

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

DesertNet International has a logo



We are happy to inform you that DNI now has a logo. The logo illustrates the international and multidisciplinary profile of DNI and will now be used on all official documents of DNI. This logo will also determine the new design of the homepage of DesertNet International which is currently being developed. In the meantime, DNI will continue to use the homepage of the former European DesertNet: <http://www.european-desertnet.eu/>

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau

2. Information relevant to DesertNet members

Publication of the DSD Working Group 3 White Paper on "Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification and Land Degradation: Knowledge Management, Institutions and Economics".

It is our pleasure to inform you that the publication "Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification and Land Degradation: Knowledge Management, Institutions and Economics" is now available online at: http://www.european-desertnet.eu/docs/DSD-WG3_WP_final_web_with-cover.pdf

This White Paper is the result of an international collaboration and consultation coordinated by Working Group 3 of the Dryland Science for Development Consortium (DSD), led jointly by the Association of DesertNet International and the United Nations University – Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH). The findings of this Paper were presented at the First UNCCD Scientific Conference that was held during the UNCCD's COP-9 in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 22-24 September, 2009. The theme of the Scientific Conference was "Understanding Desertification and Land Degradation Trends: Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management".

The final version of the White Paper stems from the international collaboration and consultation of Working Group 3, and takes into account the feedback and comments received during the online global consultation from May-August 2009, as well as those comments received during the Scientific Conference. This White Paper synthesizes leading scientific knowledge on the role of knowledge management, institutions and economics in monitoring and assessment

of land degradation and desertification. It provides key recommendations for more effective policies and actions for combating desertification both within the UNCCD and beyond.

Information contributed by: Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, DesertNet International (DNI) makhtar-schuster@botanik.uni-hamburg.de and Richard Thomas UNU-INWEH rthomas@inweh.unu.edu

E.consultation on Needs, Usefulness and Options of an Independent Panel on Land issues has been closed

The global e.consultation on "*Needs, Usefulness and Options of an Independent, International, Interdisciplinary Scientific Advisory Body on Land Degradation/Desertification to Scientifically Advise the Convention in Decision-Making for Combating Land Degradation and for Achieving Sustainable Development in Drylands*" led jointly by the Association of DesertNet International and the United Nations University – Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH) has now closed. We received promising comments from scientists worldwide.

The information will now be evaluated by an international group of experts and will be provided to the scientific community and to the Special Session of the Committee on Science and Technology CST-SS in February 2011. We thank all members of DNI who participated in this consultation process.

Information contributed by: DNI Bureau and UNU-INWEH

Projects Funds Available on Initiatives to Halt Desertification in Europe

The Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission has launched a call for proposals on halting desertification in Europe. The deadline for submissions is **30 June 2010**.

For each of these pilot projects, the objective "*is to support the development of concrete pilot initiatives on innovative technologies, techniques or practices in order to contribute to the exchanges of good practice and innovation at the local level for halting the desertification in Europe.*"

For more Information please see: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/quantity/building_blocks.htm#call_halt

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

3. Researchers Updates

LEDDRA – Land and Ecosystem Degradation and Desertification: Assessing the Fit of Responses

LEDDRA is a new EU-funded research project coordinated by the University of the Aegean (Greece). Between now and 2014, LEDDRA aims to advance the comprehensive study of responses to land and ecosystem degradation and desertification (LEDD) in cropland, grazing land and forests/shrubland regions. It adopts the ecosystem approach and an integrated methodology with feedback between theory, methods, applications and policy.

LEDDRA will develop the theory of responses to LEDD, improve existing, and develop new integrated methodologies to assess the fit of various types of responses to LEDD and the socio-ecological vulnerability of affected regions, and provide applications in selected European and non-European sites. It will also offer policy and land management recommendations for diverse stakeholders at the international, EU and national levels. The Project website <http://leddra.aegean.gr/> will incorporate an Information System to disseminate the project results to a wide-ranging audience through various communication media.

Information contributed by: Heleni Briassoulis - University of the Aegean, and Giovanni Quaranta -MEDES

Geoland2 Expert Portal

Currently, a baseline version of the geoland2 SDI is released, providing pre-operational services for the identification, viewing, access, delivery and the support of all products generated in the geoland2 project. The full functionality of the



Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), will become available within only a few months providing the user community with convenient access to GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) Land data. New and upgraded data and services will continuously be provided.

For instance, biophysical variables are provided, describing the state of the continental vegetation (Leaf Area Index, Fraction of Green Vegetation Cover), the energy budget (Albedo), and the water cycle (Normalised Difference Water Index). Such parameters are provided over the entire globe at 1km resolution, and are updated every 10 days. For more information

please see: <http://www.land.eu> then click on Geo Expert Portal

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

EU Cooperation Project on the Use of Jatropha plant

The EU cooperation project “Use of *Jatropha* plant to improve sustainable renewable energy development and create income-generating activities: an integrated approach to ensure sustainable livelihood conditions and mitigate land degradation effects in rural areas of Ghana” is currently in its second year of five under the coordination of the Desertification Research Group of the University of Sassari. It is implemented in seven rural communities of the West Mamprusi District, Tamale Province (Northern Region, Ghana). Its main objective is to afford rural communities of Ghana access to improved modern and renewable energy services and opportunities for communities based groups, combat desertification and improve their livelihood through the cultivation of the multi-purpose perennial crop *Jatropha curcas L.* and the use of its derived products at rural community level. All project activities are being carried out in cooperation with the local communities, employing participatory approaches.

For more information, please consult NRD-UNISS web-site (www.nrd.uniss.it)

Information provided by: Giuseppe Enne, NRD - University of Sassari, Italy, DNI Secretary General.

Upcoming studies

In view of the 2012 policy review on water scarcity and droughts and the Blueprint, new studies and activities will be launched in the coming months. The following section gives an overview of the current planning concerning studies and projects, as presented in the non-paper at the stakeholder meeting in April 2010. These ideas might be supplemented in the future according to the needs.

- *Water Scarcity & Droughts – Gap Analysis*
- *Leakage reduction in water distribution network*

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

New Homepage FAO Soil Resources.

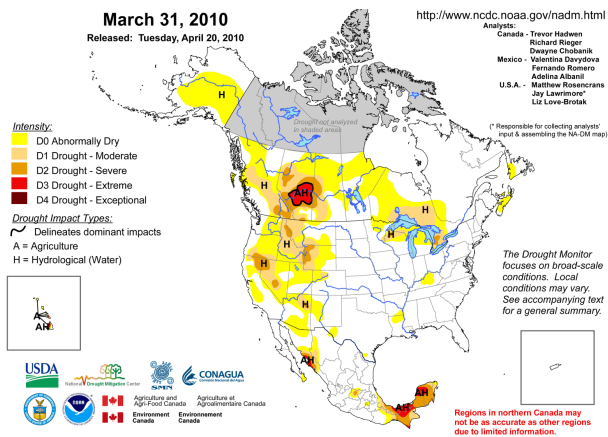
The World Reference Base (WRB) for Soil Resources has a new homepage at the FAO site. This page informs you about all publications based on the 2nd edition of the WRB, as well as the latest revised version (WRB 2007) and the guidelines for constructing small-scale map legends using the WRB. For more information please see:

<http://www.fao.org/nr/land/soils/soil/en/>

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

North American Drought Monitor

Past drought assessments typically have stopped at each country's borders as differences in resources and policy



objectives as well as differing methods for monitoring drought in each country effectively prevented an integrated view of drought conditions across the continent. The NA-DM program is being designed to overcome these past limitations with the objective of providing operational assessments of drought across the continents. This is an important step, as in today's global economy, the costs and effects of drought often extend beyond national and regional borders. The North American Drought Monitor is an operational map and narrative produced monthly through a collaborative effort of scientists in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Drought indices are used to detect and measure droughts, but different indices measure drought in different ways, and no single index works under all circumstances. So, the Drought Monitor concept was developed as a process that synthesizes multiple indices. The final outcome of each Drought Monitor is a consensus of federal, state and academic scientists to become an integral part of drought planning, preparedness and mitigation efforts at the national, regional and local levels.

The US Drought Monitor has been extremely successful in assessing and communicating the state of drought in the US on a weekly basis.

More information: <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/monitoring/drought/nadm/>

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Good Practices to Combat Desertification in Italy

The project "Good practices to combat desertification in Italy" funded by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Landscape and Sea (www.minambiente.it) has just ended under the coordination of the Desertification Research Group of the University of Sassari, NRD. The aim of the project was to explore the effectiveness of the concept of "good practice" on the basis of the application of an original conceptual framework based on the social learning and adaptive management paradigms. The framework was applied to some ten case studies located in the most vulnerable Italian regions (Sardinia, Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata and Puglia). Case study analyses were finalised to identify examples of concrete actions characterised by efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness in combating desertification in a wide range of situations (water management, ecological restoration, naturalisation of Mediterranean forest ecosystems, participatory planning etc) in different environmental and socio-economic contexts. For more information, please contact nrd@uniss.it

Information provided by: Pier Paolo Roggero, NRD - University of Sassari, Italy

German RapidEye and TerraSAR-X satellite data for scientific community

The RapidEye satellite system consists of five multi-spectral satellites with a high spatial resolution (6.5m) and revisiting time. This makes RapidEye data useful for monitoring land surface e.g. vegetation dynamics. Via the RapidEye science archive (RESA) program of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) scientific users are offered imagery grants for researchers associated with German institutions (<http://resaweb.dlr.de/index.php?id=113>). For researchers not associated with a German institution, please contact RapidEye directly.

TerraSAR-X is a German Earth-observation satellite. It has an X-band radar sensor with different modes of operation, allowing it to record images with different swath widths, resolutions and polarizations nearly independent from cloud coverage. One of the things that makes TerraSAR-X stand out is its very high spatial resolution (1m). This enables scientists to examine detailed ground features. If researchers submit their project proposal to DLR, they can receive TerraSAR-X data at data reproduction cost price only (<http://sss.terrasar-x.dlr.de/>).

Information contributed by: Gerd Ruecker

EU DESIRE Project

DESIRE is an Integrated EU-funded Project (FP 6) seeking to prevent and remediate desertification on the basis of the latest scientific achievements, cross-linked with local available knowledge. The research outputs will serve audiences at various levels ranging from the scientific community to practitioners, agricultural extensionists, policy makers, NGOs, land users, land owners, and local communities. As DESIRE begins the fourth year of five, we are beginning to provide assessments of SLM strategies, recommendations, and tools that will directly link research findings into feasible management actions. DESIRE will have a direct impact on a wide range of societal and economic issues, because practical recommendations for sustainable use of land and water are keys to preserving and improving land capability: for avoiding and mitigating degradation and desertification, optimising food security, and enhancing quality of life.



Figure 1: Stakeholders in the Zeuss-Koutine watershed area of Tunisia discuss solutions to water scarcity and rangeland degradation Photo by A. Ouled Belgacem

See <http://www.desire-project.eu>. Don't miss the Harmonised Information System where you can access full details of results and products so far, with some material available in a range of languages. (www.desire-his.eu).



Figure 2: Strategies to reduce erosion of soil by water include contour tillage and insertion of wooden terraces with soil bunds (Eskisehir, Turkey) Photo by S. Açikalin

Information contributed by: N. Geeson and S. Verzandvoort, DESIRE Dissemination and Management, respectively.

Desert Restoration Hub

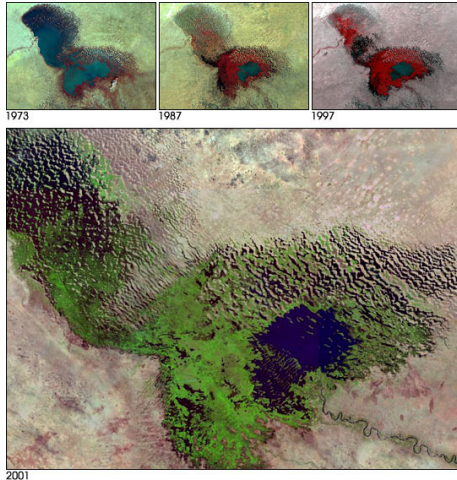
The manipulation of micro-landscape conditions to enhance plant establishment and longevity is key to the success of desert restoration and combat of desertification. Benz Kotzen suggests that knowledge and dissemination of desert restoration techniques is poor. Few trials are undertaken to examine tried and tested as well as new methods and techniques. It is suggested to establish a 'Desert Restoration Hub,' which could conceivably dovetail into an existing hub and organisation such as DesertNet International. In order to ascertain DNI's members' response to the setting up of a 'Desert Restoration Hub' and trials on micro-landscape manipulation and enhanced plant establishment methods,

please complete a short electronic questionnaire. This will only take a few short minutes. Please copy the link into your search engine. <http://www.surveypirate.com/Survey.aspx?surveyid=16759&sp.mac=azPh-UrCal5VAnsfl6Vuw%3d%3d>

Information contributed by: Dr. Benz Kotzen, The University of Greenwich, UK

Dramatic shrinking of Lake Chad

Although less dramatic and spectacular than the Aral sea problem (see our previous issue), Lake Chad is also facing severe surface reduction due to various pressures.



The Lake Chad area decreased from 25 000 km² in the 1960s to 2 500 km² today, while its depth shortened from 6 to 2 meters, endangering the life of some 4 million riparian people from Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. Abundant fish resources are disappearing. Desertification is threatening the surrounding areas and the active lake watershed (967 000 km²) as a whole.

The highly variable rainfall regime makes the inflow of the two main streams, Cahri and Logone lower and lower. A highly expansive solution could be to channel the Oubangui River into the lake, but there are neither funds nor political willingness to do this. The Chad government took mitigation and adaptation measures in the form of planting trees, and regulating fishing practices.

Climate change is actually under question. But socioeconomic factors are also as key drivers. Intense irrigation is feeding some 500.000 farmers, while local herders also need water resources.

Dramatic shortening of Chad lake area. © NASA.

Information contributed by: Gérard BEGNI, DNI, Chairman, Science/policy Interface Working Group.

Massive deforestation ad desertification in Haiti worsens the country's situation



Quite severe deforestation leading to desertification in Haiti mountains. © Treehugger Ltd.

On January 12, 2010, Haiti - the America's poorest country with 58% people under poverty threshold - faced a terrible earthquake that shocked the entire world. The capacities of this mainly agricultural country to implement a sustainable recovery are deeply hampered by an extensive desertification problem, largely caused by deforestation practices which severely eroded the soils. Forests were covering over 90% of Haiti's land area. Today, scarcely 2% remains forested. Deforestation is due mainly to two reasons:

- the country's 8, 5 million poor people has pressing needs of agricultural lands,
- Haiti's energy, both domestic and industrial, comes from wood and coal (UNDP).

Almost 85% of the country is mountain land. The heavy rains during the wet season take massive amounts of productive but very vulnerable soil towards the sea. The loss of natural barriers causes frequent catastrophes and extended desertification.

More info: http://www.entreculturas.org/noticias/news/World_Day_to_Combat_Desertification_and_Draught

Information contributed by: Gérard BEGNI, DNI, Chairman, Science/policy Interface Working Group.

4. Important upcoming events

List of links to next meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation in 2010.

15-17 June	Toward Sustainable Groundwater in Agriculture – An International Conference Linking Science and Policy. http://ag-groundwater.org	California, US
22- 25 June	International Conference on Sustainable Social and Human Development http://www.ontariointernational.org/IDCHome.htm	Sudbury, Ontario, Canada
17 June	Unesco Chair third Conference on Desertification: Action for combating http://www.fbw.ugent.be/nieuws/seminariessymposia.php	Ghent, Belgium
20-22 July	International Conference on Sustainable Community Development 2010 http://www.ipsas.upm.edu.my/icosd2010	Putrajaya, Malaysia
25-30 July	IGARSS International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium http://www.igarss2010.org/default.asp	Hawaii, US
1-6 Aug	19th World Congress of Soil Science http://www.19wcso.org.au/index.html	Brisbane, Australia
6-20 Aug	Second International Conference on Climate, Sustainability and Development in Semi-arid Regions - ICID 2010. http://icid18.org/	Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil
1-4 Sept	Dryland Hydrology: Global Challenges/Local Solutions http://www.hydrosymposium.com/	Tucson, Arizona, US
1-4 Sept	Arid Land Hydrology: Global Perspectives. http://www.azhydrosoc.org/index.html	Tucson, AZ, US
3-5 Sept	SAAG 2010 Biennial Conference. Landscape denudation or land degradation?: Interrogating the geomorphic processes of landscape change in Southern Africa https://webpace.utexas.edu/hudsonpf/comland/upcoming_meetings/meetings.htm#2010	Grahamstown, South Africa
28-29 Sept	International Scientific Conference On Advanced Scientific Tools for Desertification Policy http://www.noveltis.net/desurvey/conference/	Rome, Italy
11-15 Oct	First WASWC Council Meeting and International Conference On Combating Land Degradation in Agricultural Areas www.ms.iswc.ac.cn	Xian, Shannxi, China
14-15 Oct	Development and Cooperation in the Mediterranean region using satellite services http://www.eurisy.org/	Rabat, Morocco
21-23 Oct	6th WSEAS International Conference on Energy, Environment, Ecosystems and Sustainable Development. http://www.wseas.us/conferences/2010/timisoara/eesd/	Timisoara, Romania
25-29 Oct	Global Forum on Salinization and Climate Change http://www.uv.es/jorba/GFSCC2010 .	Valencia, Spain
8-11 Nov	The Third International Conference on Drylands, Deserts and Desertification: The Route to Restoration http://www.entersymposium.com/ddd/site/	Sede Boqer Campus, Israel
8-12 Nov	XVI International Soil Conservation Conference (ISCO 16)	Santiago de Chile, Chile

	http://www.iscochile2010.cl/	
19-21 Nov	2010 Pilot International Conference on Global Sustainable Development, Theme: Climate Change, A Challenge to Businesses in the 21st Century. http://www.conferencealerts.com/seeconf.mv?q=ca1ms00a	Kampala, East Africa, Uganda
13-17 Dec	Arid and Semi Arid Development through Water Augmentation (ASADWA) http://www.asadwa.ugent.be	Valparaiso, Chile

Information provided by: Maria Jose Marques Perez, DesertNet Board Univ. Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

5. Publications and Special Issues

- del Barrio G., Puigdefabregas J., Sanjuan M.E., Stellmes M. and RuizA. Assessment and monitoring of land condition in the Iberian Peninsula, 1989–2000. *Remote Sensing of Environment* 114(8), 1817-1832. URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2010.03.009>
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- arid rangeland: Natural desertification in action. *Journal of Arid Environments* 74, 221-228.
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Special issue of international journal Land Degradation and Development to publish academic review articles based on the DSD White Papers

Elements of the White Papers presented at the First UNCCD Scientific Style Conference in Buenos Aires in September 2009 are currently under review for publication in a special issue of the journal *Land Degradation and Development*. For more information about the journal, please see: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/6175/home>. Each DSD Working Group has submitted 4 papers to the special issue, giving 12 papers in total, plus there is a short editorial piece by the DSD Steering Committee that sets out the background to the special issue. Each of the contributions is based on the reviews outlined in the 3 White Papers and presented in Buenos Aires. Some DNI members may have been invited to act as peer reviewers by the journal– many thanks to those of you who have participated in this valuable process.

Information contributed by: Lindsay Stringer l.stringer@leeds.ac.uk

6. Other Information

Oxford Interdisciplinary Desert Conference

The 1st Oxford Interdisciplinary Desert Conference on April 15-16, 2010 brought together researchers interested in dryland people and environments. Hosted by the Oxford University School of Geography, the goal was to stimulate debate and collaboration across academic departments, share knowledge and expand desert paradigms. With presenters from 4 continents the conference covered subjects across the physical and social sciences from archaeology to zoology. Desert themes examined issues and locations from the Gobi through Arabia, the Sahara and Patagonia. Interaction and discussion across fields and timespans were the highlight with a book drawn from conference research expected in 2011. We welcome questions and participation in developing future initiatives.

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