

Understanding Ecological Thresholds in Global Change: Connecting Science to Decisions and Response

November 7-10, 2006

*Hosted by The H. John Heinz Center for Science, Economics and the Environment
and
The Nature Conservancy*

Airlie Center Warrenton, VA

On November 7 – 10, The Heinz Center and The Nature Conservancy will host a small meeting gathering together climate, ecological, and social scientists as well resource managers from the public and private sectors to:

- Organize what is known scientifically about linked social and ecological thresholds, the role of climate (across timescales and spatial scales) and the confluence of factors that drive change toward a particular threshold effect.
- Articulate what is known and understood in terms of climate, ecological, and social dimensions of threshold responses in a way that is relevant to groups of decision-makers and managers identified through the process of the meeting.
- Produce a document that articulates the implications of threshold changes in ecosystems for their management and their services to humans in the realm of global change.

Using a case study approach, the meeting will explore in-depth instances where the defining element of an environmental change threshold is expressed in terms of the effect on social and economic coping capacities. The task for meeting participants at this stage is to explore natural, physical, and social origins and pathways of change in multiple stress contexts and document important insights and further information needs.

This meeting has been designed to lay the scientific groundwork for a larger symposium to be designed and carried out in close consultation with decision-makers. Indeed, our hope is that this meeting will initiate a range of activities and dialogue throughout the scientific and related policy making communities that stimulate ideas for incorporating knowledge into response strategies and future planning.

Following this first meeting the initiative envisions a larger symposium event and potentially a set of activities engaging resource managers and practitioners to explore responses to threshold effects that challenge the condition of ecosystem services and the foundation of a range of natural resource management practices.