

Field Workshop on Degraded Lands for Chinese Environmental NGOs

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Preliminary Summary

An interdisciplinary group of about 40 Chinese natural resource scientists and Chinese environmental NGO representatives from 17 of China's 26 provinces and municipalities, participated in a degraded-lands field workshop in Guangdong Province. Ten faculty and graduate students from the South China Agricultural University (SCAU) in Guangzhou participated. The workshop, the first of its kind, was sponsored jointly by FAS and SCAU and supported by The International Foundation (U.S.), and the Guangdong Natural Science Foundation (China). The objectives of the field workshop were (a) to strengthen communications between environmental non-governmental organizations and the science community in dealing with degraded land problems, (b) to highlight degraded land problems in South China, (c) to identify causes of land degradation, (d) to

illustrate various sustainable solutions to improve degraded lands, and (e) to assess any adverse, unexpected effects from implementing solutions.

— During five days in the field, the workshop participants visited 15 sites including Dinghushan, a Man and the Biosphere Reserve (MAB), one of the last mountainous remnants of South China's native tropical, broad-leaf monsoon forest about 4.5 square miles in size; Heshan Research Station to see stereoagriculture (agriculture that varies with topographic position) and tropical forest research; the 1300 square miles of litchi/longan orchards in western Guangdong; the start of a ten square mile, fast-growing eucalyptus plantation for paper production; a tangerine plantation using chickens for biological pest control; a factory for production of tangerine-based Chinese medicine; Xiaoliang Soil and Water Conservation Station's demonstrations of the recovery of

extensive, severely degraded lands; restoration of a six square mile oil-shale tailings site 150 feet thick; and island mangrove restoration in the Pearl River from 75 acres to 2 square miles.

— Observations of Guangdong Province during the fieldtrip include: broad evidence of rapid economic development; expanded tourist activities within natural reserves and state farms; improved highways with growing automobile and truck traffic and traffic jams; numerous, large, active and abandoned quarries in the granite hillsides; numerous brick factories in urban and rural areas; rapid expansion of fruit production throughout the province; continued use of medical wastes as fertilizer in some litchi/longan orchards; continued expansion of tree plantings with non-native species of eucalyptus, casuarina, and pine; and the extensive use of firewood in the villages and countryside.