

SoilSoc Newsletter 2010

The NOVA Network "**Soils and Society**" - **SoilSoc** was established in the spring 2006 to promote Nordic higher education and research in the field of soil sciences and to strengthen the collaboration between the Nordic agricultural and forestry universities on soil related questions. This Newsletter is sent out to inform all the interested parties about the latest proceedings in the SoilSoc Network activities.

New faces in the SoilSoc network

A new network leader and secretary have been responsible for the SoilSoc network since autumn 2009. The persons taking over after the initial leader and secretary are:

Ólafur Arnalds, Professor, Dean for the Dept. of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, Agricultural University of Iceland and **Ella Wessén**, PhD student, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences as the SoilSoc network leader and secretary, respectively.

Two additional Nordic universities from Denmark and Finland have joined the SoilSoc network during this period. They are represented in the SoilSoc board by **Lis Jonge**, Dr., Agroecology and Environment, **Aarhus University**, Denmark and **Tarja Lehto**, Professor, Forest Soil Science, **University of Joensuu**, Finland.

In addition, Denmark, Norway and Iceland have new student representatives joining the board and contact info as well as the composition of the current SoilSoc board can be found at the SoilSoc website: <http://soilsoc.slu.se/soilsoc/board.html>

The SoilSoc website

The server and address of the SoilSoc website was modified and moved to the University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU, during autumn 2009. The design of the website is still the same and page viewers that have the old address is automatically directed to the new one, which is: <http://soilsoc.slu.se>

Past courses and meetings

Since its initiation, the SoilSoc network has successfully organised five intensive NOVA courses: *Soil degradation, erosion and restoration* (Iceland June 2008, PhD course), *Bioinformatics for environmental scientists* (Finland August 2008, MSc course) and *Microbial N transformations and NO/N₂O emissions* (Norway June 2009, PhD course), *Soil degradation, erosion and restoration* (Iceland June 2010, PhD course), *Remediation of contaminated soil* (Denmark August 2010, MSc course).

Further information on these past courses as well as past SoilSoc board meeting reports (latest from 2009) can be found at the SoilSoc website: <http://soilsoc.slu.se/soilsoc/reports.html>

The students' interest in and feedback from these courses has been very encouraging and motivates the network to host similar interdisciplinary courses also in the future. Should you have an idea for a future SoilSoc intensive course, don't hesitate to contact your respective board member or the network leader or secretary! The next SoilSoc board meeting, where future courses will be discussed, will be held in Finland 18th to 19th of November 2010.

SoilSoc intensive courses 2010 and 2011

NOVA has accepted to fund one more SoilSoc course during 2010:

Sustainable use of tropical soils (Ethiopia October-November 2010, PhD course, host Kristina Lindström), is the first ever NOVA course to be hosted at and in tight collaboration with a developing country. The severely degraded soils, vast biodiversity and rich agricultural possibilities of Ethiopia provide an exceptional case-study, as well as give the Nordic students much-needed experience in global soil challenges and developmental collaboration.

Information on the course can be found at the SoilSoc website:

<http://soilsoc.slu.se/courses/coursesSoilSoc/2010tropical.html>.

To date, no SoilSoc courses are planned for 2011 but this topic will be discussed during the board meeting 19th of November in Helsinki, Finland.

SoilSoc minor (25 ECTS) at the University of Helsinki

Since autumn 2008 it has been possible to take Nordic Minor in Soil Sciences (25 ECTS) at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry. A possibility to complete an entire Nordic minor package is a new way to benefit from NOVA collaboration and make it visible in the study curriculum. It also gives a framework and meaning for short Nordic exchange visits (Nordplus Express Mobility) and longer exchange periods, strengthening thus Nordic collaboration and providing specialisation alternatives. The structure of the minor entity is flexible; it will be tailored separately to every student to ensure sufficient interdisciplinary and Nordic interaction.

Please find more information on the Nordic Minor in Soil Sciences at the SoilSoc website:

<http://soilsoc.slu.se/programme/programmeFI.html>

SoilSoc board meeting 2010

The yearly board meeting will be hosted in Finland 18th to 19th of November 2010 and members from all universities represented in the board will be able to participate. Hopefully, we will be able to discuss future SoilSoc courses as well as other collaborations between the participating Nordic universities.