

Dialogue for Nature Conservation

Skills development in dialogue, local participation and management, and conflict management within nature conservation and the management of natural resources

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Foreword

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has produced *Dialogue for Nature Conservation*, a programme for skills development in dialogue, local participation and management, together with conflict management within nature conservation and the management of natural resources. It is intended primarily for personnel within the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the county administrative boards who work with nature conservation.

We hope that *Dialogue for Nature Conservation* will become a useful aid in implementing nature conservation policies in cooperation with local efforts. Open communication with the world around us is a prerequisite for successful nature conservation.

The aim is to realize the ideas presented in “En samlad naturvårdspolitik” (“A Shared Nature Conservation Policy”, Swedish government doc. 2001/02:173) and in “Sammanhållen rovdjurspolitik” (“A Shared Predator Policy”, Government bill 2000/01:57). Increased local participation is an important aim in both of these documents. It is also an important aspect of the work to implement the Convention for Biological Diversity and the ecosystem approach to developing participation and local management of natural resources.

The programme has been developed by a project group at the Natural Resources Department. The initial project manager was Cecilia Persson, who was succeeded by Mia Olausson, both from the Unit for Outdoor Recreation and Nature Management. Jesper Taube and Suzanne Kolare were also members of the project group. The Department of Urban and Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, produced a draft programme, which was subsequently refined by the project group.

Stockholm, September 2007

Björn Risinger
Director, Natural Resources Department

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Summary

Modern nature conservation concerns both people and nature. Dialogue is needed if nature conservation agencies want to succeed in their mission regarding the conservation and sustainable use of nature. For this reason, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has produced a skills development programme for dialogue, participation and conflict management – *Dialogue for Nature Conservation*. The programme has been designed for officials and their directors at county administrative boards and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

Dialogue for Nature Conservation will give officials and directors a theoretical background and practical tools to spur dialogue, for creating democratic processes and acquiring basic knowledge about conflict management. Good communication is vital for successful nature conservation.

The programme is intended for people who work with nature conservation, marine environmental issues and the management of large carnivores and other wild mammals and birds. Nature conservation includes the protection and management of natural environments, planning for different types of landscapes, regional landscape strategies and local development projects.

Most of the courses are intended for officials. One course has been specifically designed for nature conservation directors, to prepare them for greater local participation in nature conservation and supporting the work of their employees.

The *Dialogue for Nature Conservation* programme includes

1. Basic course for officials
2. Course in environmental communication for nature conservation directors
3. Advanced courses in four specific areas:
 - a. management and site protection
 - b. large carnivore issues
 - c. wildlife management
 - d. local development and nature conservation
4. Advanced courses in communication:
 - a. cooperation and learning
 - b. conflict management

During 2008-2009, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency aims to implement the basic course eight times, each advanced course twice and the director's course four times. The courses will be arranged by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency in collaboration with various partners, primarily for the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative board personnel. We expect that approximately 300 people will take part in the courses, a reasonable goal considering that approximately 500 people work with these issues

at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative boards.

Officials from municipalities and other public authorities can take part in the courses if there are vacancies. Other groups may arrange the courses on their own. A course evaluation will be carried out after each course. The programme will be evaluated and possibly restructured in 2010. Any decisions concerning the future of the programme will be based on this evaluation.

Background

The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency has developed this programme for dialogue, local participation and conflict management within nature conservation as part of its work to realize the ideas presented in “En samlad naturvårdspolitik” (“A Shared Nature Conservation Policy”, Swedish government doc. 2001/02:173), in which increased local participation is presented as an important goal. In the regulatory letter for the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish government has stated that the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is to present a skills development programme for dialogue, local participation and management, and conflict management before 30 September 2007. The programme is to be targeted at those who work with practical nature conservation and the management of natural resources.

Increasing local participation is also a part of Sweden’s commitment to implement the Convention for Biological Diversity. The concept of an *ecosystem approach* is defined in this convention as a method of working to develop participation and local management of natural resources.

The programme has been developed within the framework of a project at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. We have entered into an agreement with the Department of Urban and Rural Development at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, under which the department has produced a draft programme.

The draft has been referred for consideration to a number of internal and external references, and it has been discussed by the director’s group of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency’s Natural Resources Department at a workshop. The project group has subsequently refined the material to develop this programme.

Economic considerations

It is the ambition of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency to arrange the basic course eight times, each of the four advanced courses twice and the director's course four times in the period 2008-2009.

It is our aim that approximately 300 officials and directors at the county administrative boards and at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency will take at least one of the courses in the programme. This is a reasonable aim, having estimated that approximately 500 people work with these issues at the agency and the county administrative boards.

A course evaluation will be carried out after each course. The programme will be evaluated and possibly restructured in 2010. Any decisions concerning the future of the programme will be based on this evaluation.

Man and nature

It is the task of nature conservation both to protect valuable sites and species and to meet the human need to use the natural world and all that it provides. *Man and nature* is the watchword of today. The natural landscape, natural resources and biological diversity must all be preserved and used in a sustainable manner to serve human needs.

The basic principles of nature conservation policy are the same as those of the environmental quality objectives. These are about

- human health,
- biological diversity and the natural environment,
- the cultural environment and cultural heritage values,
- the long-term production capacity of ecosystems, and
- sensible management of natural resources.

The preservation of biological diversity is not only the responsibility of nature conservation agencies. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency is working to ensure that this responsibility is firmly grounded in individuals, as well as various stakeholder groups and sectors of society. The aim is for nature conservation to be seen as a foundation for sustainable development, at all levels. This is why it is necessary to communicate openly with the world around us.

Just as we increase our knowledge about natural values, we must also develop our expertise regarding dialogue and cooperation. Most of those who are employed within nature conservation have some form of scientific education, though seldom training in communication. We need to develop a programme for skills development in communication that is designed to fit the requirements of nature conservation.

Many different areas of cooperation

A healthy dialogue is a prerequisite for our ability to work together with other stakeholders towards common goals for natural resources. Examples include:

- The ecosystem approach. We need to create an understanding for, and participation in, the work to preserve natural values and to promote sustainable use of natural resources.
- Regional landscape strategies. Several interests must share the same landscape in order to preserve natural and cultural environments, recreational interests and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Land procurement negotiations. The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency commissions independent negotiators when procuring land for nature reserves and national parks. These negotiators must have good skills in dialogue and conflict management.

- Large carnivore issues affect hunters, owners of domestic animals, landowners, those interested in animals, the general public when collecting berries and mushrooms, etc.
- The marine environmental issues involve coordinating the diverse interests of e.g. farmers, professional and recreational fishermen, owners of pleasure boats, municipalities, and the shipping industry.
- Care and conservation. The desire to preserve natural values sometimes comes into conflict with the interests of forestry, agriculture and hunting.
- Wildlife management has to a great extent been delegated to the county administrative boards and to hunters. How can cooperation between these two be strengthened? High demands are placed on communication and dialogue when an authority is to cooperate with non-governmental organisations in conflicted issues.
- Species protection is handled mainly by the county administrative boards. Officials meet not only the general public, but also taxidermists, animal traders and exhibitors.
- Urban and peri-urban nature. Here, nature conservation encounter people participating in outdoor recreational activities, as well as those who work for example with municipal and regional planning for the construction of residential areas, traffic planning and other purposes.
- Outdoor recreation. Active outdoor recreation sometimes conflicts with interests associated with e.g. forestry, hunting, mining, municipal planning for housing and traffic.

Different degrees of influence

The forms of cooperation vary from one field to another. In many cases, it is a question of local participation in nature conservation policy. This is the case for area protection, the management of protected areas, and the management of large carnivores. Local development projects, work with regional landscape strategies and local nature conservation (LONA) initiatives involve other forms of cooperation with local stakeholders.

Local stakeholders such as hunting organisations have a major influence on and responsibility for wildlife management. This is a clear case of local management of natural resources.

Dialogue and participation

All forms of cooperation in nature conservation require that officials and directors have the skills required to constructively lead and conduct democratic dialogue and processes. It is important to avoid confrontation during processes and concentrate instead on showing and receiving respect through dialogue and participation. Consultation, early information and the involvement of landowners, neighbours and other stakeholders need to be developed. It is important to confirm and make use of local knowledge and involvement.

The reality of today's nature conservation officials is multi-faceted. They must follow the commissions, directives, laws and other frameworks governing nature conservation. They are to create the prerequisites for democratic dialogue, support and lead processes based on participation where local interests are met with respect. They encounter a variety of stakeholders with different ideas and expectations of a process and its outcome. These include e.g. landowners who know a lot about their land and have cultivated it for many years, forestry companies, hunters, fishermen and mushroom or berry pickers, all of whom have their own interests to protect.

Officials and stakeholders have different degrees and forms of authority and freedom. The official has authority as a representative of society, but as a civil servant his or her manoeuvrability is limited. A citizen may be small and powerless relative to the civil servant, but is free to act at will within the limits of the law. The situation is complex, and the official must be aware of his or her own role, leverage, and the expectations of those who have been invited to take part in a process.

Nature conservation agencies are seldom faced by a homogenous group. Most stakeholders can adopt a wait and see attitude to an authority's offer to cooperate, while others may perceive the discussion as a threat to their interests. An open dialogue is an important way to clarify the significance of participation. Participation is necessary in both planning and decision-making processes. Different ideas regarding the prerequisites for a meeting can lead to conflict and distrust.

Officials must learn to deal with both positive and negative signals from stakeholders as well as to be clear about what participation involves. If an official is unaware that an invitation has caused suspicion and worry, this may have repercussions on the process as well as for the official.

A result of using participant-focused democratic processes is that stakeholders are treated with respect and given the opportunity to contribute. Those who lead these processes must be aware of the fundamentals of democracy and be able to put them into practice when planning and carrying out individual discussions and meetings, as well as in longer processes. They must also develop an ability to speak so that others listen and understand, and to listen so that others want to speak and sense that they have been understood.

The professional identity and relationships of an official are affected by developing working methods for communication and participation, which can lead to a re-evaluation of one's previous values and professional role. It is wise to remember that it takes time to change the way we work. One or more courses in this programme may be a good start, but further supported and guided efforts may be needed to consolidate this knowledge.

Program overview

The objectives of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency's *Dialogue for Nature Conservation* programme are that participants will

- be aware of the prerequisites and be able to create an appreciation for nature conservation,
- be able to create, lead and participate in democratic discussions, and to discuss the significance and consequences of different approaches,
- be able to initiate, support and lead participatory processes, and to discuss the significance and consequences of the chosen approach, and
- be able to prevent and manage acute conflicts.

The *Dialogue for Nature Conservation* programme is to provide officials and directors with the skills needed to make use of different perspectives and interests, while maintaining credibility in a process with local participation. They will be able to handle criticism and objections to the aims and activities of the authorities. They are not to stifle criticism, but ensure that it can be used to clarify the process and the aim, and thereby ensure a learning process.

The participants will be able to use tools and models in order to analyse the situation and be able to deal with issues of trust and mandate. It is just as important to be able to clarify what is *not* included in the participatory process as what is included. It is important not to create false hope in other stakeholders.

Dialogue for Nature Conservation is to provide officials and directors with a theoretical background and practical tools to spur dialogue, for creating democratic processes and acquiring basic knowledge about conflict management.

Advanced courses will enable the participants to deal with the problems that arise within various fields of expertise with respect to local participation, cooperation and the local management of natural resources. Advanced courses will be devoted to conflict management, as well as cooperation and learning, i.e. how to create good working processes in situations that do not have expressed conflicts.

Officials from municipalities and other authorities are welcome to take part in the courses if there are vacancies. Other groups may arrange the courses on their own.

Basic course: Dialogue for nature conservation

The course is to provide fundamental skills of importance for those whose task it is to stimulate an interest and participation in, and understanding for nature conservation. The participants will learn to assess the prerequisites for communication, and how to change problematic situations using democratic methods and models.

Participants

Officials who work with nature conservation or the management of natural resources, primarily those working at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the county administrative boards. A basic course can be adapted for officials within a particular field, such as those working with conservation, with urban and peri-urban nature, outdoor recreation, wildlife management or large carnivores.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, the participants will:

- know of and be able to use methods and models for participation, dialogue and conflict management in their work,
- be able to discuss the significance and consequences of selected approaches,
- be able to see the role of nature conservation in a broader context, understand the role and aims of themselves and their agency, relative to those of other stakeholders,
- be aware of how stakeholders' understanding of nature conservation can change, and be able to apply this knowledge in their work,
- recognize that participatory processes take time, and be able to change their own routines.

Execution

The course is equivalent to 4-5 working days. It consists of two teaching sessions (two and one days, respectively), as well as self-study and one or two follow-up meetings, which could be held by telephone. There is a 1-2 month interval between the two teaching sessions.

SESSION 1. INTRODUCTION TO NEW MODELS AND NEW APPROACHES (2 DAYS)

Four topics are covered, using lectures and exercises such as role-playing, forum theatre, and reflective discussions:

- reflection on the participants' own experiences, current work routines, identified problems and opportunities,

- investigation into the prerequisites for communication in nature conservation, distribution of roles, influence on and respect for the knowledge and integrity of others, roles taken by officials and roles they assign to the other stakeholders, what influence they have and exert, what happens when they feel overlooked or violated, or when others feel this way,
- models and methods for cooperation, dialogue and participation,
- models and methods for dealing with various interests and perspectives on nature conservation, and using these to prevent conflicts.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The participants select a project in which they can apply the new knowledge about dialogue and participation at their place of work.

SESSION 2: REFLECTION AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES (1 DAY)

Supervised discussion on participants' experiences of practical application of the knowledge gained during Session 1. Methods and tools are further developed and the foundations are laid for each participant's own 'toolbox'.

FOLLOW-UP

After the course, participants are given the opportunity to reflect on the experiences gained after the course, supported by the course supervisor. Opportunities and problems can be discussed and the participant's toolbox modified. The follow-up may take the form of a meeting with officials in neighbouring counties or a telephone conference. One or two 3-hour meetings will be held.

Schedule

The course will be held 4 times per year in 2008 and 2009, with 20-25 participants per course.

Environmental communication for nature conservation directors

The aim is to inform of what the officials learn in the basic and advanced courses, and enhance the possibility for directors to support efforts to increase local participation.

Participants

Directors at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the county administrative boards. It is appropriate that the course is held before or in association with the basic course held for one's officials.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, the participants will:

- know of various methods and models for working with dialogue, participation and conflict management in nature conservation and management of natural resources,
- know what is required of directors and other supporting functions so that they can facilitate officials' work with dialogue, participation and conflict management,
- be able to support employees so that they can both comply with legislation and directives and be open to participation.

Execution

The course is held over 2 days and consists of alternating lectures and exercises, such as role-playing, forum theatre, case studies and reflective discussions:

- Reflection on the participants' own experiences of local participation and the management of natural resources, their current way of working, identified problems and opportunities.
- Models and methods for cooperation, dialogue and participation, how to create prerequisites for democracy and participation on the organisational level, how a director can help employees deal with demands for compliance with legislation and directives while remaining open to participation.
- Methods to support employees who are in conflict-filled situations.
- What officials within nature conservation and the management of natural resources expect of their directors, and what expectations are realistic.

Schedule

The course will be held 4 times during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Advanced courses for specific fields of expertise

Local participation in the protection and management of protected areas

The course is to develop expertise and create participation in the protection and management of protected areas, and it is to increase acceptance of the goals of nature conservation.

Participants

The course is intended for officials primarily at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the county administrative boards who work with the protection of valuable nature and the management of nature reserves and other protected areas.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, the participants will:

- be aware of the potential for local participation with respect to the creation and conservation of protected areas,
- know of and have tested methods for dealing with the driving forces, perspectives and arguments that local stakeholders hold in issues of care and conservation,
- be able to identify which tools officials should choose in order to increase acceptance of nature conservation, and to prevent and manage conflicts that can arise in association with area protection and conservation.

Execution

The course includes a 2-day teaching session and self-study. Teaching consists of:

- Discussion and reflection on case studies and input from the participants' own experience.
- Meetings with interest organisations and others who have taken part in the care and conservation of natural areas. Representatives of the organisations will describe how they experienced the process. A discussion will follow, concerning what has affected the development and how conflicts were managed.
- Discussion within the course group about the topics of self-study.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The participants choose a topic for self-study on which to apply the knowledge gained. A written account of the self-study is submitted, and an educational supervisor provides feed-back and guidance over the phone or through a web-based discussion forum.

Schedule

The course will be held twice in the period 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Local participation and conflict management in the management of large carnivores

The course is to develop the ability of the official to communicate with individuals and groups, increase understanding of the processes that occur during conflicts and clashes of interest in issues concerning large carnivores, and provide a toolbox with which the officials can work.

Participants

The course is intended for those who coordinate and process large carnivore issues at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative boards.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, participants will:

- know of meeting techniques and conflict management models,
- be able to predict and assess the prerequisites for dialogue in meetings with cattle and animal owners, hunters and residents,
- have developed an understanding of driving forces, stakeholder perspectives and arguments regarding large carnivore management,
- have developed an ability to manage acute conflicts and face upset or shocked people.

Execution

The course includes a 1.5-day teaching session and self-study and consists of alternating lectures and exercises, such as role-playing, case studies and reflective discussions:

- Techniques and design of meetings, plenum meetings and group dynamics.
- Methodology of dialogue.
- Conflict management.
- Building long-term and constructive work procedures for a regional large carnivore group.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The participants choose a topic for self-study on which to apply the knowledge gained. Participants will submit a written account of their self-study and receive feedback and supervision over the phone or through a web-based discussion forum.

Schedule

The course will be held twice during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Cooperation in the management of wildlife

Wild mammals and birds are jointly managed by various stakeholders and authorities with different knowledge, experience and perspectives. This course is to develop official expertise in recognizing various interests and developing forms of cooperation.

Participants

The course is intended for those who deal with wildlife management issues at county administrative boards and at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, the participants will:

- have developed an understanding of the opportunities and obstacles to cooperation between stakeholders with different perspectives,
- have better understanding of their own role relative to those of other stakeholders in wildlife management,
- know of models and methods for organising cooperation and joint management, and for managing conflicts,
- know of different methods and approaches to promote learning and dialogue in cooperation and joint management.

Execution

The course includes a 1-1.5-day teaching session and self-study and consists of alternating lectures and exercises, such as role-playing, case studies and reflective discussions:

- Models and methods for cooperation and joint management.
- Dealing with unexpected events and conflicts.
- Methods and models for common learning and democratic meetings where different knowledge is presented.
- Reflection on group dynamics, inter-organisational processes, and legitimacy.
- Reflection on various forms of knowledge and how these are handled and accepted in joint management. We reflect on scientific knowledge, hands-on knowledge, expert knowledge and local knowledge.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The participants choose a topic for self-study on which to apply the knowledge gained. Participants will submit a written account of their self-study and receive feedback and supervision over the phone or through a web-based discussion forum.

Schedule

The course will be held twice during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Nature conservation and local development

This course is to enhance officials' expertise in how nature conservation can be integrated into local development projects with other sectors, and increase opportunities for cooperation with local development groups and businesses.

Participants

The course is intended for those at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative boards who work with nature conservation in issues that closely concern other sectors and stakeholders, such as rural development, commerce, the cultural environment, agriculture, forestry conservation, and regional planning.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, participants will:

- know of the goals of national and regional programmes for nature conservation, and local and regional development,
- be aware of which interest groups work with local development in matters that concern nature conservation. These may be authorities, stakeholders and EU programmes at local, regional and national levels,
- be able to critically examine and describe conflicts of interest and opportunities between nature conservation and local development,
- have applied the knowledge gained from the basic course, and enabled sustainable local initiatives and activities in nature conservation.

Execution

The course is held over 4-5 days. It includes two teaching sessions and self-study. There is an interval of 1-2 months between the teaching sessions.

SESSION 1

- Presentation and comparison of goals, rules and regulations, institutions and programmes for regional and local development. These may be programmes for regional growth, programmes for regional development, the Rural Development Programme, including “Leader” and “New Goals 2” (the Social Fund and Interreg).
- Discussion of some selected regional programmes, plans and strategies.
- A study visit to a project in which nature conservation is included as part of the development work, analysis of how the goals cooperate or conflict with each other.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- A visit to a local stakeholder or municipal employee who is working with local development, as well as a visit to a colleague at another unit of the county administrative board or the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

- Critical examination of existing regulations of one's own nature reserves or protected areas, and an assessment of whether they promote or hinder local development work.

SESSION 2

- Joint development of proposals for local, regional, and national measures that facilitate the connection between local development and nature conservation.
- Drafting proposals for how one's own organisation can benefit from the possibilities that have been identified.

Schedule

The course will be held twice during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Advanced courses in communication

Cooperation and learning

Course participants are to become skilled in initiating and leading cooperative and learning processes in nature conservation and management of natural resources. This regards meetings and situations where there are no expressed conflicts.

Participants

Officials at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative boards who work with nature conservation and management of natural resources.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, the participants will:

- be able to plan (independently or with the support of a supervisor) constructive meetings and processes that make use of the creativity and knowledge of participants whose voices are heard,
- be able to act as process leader (under supervision) at meetings to define cooperative and learning processes, and to evaluate the results,
- be able to analyse and understand the consequences of various choices in process implementation, understand the significance of being able to control the agenda for a process, and the opportunities this offers other stakeholders, know who formulates a problem, and how decisions are reached.

Execution

The course includes a 2-day teaching session and self-study and consists of alternating lectures and exercises such as role-playing and reflective discussions:

- Criteria for cooperation, democracy and learning among stakeholders with different interests, opportunities for cooperation with regard to effective nature conservation and management of natural resources.
- Aids in communication.
- Structuring meetings.
- Process management and structuring of processes.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The participants can practice new structures to make meetings effective or plan the initial stages of a more long-term process. Participants will submit a written presentation and receive feedback and supervision over the phone or through a web-based discussion forum.

Schedule

The course will be held twice during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.

Conflict management

Participants are to develop their abilities to manage conflicts and disagreements that may arise within nature conservation and management of natural resources.

Participants

Officials at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and county administrative boards who work with nature conservation and the management of natural resources.

Learning objectives

Having completed the course, participants will:

- have developed their abilities to plan and carry out constructive discussions in matters where different interests, opinions and perspectives are expected or known to exist,
- have developed the ability to deal with acute conflicts,
- have developed the ability to choose responses and behaviour that reduce the risk of conflict and instead function constructively in the dialogue,
- be able to assess whether independent process leaders are necessary in order to solve a conflict, be able to cooperate with the process leader and adapt the issue accordingly.

Execution

The course includes a 2-day teaching session and self-study and consists of alternating lectures and exercises such as role-playing and reflective discussions, with both long and short conflict processes:

- The social dynamics and driving forces of conflicts.
- Group relationships.
- Meta-communication – talk about talking, and how to agree with others about the prerequisites for a discussion.
- Acute conflict management.
- Long-term conflict management processes and cooperation with an independent process leader.
- Case studies of cooperation and conflict.

Schedule

The course will be held twice during 2008-2009, with 15-20 participants per course.