



18 December 2009

Updates on Biochar and Copenhagen

As we enter the last day of the UNFCCC COP15 Copenhagen talks, it is hard to determine whether a deal is still possible or not. President Obama spoke before the Plenary today, and indicated strong support for an agreement that brings all parties to the table in an agreement that makes commitments verifiable. At least 100 heads of state have been negotiating to resolve differing viewpoints on emissions targets, financing, transparency of reporting, and enforceability. Support for climate combating technologies and financing of technology transfer from developed to developing countries, as well as agricultural sector and land use change mitigation strategies remain a high priority in the discussions, which may open the door for biochar to be acknowledged as a high-priority technology that must be scaled up in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance food and energy security globally!

The draft negotiation text released on Friday by the Conference Chairs and Parties remained short on details pertaining to agricultural sector solutions and technologies, but placeholder text is included for domestic agricultural and land use activities of industrialized countries as well as for the financing of cooperative agricultural sector mitigation activities between developed and developing countries. The impact for biochar production and utilization systems is thus promising in terms of UNFCCC recognition of agricultural activities in helping to combat climate change, including the promise of biochar as a high-impact, low-cost climate mitigation and adaptation technology with multiple co-benefits. More information on the COP15 can be found at: <http://unfccc.int>.

2009 Year in Review for IBI

IBI has achieved some major milestones in 2009 that we are proud to share. Organizationally, we grew from two part-time staff members in 2008 to six at the end of 2009. We began the process of expanding our [board](#), bringing on new board member David Wayne in October. We drafted IBI's first strategic plan and launched a membership program. We convened a new [advisory committee](#) of 39 members from 13 countries to consult on all aspects of IBI's work. Thanks to the hard work of administrative director [Lee Parker](#), we set up all the systems for planning, accounting and reporting that a non-profit organization needs in support of the IBI programs that we are developing to serve the biochar community. Here are some highlights of

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our program work in 2009:

Research Support

Objective: To support the development of a knowledge base on biochar characteristics in relationship to soil health, crop productivity, by-product management, bioenergy production and carbon sequestration.

Biochar Standards - Starting at the May 2009 Asia Pacific Biochar Conference in Australia and continuing to the North American Biochar Initiative conference in the USA, IBI initiated a [biochar characterization workgroup](#) that will develop a definition of biochar and a classification scheme across feedstocks, production systems and applications. This work will become a major IBI focus in 2010.

Biochar Community Resources - We added website resources including a searchable research [bibliography](#), an [academic and research program directory](#), a list of [biochar reports](#) and a series of [research summaries](#) explaining important aspects of biochar research to the general public.

Research - IBI Extension Director [Julie Major](#) drafted a research gaps matrix to identify areas that need more attention and funding. Julie and board member Johannes Lehmann reviewed biochar research projects and papers and made numerous presentations at scientific meetings and conferences.

Policy

Objective: To promote the adoption of supporting policy mechanisms within the global community regarding the inclusion of biochar in all appropriate policy contexts.

UNFCCC process - After a successful launch for biochar at COP 14 in Poznan in 2008, IBI Executive Director [Debbie Reed](#) pressed forward with the process, attending informal **UNFCCC** meetings and negotiations in Bonn, Germany in April and June. IBI also hosted a side event at the UNCCD (UN Convention to Combat Desertification) COP9 in Buenos Aires in September. As a result of our joint work with UNCCD, 16 countries and the UNCCD Secretariat itself have made submissions to the UNFCCC to include biochar in the negotiating text for the next climate agreement. At COP15 in [Copenhagen](#), the IBI delegation hosted one side event and participated in several others concerning biochar, marking a new high point of interest in biochar as a climate solution. IBI also continued to educate delegates, high-ranking government officials, non-governmental environmental groups and other conference observers of the benefits of biochar at the COP15, and held several meetings with the biochar community, bringing together interested parties from multiple backgrounds. IBI has also secured UNFCCC credentials as an observer group to the Convention, assuring us a seat at the table as climate negotiations continue.

National and Regional - Debbie Reed prepared written biochar briefs for the Australian government, the [UK Parliament](#) and the European Union Energy Directorate. She also reviewed proposed carbon standard methodologies and white papers on biochar offsets, including one for the state of California and one for the Voluntary Carbon Standard. Debbie has also provided policy support and strategic advice to multiple members of the international biochar community at the national and sub-national level.

US policy - Debbie Reed met with staff at the White House, State Department, EPA, USDA and the Department of Interior regarding the role of biochar as a climate mitigation, waste management, and soil enhancement technology. She has also conducted briefing and educational sessions for many congressional offices and

committees in the US House and the Senate. In June, Johannes Lehmann [testified at a congressional hearing on climate change](#) impacts. As a result of this work, biochar is now a part of two important pieces of [pending legislation](#), and will be included in a third.

Project Support

Objective: Expand and facilitate biochar production and utilization demonstration projects globally.

Developing country projects - IBI is supporting [projects](#) through assistance in the areas of agronomy and pyrolysis in several countries. We have been able to help projects secure funding in a few cases. Julie Major visited projects in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Chile, while board member Stephen Joseph provided hands on help with a new kiln design used in a Costa Rica project.

Extension services - In July, IBI hired [Jane Lynch](#) as technical extension director. Jane has been working in Australia with Stephen Joseph to develop testing procedures for biochar kilns and stoves. Through the [Ask the Extension Director form](#) on the IBI website, as well as via telephone calls and emails, Jane and Julie have answered dozens of questions each month from farmers, gardeners, project developers and regional biochar groups.

Training materials - IBI published a [Guide to Conducting Biochar Trials](#) written by Julie Major. Julie and Jane are developing additional training materials and guides that we will offer as online workshops in 2010.

Commercialization - IBI developed a [biochar value streams matrix](#) to help guide thinking about commercialization potential of biochar. Many ideas are now on the table and new programs to assist companies will continue to blossom in 2010.

Communications

Objective: To be an objective and reliable source of information on biochar policy, production and utilization.

Presentations - IBI staff and board members maintained a busy schedule of presentations at meetings and conferences addressing scientific societies, agricultural organizations, and newly formed biochar regional groups.

Conferences and regional groups - IBI co-sponsored regional biochar conferences around the world including the [Asia Pacific Biochar Conference](#) in Australia, the [North American Biochar Conference](#) in the USA, and smaller regional conferences. We supported the formation of 24 [regional biochar groups](#) in 15 countries and regions and provided a page for each group on our website. IBI Communications Director, [Thayer Tomlinson](#), started work on the next IBI international conference to be held in [Brazil in 2010](#).

Networking - Thayer and IBI Communications Editor, [Kelpie Wilson](#), transformed the [IBI website](#) into an information-dense platform with [daily news updates](#) and networking features like a [member directory](#), a [bulletin board](#) and a [blog](#). Our [monthly newsletter](#) kept the community informed about new projects and developments in research and policy, and we answered several hundred individual requests for more information via phone and email.

Publications - We contributed to the preparation and support of the book [Biochar for Environmental Management](#), released in February 2009. We prepared many fact

sheets, white papers and answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#). We reported on [biochar projects and activities](#) around the world.

Membership - IBI has launched a [membership program](#) to widen our support base. IBI is grateful for the start-up funding it has received from foundations and generous individuals. Now the IBI needs to broaden its sources of funding onto a sustainable basis. Our membership program will not only provide core funding, but it will establish a reciprocal relationship between IBI and practitioners and interested parties around the world.

Please Join IBI today! Those who signal their continuing interest through membership will be welcomed into a reliable community whose opinions will continue to help steer and develop the work of the IBI. We hope you will want to contribute to the realization of biochar's potential as one of the "wedges" that offer a solution to the climate crisis.

To all those who have already joined as IBI Members - a Big Thank You!

Show your Support--Become an IBI Charter Member

From now until 31 January 2010, IBI invites biochar supporters to become Charter Members of IBI. Charter Members will receive a special gift - the IBI hat - free with your membership dues.

As you can see, IBI has worked very hard over the past year to advance biochar. Through this work of IBI and others, more people are recognizing that sustainable biochar is a powerfully simple tool to fight global warming. But we need your help to hit the ground running in 2010 to continually expand the services we can offer to the biochar community. Help us raise the resources we need to support greater development of sustainable biochar - become an IBI member!

Sustainable biochar is one of the few technologies that is relatively inexpensive, widely applicable and quickly scalable. We really can't afford not to pursue it.

[Click here to join.](#)

Call for Abstracts for USBI 2010 Conference



Recent advances in biochar science and technology will be showcased at Biochar 2010: U.S. Biochar Initiative Conference, hosted by Iowa State University on June 27-30. Join scientists, engineers, policymakers, policy analysts, producers, and users to discuss these critical developments.

Call for Abstracts now open • **Deadline for submission: February 1**

For Biochar2010 conference information, visit
www.biorenew.iastate.edu/biochar2010

First Biochar Workshop Held in Malaysia

The first Biochar Malaysia Workshop was held December 14, 2009 in Kuala Lumpur and was organized by Dr Amran Salleh. Among the speakers were the Vice Chancellor of the University Putra Malaysia, Dr Nik Mustapha R. Abdullah; the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology speaking for the Minister, Dr. Maximus Johnity Ongkili, and IBI Chair Dr. Johannes Lehmann, Cornell University.

The event provided ample opportunity for lively discussion on the science and technology priorities for biochar in Malaysia and the opportunities and needs for organizing a Malaysian biochar initiative. To read more about the workshop, see:
<http://www.icc.upm.edu.my/biochar/index.php?content=home>
