

Northern Forest Institute



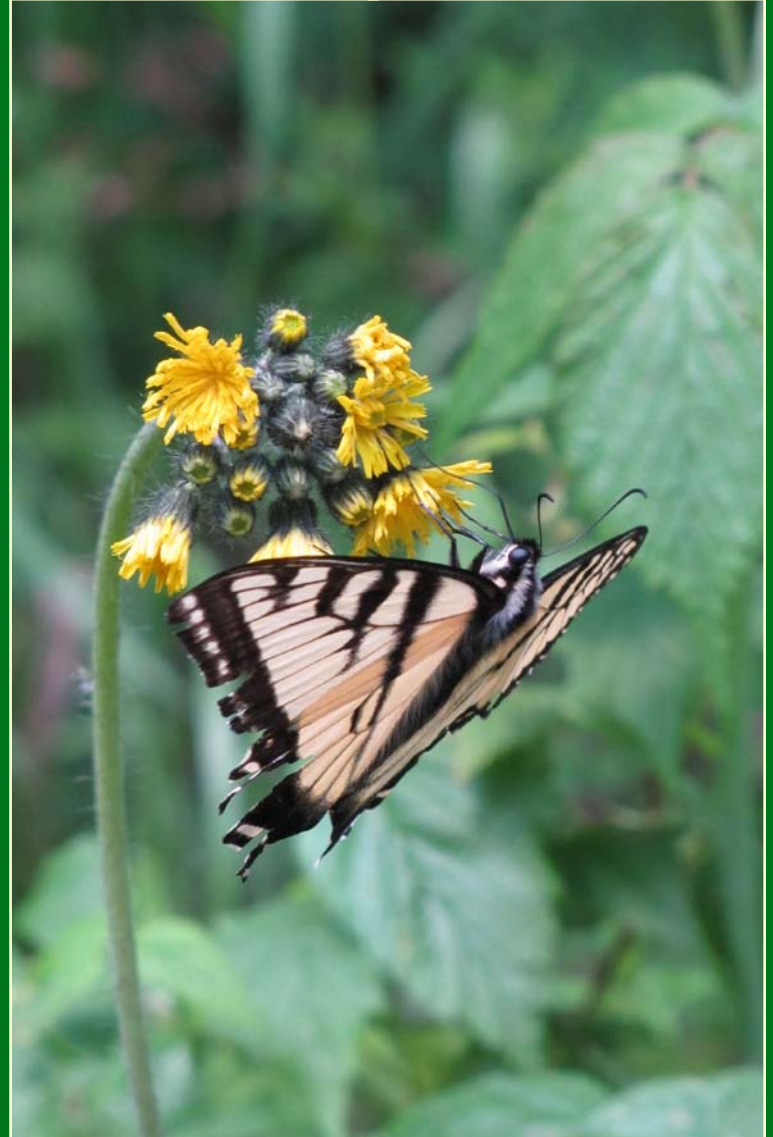
Annual Report, July 2013 - June 2014

ESF

State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Executive Summary

July 1st, 2013 through June 30th 2014 was a period marked by exciting changes in staff, finding our stride managing the Adirondack Interpretive Center, developing new programs and initiatives, and creating new partnerships. Perhaps most noteworthy, NFI led the development of ESF's first-ever residential semester at the Newcomb campus. This reporting period was also one of significant transition, with new leadership at ESF and the Adirondack Ecological Center. After 13 years at the head of ESF, Dr. Cornelius Murphy passed the College mace and mantle of the presidency to Dr. Quentin Wheeler, who came to ESF from the University of Arizona. As the reporting year started Doug Allen stepped down from the Directorship of the AEC, passing it to Stacy McNulty who functioned as interim director through the first six months before Brian Houseal was named new AEC director in January. Prior to taking leadership of the AEC, which includes NFI, Brian spent 10 years as executive director of the Adirondack Council, preceded by 15 working for The Nature Conservancy creating large-scale land conservation areas in Central America.



Staffing

Reflecting on our experience managing the AIC over two years while maintaining existing NFI programs and working to launch planned initiatives, made clear the need to add program staff capacity. We were excited to create and add a new, full-time position of assistant program manager, and to hire a graduate student for the spring semester to help with special projects. Both additions to the program staff team ensured our ability to provide outstanding programs and exemplary guest experiences.



Program Manager

In June of 2013 Frank Morehouse III joined NFI as program manager, filling the position left vacant following the departure of Rebecca Oyer in 2012. Frank came to NFI from Audubon, having worked for several years as the coordinator of educational outreach at Audubon's center just north of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. A native Adirondacker, Frank brings a passion for natural history, an interest in the exploration of our deeper connections to the natural world, and a pronounced talent for music. He also serves as a role model for regional youth considering non-traditional careers that may enable them to live and work in the Adirondacks.

Assistant Program Manager

Kristin Pasquino, as the adage goes, is not letting any grass grow under her feet. As a student, she competed on ESF's Cross Country team, an apt metaphor for her career pace as well. Over the course of three years she progressed from the AIC Interpretive Naturalist intern, to the temporary summer program manager, to being the top candidate for our new full-time assistant program manager position, which began Memorial Day weekend. Kristin's "since Summer One" experience at the AIC is a tremendous asset, combined with her professional training in natural history interpretation and informal science education.





Junior Naturalist Program

For a third year, we welcomed back Rebecca Mara and Erin Mackey, now seasoned in the day-to-day operation of the AIC. Their enthusiasm and experience were an asset to the AIC and they are excellent role-models for engaging youth in nature-based experiences from hands-on learning to employment.

Interpretive Naturalist Internship

The successful candidate for the summer 2013 internship was Angela Noviasky, a senior in ESF's department of Forest and Natural Resource Management (FNRM). Angela's maturity and poise were a great addition to our summer staff. In addition to creating and leading interpretive programs, Angela also introduced us to her mother, an accomplished artist who participated in our art and nature-themed Rockwell Kent day, during which she was one of our plein air painters, sharing her work and process with visitors along the trails.



Programs & Initiatives



NFI strives to provide educational outreach programs to three core audiences: academic, professional and general public. While NFI has a strong tradition of designing and delivering programs to academic audiences (k-12 and college), and has offered professional development workshops for teachers, foresters, and resource managers for years, building a robust public program slate over the past two years has been an interesting and rewarding experience. All NFI programs are aligned around a few core themes, the central of which is communicating the process of science through direct exposure to outdoor and nature-based experiences. With operation of the AIC settling into a rhythm and the ARS now completed, during the second half of this reporting period NFI was able to commit resources and time to advancing program development previously planned but not completed in key content areas.

Adirondack Residential Semester

In May of 2012 NFI was asked to create a residential semester to be offered at the Newcomb Campus fall semester of 2013. This was an exciting but challenging undertaking. Over the previous reporting period NFI developed the semester structure and in collaboration with co-faculty Dr. Marianne Patinelli-Dubay (NFI), Stacy McNulty (AEC) and Dr. Ross Whaley (ESF President Emeritus) designed a 5 course, 15-credit semester. Our inaugural semester hosted three students, two from ESF and one from the University of North Carolina. Over 14 weeks these students engaged in an integrated program exploring the Adirondack park from public policy, philosophical, ecological and experiential perspectives, which included meetings and conversations with individuals and leaders representing the spectrum of issues facing the Park. The semester required students to integrate and demonstrate what they learned by producing a “comprehensive unit management plan” for the newly acquired Essex Chain Lakes, work that culminated in December with public presentations and hearings on their proposed plan in Newcomb and on main campus in Syracuse.



Leadership Training

Part of the founding concept of NFI, anchored in the name itself, is creating content and programs aimed at helping to develop conservation and natural resource management leaders. While many of the professional development workshops NFI has offered provide information and experiences advancing the knowledge and performance skills of participants, this year we introduced our first specific leadership training program. In partnership with Lee Riddell, director of the SUNY Leadership Institute, NFI created, hosted and co-led the first Adirondack Leadership Trek in April of 2014. This 3-day experience brought 13 participants from institutions of higher education across NYS, both public and private. The trek mixed indoor conversations with outdoor experiences, including a late-winter mountain climb, all designed to challenge participants while engaging in thoughtful learning about themselves and the conditions under which they are most efficient, effective and balanced at work. Future leadership trainings are already in the works, with pre-designed and custom trips available.



Hudson River Environmental Opportunities Network (HREON)



Photo Credit - Yusuf Burgess



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With the College's request in mid-2012 for NFI to shift focus to creating and leading the Adirondack Residential Semester (ARS) in fall 2013, work on HREON, initiated in spring 2012, was put on hold. In January of 2014 we were able to revitalize this network of organizations working to increase opportunities for underserved youth interested in conservation experiences, academics and careers. ESF graduate student Natasha Karniski, who impressed us first while serving as the AEC teaching assistant (TA), and then the ARS TA, was hired to reconnect the network, update the opportunities matrix and work with ESF to design and launch the HREON web page at www.esf.edu/nfi/diversity.

Environmental Philosophy

Under the leadership of Marianne Patinelli-Dubay, who earned her doctorate during this year, NFI's program in Environmental Philosophy continues to grow, adding structure and substance to her work bridging science and the humanities. In addition to stand-alone programs and professional workshops, Marianne teaches a summer course annually at ESF's Cranberry Lake Biological Station, and was invited this year to design and teach the department of Environmental Forest Biology (EFB)'s honors seminar. Marianne's Land Use and Ethics symposium, now in its third year, drew 20 participants from 10 institutions, and continues to stimulate rich conversations bridging a wide range of disciplinary boundaries. Marianne was also an invited speaker at the Society of American Forester's annual conference, teaching a workshop in practical ethics as one of the conference sessions.



Essex Chain Lakes



In 2012 Governor Andrew Cuomo announced the purchase of the Essex Chain Lakes, an 18,000 acre area of interconnected lakes and long, undisturbed stretches of the Hudson River. This large addition to the forest preserve is immediately south of Newcomb and also borders the towns of Long Lake, Indian Lake, and Minerva. Having been in private ownership by Finch Pruyn for over one hundred years, these former timberlands represent an exciting new opportunity for a wide range of outdoor recreational enthusiasts. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), tasked with managing and protecting these lands as they open to the public, approached ESF and NFI to help in that process. Throughout the spring of 2014 DEC and NFI met to develop the tools and protocols for issuing permits and providing day and overnight users with appropriate information for their safe, respectful and enjoyable access and use of these lands. The lands opened for permitted overnight use by the public July 1st, 2014, and detailed information about the permitting process and usage numbers will be available in our next annual report.

Facilities



Photo: Nate Bush



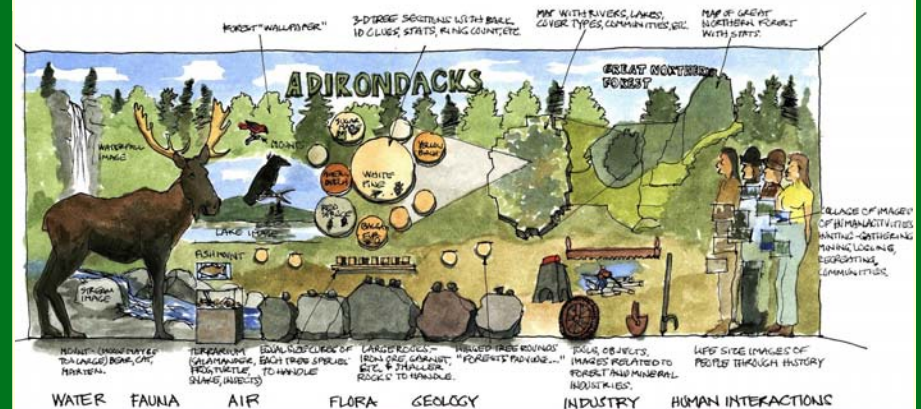
Masten House

In 2013 the ESF College Foundation finalized the purchase of the Masten House and renovation got into full swing beginning in late May with 4 ESF Construction Management student interns engaged in the process, living on site and working with the local contractors on demolition, light construction and site work. NFI played a key role in assisting with renovation planning, and selecting interior furnishings and finishes. NFI will lead in creating programming for Masten, work that has already commenced in collaboration with NFI partners, the community of Newcomb and regional institutions and organizations committed to working in and for the Adirondacks. Once Masten is completed NFI will begin utilizing it as an additional resource for outreach and educational activities at ESF's Newcomb Campus. Anticipated opening of the Masten House will be Memorial Day weekend 2015.

Charles & Elizabeth Morgan Northern Forest Room



This year NFI collaborated with Robert McNamara of Art of Wilderness to design comprehensive new exhibits for the east and west walls of the Northern Forest Room. The former exhibits were removed in 2011, and renovation work was begun in late 2013 and completed in early 2014. Five new picture windows and a wood burning pellet stove now flood the room with light and warmth. This major renovation, transforming the 1989 exhibit room for the first time in over 20 years, will be substantially completed by December of 2014, with a formal ribbon cutting ceremony during the 2015 Loons and Log Celebration on Memorial Day weekend.



Preliminary design and content elements of the Northern Forest Wall (Art of Wilderness)

Service

Service-learning and community service are important components of the educational and professional commitment at ESF, and are a fundamental part of our institutional culture. At NFI we are always excited to create opportunities to host service learning groups from ESF and beyond. This work is beneficial to participant groups like ESF's Soccer team and the ESF/SU Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity, providing bonding experiences and opportunities to see and contribute to the management of a 15,000 acre station. This contribution is a tremendous benefit to the Newcomb campus, providing more than 120 work-hours of effort towards many important projects this year.



NFI staff are equally committed to community service, spending a day of work at Asgaard Farm in Ausable Forks, NY, former home of renowned artist Rockwell Kent. Several members of the AEC joined us for our March work-day, helping care for new-born goats and clean barns during the farm's busy kidding season.

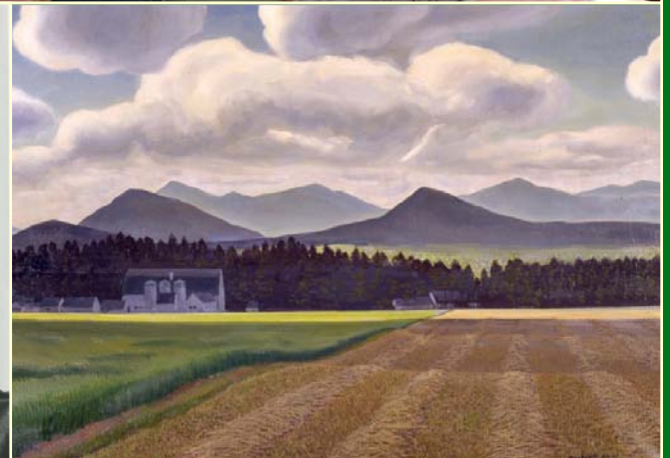
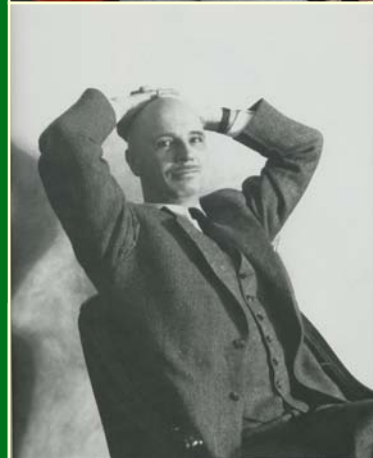


Photo - Nancie Battaglia, 2008

Adirondack Interpretive Center

Managing the AIC is a rewarding and educational experience both for our visitors as well as ourselves. We continue our full immersion approach to learning how to operate a public nature center which is both exhilarating and challenging. From a programmatic perspective our experience and tracking data over the past two years indicates participation and interest run highest for interactive and hands-on programs like our basket-weaving workshops with Long Lake-native Shea Carr, and specialty guided walks, such as Susan Hopkin's monthly mushroom forays. Recurring daily programs are less popular. Special winter programming, including the Got Game series for sportsmen and women and moonlight snowshoe walks, enjoy good attendance, though bird watching and our ability to offer snowshoes to visitors of all ages remain our biggest draws between December and April.

Drawing on data from the previous reporting period, program offerings were adjusted for 2013-14. In addition to adjusting the number and timing of public programs offered, we increased promotion and marketing, which resulted in a 100% increase in attended programs for the year, from 30% to 62%.

Between July 1st, 2013 and June 30th, 2014 the AIC had an annual monthly building visitation of 484, with 1550 individuals entering the facility in August, our busiest month. December was our quietest, with only 19 visitors. This is the lowest December in three years, and we believe is largely due to the repeated rain and freezing spells in December, which left the AIC trails without adequate snow cover for snowshoeing or skiing, and too muddy for hiking. Total visitation for the year was 5809, bringing the 3 year average to 6375.

These visitation figures do not include the large volume of individuals who use the AIC trail system all year but do not enter the building, data we hope to collect and include in future annual reports.



Upcoming Events at the Adirondack Interpretive Center

- Art Along the Trails**
Stop by to see Artist-in-Residence Frances Gaffney as she works along the trails!
Every Sunday this summer, all day.
- Audubon Bird Walk**
Search and listen for our Adirondack birds!
Saturday June 14th 9:00 am
- 2014 Adk Bioblitz**
Work w/ local experts collecting and identifying wild plants and animals!
Sunday June 29th 8:30am—5:30 pm
- Watercolor Workshop**
Develop your technique and style with Artist-in-Residence Frances Gaffney.
Saturday June 28th 10:00 am—3:00 pm
- Beaver Natural History - A Paddle on Rich Lake**
A day of outdoor exploration for the whole family!
Saturday June 28th 1:00 pm
- Learn about this Adk mammal from the seat of a canoe!**

Please call or email to register for all programming.
For more information on all of our events, visit us in Newcomb, online, or on Facebook!

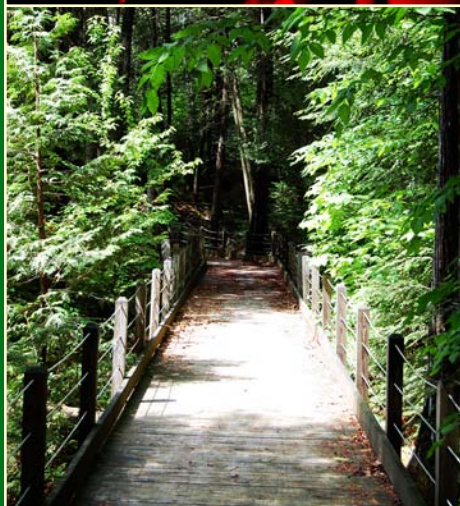
ESF Building open every day 9:00 am—5:00 pm. Trails open every day from dawn to dusk.
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AIC Highlights

Astronomy: The compelling beauty of the Adirondack landscape has drawn and captivated humans for centuries but in all our celebration of this unique and stunning place, we often forget the celestial dome framing our incomparable mountains and lakes. Bob Fisher of Minerva keeps us from overlooking this amazing aspect of our landscape, sharing his knowledge, and appreciation of astronomical phenomena during programs he offers at the AIC throughout the year.

Music in the Woods: There are few better music venues in the world than open-air settings and the first overlook on the Rich Lake trail provides a majestic spot to contemplate the serenity of the cedar stand in which it is nestled and the majestic view across Graveyard Bay to Goodnow Mountain. Add the harmony of stringed instruments and woodwinds and you have our most popular new program bringing people outdoors.

The World's Only Rubber Loons: The popularity of our loons grew to include an order of 1000 by the Adirondack Museum for sale in their museum shop and smaller retail orders from Wisconsin and New Hampshire. With 100% of the proceeds from loon sales supporting educational programs and interns at the AIC we are hopeful sales will continue to increase each year. Our third annual loon race Memorial Day weekend raised an additional \$1,000 for NFI.



Goals for 2014 - 2015



Marketing

ESF's Newcomb Campus is the only facility and field station in the Adirondack region with the combination of top-tier research, education and outreach paired with residential facilities capable of housing and feeding 100 individuals. However, awareness of these resources lags behind usage. In the next year NFI plans to lead, in close coordination with the AEC, ESF College Foundation, and ESF administration the creation of an integrated marketing campaign to promote the Newcomb Campus and educational outreach opportunities available from NFI.

SUNY's Field Station

While the ARS was an encouraging success academically and programmatically, strategically NFI is pursuing alternatives that will more efficiently accomplish the twin goals of increasing outreach contacts and Newcomb Campus usage. In coordination with the planned marketing campaign in 2014-15 NFI will work to position ESF's Newcomb Campus as a resource our 63 sister SUNYs can utilize for unparalleled access to the Adirondacks physically and academically.

School Groups and Scouting

With the AIC operation becoming more refined and management tool and systems growing, NFI staff is now able to rebalance program effort more evenly between all three core audiences we serve, public, professional and academic. In the coming reporting period we will increase our effort to serve academic groups, particularly at the secondary level, and community-based public groups such as boy and girl scouts. NFI believes these audiences are a natural fit for the type of content and experiences we are uniquely able to deliver at the Newcomb Campus.

Guest Services Manager

As NFI has grown, so too have the needs of planning and managing the logistic side of educational outreach, workshops, symposia and the breadth of other educational outreach programs. NFI is excited to be designing a new full-time position specifically to manage these responsibilities, freeing educational staff to focus on program development and delivery. Anticipated posting and hiring is expected at the end of 2014 or early in 2015.



Opportunities

As NFI plans programmatic initiatives and desired areas of growth over the next 12-36 months, some discrete opportunities may be of interest to supporters:

Diversity Scholarships

Advocating for diversity is important, modeling it is equally if not more so. NFI is interested in creating a summer experience modeled on the Junior Naturalists but serving underserved youth from metropolitan communities. These 10-week residential experiences for 4 individuals will provide exposure to field research, informal science education techniques, history of the Adirondacks, and recreational opportunities. (\$20,000)

1874 Chase Guide Boat

From school groups to our annual guide boat days to individual reservations our unique guide boat programs offer a powerful combination of education, recreation and access to an iconic Adirondack experience. Restoring the remaining Huntington-owned guide boat, one of the oldest known Caleb Chase-built guide boats, will help expand the group sizes we can accommodate for guide boat programming. (\$10,000)



Newcomb Campus Transportation Project

With ESF educational and housing facilities spread along 5 miles of 28N and campus access roads, NFI staff are frequently on the move. Access to College vehicles is limited, a capacity NFI has an exciting, creative, and cost-effective mechanism for expanding by restoring our unused 1948 Willys CJ2A. (\$5,000)

Trail Counters

Trail registers are an important management tool for capturing usage, however research has demonstrated that registry compliance is much lower (~50%) than actual usage. NFI would like to purchase and install digital trail counters on the Rich Lake and Sucker Brook trail heads to generate more accurate data on annual AIC trail usage (\$2,500).





The Northern Forest Institute gratefully acknowledges the support and commitment of:

The Adirondack Park Institute

Charles and Elizabeth Morgan

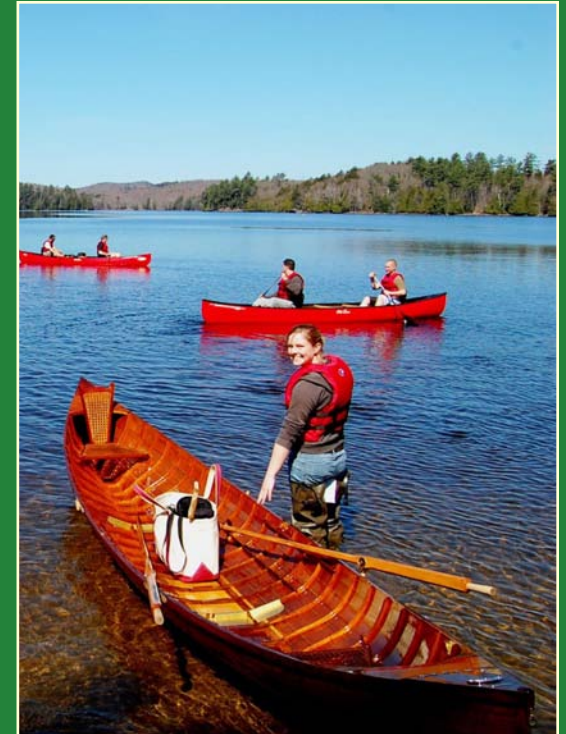
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

The Town of Newcomb

Fritz and Ginny Parker

The Walbridge Fund

Open Space Institute



The Northern Forest Institute is the educational outreach unit of SUNY ESF's
Newcomb Campus at the Huntington Wildlife Forest in Newcomb, NY

For more information on NFI please visit us on the web at www.esf.edu/nfi

More information on the Adirondack Interpretive Center, operated by NFI,
can be found at www.esf.edu/aic

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