



Ground Truth Studies Teacher Handbook, Second Edition

Jesse Boyce, Susan Hassol, John Katzenberger, Martha Kirpes, Anthony Leiserowitz, William Stapp

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The Ground Truth Studies Teacher Handbook is a primer on global change and remote sensing. It includes activities for elementary and secondary students, resources for teachers, a glossary, and color plates. First published in 1992, The Ground Truth Studies Teacher Handbook is used in classrooms across the country.

Ground Truth Studies is an interdisciplinary activity-based handbook that draws on the broad range of sciences that make up the study of global change and the complementary technology of remote sensing. Satellite and aerial imagery open a unique window onto the face of the Earth. These images are inviting and, once they become familiar, offer the learner — of any age — a new visual language with direct relevance to local as well as global environmental change. A key element of remote sensing is to go out into the area covered by an image and make observations and measurements. This direct observation or "ground truthing" complements and verifies the remotely-sensed data, hence the title of this book. The Ground Truth Studies Teacher Handbook provides supplementary program material for use by both primary and secondary teachers.

Critical global change issues which are gaining recognition in this decade — unprecedented biodiversity loss, climate change, and stratospheric ozone depletion — will all remain center stage as we progress into the 21st century. A clear and necessary educational challenge is to face these issues with the information to make wise decisions. These issues are rich in the fundamentals of science. Educational approaches which build on the strength of an individual discipline such as biology, while at the same time fostering the integration across disciplines, are required for gaining a grasp of the complex new field of study described as Earth system science.

The aim of the GTS Teacher Handbook is to explore these global change issues with the aid of the powerful tool of remote sensing. The range, quantity, and complexity of satellite data require a new commitment to its interpretation and use. The knowledge gained is a critical piece of the puzzle of our dynamic planet and lays the foundation for the development of global environmental policy. It can also serve as a guide for making personal decisions that impact one's local environment and, ultimately, the global environment.

The 20th century is perhaps the last century humanity will view the Earth as an infinite expanse from which to appropriate the necessary resources for supporting human activity. What we do, from clearing forest cover to growing rice to burning fossil fuels to manufacturing and transporting goods, transforms essential elements of the biosphere. Where are the models to guide us toward a sustainable use of resources in the 21st century? What tools do we have to mitigate our global impacts or to approach whole ecosystems wisely? What is required to approach these questions with even tentative confidence? The challenge of this decade is to assemble the data, the ideas, and the models that transcend the limits of single-disciplinary research and forge new modes of cross-disciplinary research. The educational challenge is to provide approaches that embrace the natural and social sciences, and provide the basis for policy and practice that is sensitive to the immediate and long-term needs of our complex, miraculous home planet.

The study of global change is as close as your backyard or school grounds. This Handbook is an invitation to link local environmental conditions to the broader topics of global change.

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