

Constitution of GeoHab

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Article 1: Organizational Name

- A. The Organization will be known as GeoHab, which stands for “Marine Geological and Biological Habitat Mapping”.

Article 2: Purpose

- A. GeoHab convenes annual international meetings to bring together individuals interested in advancing the discipline of marine geological and biological habitat mapping critical for marine spatial planning and ecosystem-based management (see Appendix 1).

GeoHab is an international forum that meets annually to share ideas and information on marine-related science, technology, and innovation and, in particular, to

- maintain awareness of technological developments and survey standards,
 - identify existing metadata sources relevant to marine habitat mapping,
 - build links between marine habitat mapping agencies and practitioners worldwide,
 - discuss international mapping schemes and standards,
 - encourage members in their development of new thematic maps useful for fisheries management, biodiversity management, and the assessment of Marine Protected Areas,
 - encourage members to apply and evaluate habitat classification systems using real-world examples,
 - promote the participation of early-career researchers in the scientific community,
 - support innovation in seafloor research and technology, and
 - support and initiate scientific publications that promote the work of participating GeoHab scientists and students.
- B. GeoHab is closely linked with the Circum-Pacific Council (CPC, www.circum-pacificcouncil.org), which is in charge of GeoHab’s finances; the role of the CPC is described throughout this document.

Article 3: Participants

- A. Any interested individual is eligible to participate in the Organization without fees. Participants may hold executive positions, vote in elections, and vote on GeoHab business.
- B. The Organization does not place any limits on participants based on age, gender, race, religion, language, or disability.

Article 4: Executive Committee

- A. The Executive Committee (EC) will be made up of 5 officers, listed below. The present officers are listed in Appendix 2.
 - i. President
 - ii. Executive Director

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- iii. Treasurer
 - iv. Upcoming Conference Chairperson
 - v. Past-conference Chairperson
- B. The duties of each executive officer are as follows:
- i. The President shall:
 - a) Be elected by the members of GeoHab (see Article 7).
 - b) Be responsible for ensuring the smooth operation of the Organization.
 - c) Work with the GeoHab community to facilitate the establishment of an annual vision for the Organization.
 - d) Be responsible for ensuring their successor is properly transitioned into the role of President.
 - e) Act as a signing officer of the Organization.
 - ii. The Executive Director shall:
 - a) Act as second in command to the President.
 - b) Be appointed by the members of the EC and serve at their pleasure (see Article 7).
 - c) Be reviewed annually by the other officers.
 - d) Be responsible for ensuring the smooth business operation of the Organization.
 - e) Work with the GeoHab community to facilitate the establishment of an annual vision for the Organization.
 - f) Be responsible for ensuring their successor is properly transitioned into the role of Executive Director.
 - g) Share responsibility with the President in chairing all Organization meetings.
 - h) Act as a signing officer of the Organization.
 - iii. The Treasurer shall:
 - a) By necessity, be a citizen of the United States.
 - b) Be elected by the members of GeoHab (see Article 7).
 - c) Work closely with the Circum-Pacific Council to keep records of all spending within the Organization in accordance with regulations pertaining to non-profit organizations in the United States of America.
 - d) Create and maintain the annual budget and share this documentation with the broader community at the Annual General Meeting.
 - e) Act as a signing officer of the Organization.
 - f) Be responsible for managing the Organization bank account.
 - g) Act as chair of Organization meetings in the absence of both the President and Executive Director.
 - h) Be responsible for the compilation and filing of annual tax returns.
 - iv. The Upcoming Annual Conference Chairperson shall:
 - a) Be nominated by the Organizing Committee of the Upcoming Annual Conference (see Article 7).
 - b) Follow the Guidelines in Article 6 concerning the operation of a GeoHab Conference.

- c) Provide planning updates to the other GeoHab Executive Officers.
- v. The Past-conference Chairperson shall:
 - a) Follow the Guidelines in Article 5.
 - b) Provide guidance to the Upcoming Annual Conference Chairperson and the other Executive Officers as deemed appropriate.
 - c) Provide advice and guidance to the current and future Annual Conference Chairperson(s).

Article 5: Annual General Meeting

- A. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held each year during the annual GeoHab Conference. The meeting is usually held after the final science presentation on the last day of the conference (Thursday) for the duration of one to two hours.
- B. Any GeoHab participant may attend the AGM.
- C. An attendance list is circulated at the AGM and provided to the rapporteur (see E).
- D. An AGM Chairperson either volunteers or is put forward by those in attendance.
- E. An AGM rapporteur either volunteers or is put forward by those in attendance.
 - i. The rapporteur keeps notes on the proceedings of the AGM.
 - ii. The week following the AGM, the rapporteur circulates said notes to a few GeoHab participants who were present at the AGM and who volunteered to provide their edits and comments.
 - iii. Upon completion of editing, the rapporteur circulates the AGM minutes to all those participants who attended the meeting, with special consideration that the minutes are sent to the Upcoming Annual Conference Chairperson(s). The minutes are also posted on the GeoHab website (www.geohab.org).
- F. The recommended format of the AGM is provided in Appendix 4.

Article 6: Annual GeoHab Conference

- A. GeoHab conferences are held annually, usually in May; hosting a conference in a different month would be at the discretion of the Executive Officers.
- B. In order to maintain GeoHab's international presence and perspective, the intent is that GeoHab conferences will be held on different continents and in different hemispheres each year.
- C. The selection of the host country is decided at least two years in advance at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held immediately after each GeoHab conference (Article 5, guidelines 12 to 16). This process is initiated by an offer from a delegate (usually but not always from an internationally recognized marine science institution), who would then become the Chairperson of the conference the year it is held.
- D. The organization of the conference is up to the Conference Chair and a Local Organizing Committee (LOC). Advice and support are encouraged to be sought from the previous Past-conference Chairperson (see Appendix 6). Guidelines are provided in Appendix 3.

- E. If a planned conference must be cancelled for any reason, the LOC will work with the GeoHab Executive toward a reasonable solution.

Article 7: Appointments and elections

- A. The Executive Committee shall appoint an Executive Director to work on behalf of GeoHab. This appointment will have a three-year term limit.
- B. The Executive Director shall be responsible for overseeing the elections of the President and Treasurer.
- C. Nominations for elections can be given to the Executive Director before the AGM at which elections shall take place, and notice of nominees will be given at the same time notice of the AGM is given to the rest of the GeoHab membership. Alternatively, nominations will be taken from the floor during the AGM at which the elections are taking place.
- D. Voting will be conducted via a show of hands.
- E. A majority vote (50% + 1) is required to elect each position.
- F. Each member can hold at most one executive position at a time.
- G. There is a three-year limit on the period in office for President and Treasurer. These two position periods may be asynchronous.
- H. Incumbents can serve multiple three-year periods if re-nominated and re-elected.

Article 8: Impeachment

- A. No member of the Executive Committee may be recalled without just cause or in any manner not specified in this Constitution.
- B. This Constitution defines just cause as:
 - i. Failing to attend two consecutive Annual General Meetings.
 - ii. Failing to fulfill the majority of their mandates as dictated by this Constitution, within reasonable limits and without reasonable excuse.
 - iii. Conduct likely to result in dismantling of the GeoHab organization or conduct likely to bring the Organization into disrepute.
 - iv. Other gross misconduct.
- C. A vote to impeach an Executive Committee member can only be brought forth at an AGM.
- D. Any member present at an AGM may put forth a motion to impeach an Executive Committee member provided they have a petition signed by 75% of current members at the same AGM.
- E. Advance notice of a motion to impeach must be given to the Executive Committee member facing impeachment, and that Executive Committee member must have the ability to speak in their defence before the vote is taken.
- F. A vote of 75% +1 of the membership present at an AGM is required to impeach an Executive Committee member. Voting will be conducted by secret ballot.

Article 9: Constitutional Amendments

- A. Amendments to this Constitution are subject to the following regulations:
 - i. Amendments to the Constitution can only be made at an AGM.
 - ii. Motions to amend the Constitution must be presented to the President or Executive Director of GeoHab no less than three days before the AGM at which the Constitution will be amended.
 - iii. All members are entitled to vote on amendments to the Constitution.
 - iv. Voting will be conducted via a show of hands, though any member may request that the motion be voted on by secret ballot. If any one member requests this for any motion, voting must be done by secret ballot.
 - v. A 2/3 vote of the members present at the AGM is required to pass a motion to amend the Constitution.

Article 10: Finances

- A. As stated in Article 4, the President, Executive Director, and Treasurer will be the signing officers of the Organization.
- B. At least one signing officer must sign every cheque from the bank account of the Organization.
- C. An executive officer cannot sign a cheque made out to his/herself.
- D. The ATM card is held by the Treasurer or host and is to be used only when a cheque is not acceptable.
- E. The budget will be created each year by the Treasurer and will be passed by the executive committee at the AGM.

Article 11: GeoHab Website

- A. The official website of the Organization is www.geohab.org.
- B. At each AGM, the EC will establish a "Website Committee" of 3-4 individuals to maintain, update, and manage content on the GeoHab website. This committee is not responsible for the yearly conference sites, which are the responsibility of the LOC, but coordinates with the LOC on the content relevant to the conferences.
- C. Suggested changes to the website can be put forth at the AGM.

Appendix 1: List of GeoHab Conferences

Conference Number	Year	Location	Country/Territory	Chairperson(s)
21	2023	St-Gilles	La Réunion	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Cawthra
20	2022	Venice	Italy	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo
19	2021	Online, three international nodes		Nodal organizing committees
	2020	Postponed		
18	2019	Saint Petersburg	Russia	Daria Ryabchuk
17	2018	Santa Barbara, California	United States of America	Guy Cochrane, Donna Schroeder
16	2017	Dartmouth, Nova Scotia	Canada	Craig Brown, Brian Todd
15	2016	Winchester	United Kingdom	Tim LeBas
14	2015	Salvador, Bahia	Brazil	Alex Bastos
13	2014	Lorne, Victoria	Australia	Daniel Ierodiaconou
12	2013	Rome	Italy	Andrea Fiorentino, Silvana D'Angelo
11	2012	Orcas Island, Washington	United States of America	Gary Greene, Vaughn Barrie
10	2011	Helsinki	Finland	Aarno Kotilainen
9	2010	Wellington	New Zealand	Geoffroy Lamarche
8	2009	Trondheim	Norway	Terje Thorsnes
7	2008	Sitka, Alaska	United States of America	Tory O'Connell, Cleo Brylinsky
6	2007	Nouméa	New Caledonia	Yves Lafoy
5	2006	Edinburgh	Scotland, United Kingdom	Alan Stevenson, Heather Stewart
4	2005	Sidney, British Columbia	Canada	Vaughn Barrie, Kim Conway
3	2004	Galway	Ireland	Anthony Grehan, Margaret Wilson, Janine Guinan
2	2003	Hobart, Tasmania	Australia	Peter Harris
1	2002	Moss Landing, California	United States of America	Gary Greene
Organizational meetings	2001	St. Johns, Newfoundland	Canada	Brian Todd
	2001	Bergen	Norway	Thomas Noji

Appendix 2: Table of Executive Officers

Term	President	Executive Director	Treasurer	Upcoming Conference Chairperson(s)	Past Conference Chairperson(s)
2025–2026				2026 Chairperson	2025 Chairperson
2024–2025				2025 Chairperson	2024 Chairperson
2023–2024				2024 Chairperson	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Cawthra
2022–2023				Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Cawthra	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo
2021–2022		Gary Greene ¹	Guy Cochrane ²	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo	Daria Ryabchuk

¹ Filling in as ED due to role as President of CPC

² Filling in the role of Treasurer until the first elections.

Appendix 3: Guidelines for Organizing the Annual GeoHab Conference

- Guideline 1.** Committees: The Upcoming Conference Chairperson shall create a Local Organizing Committee and an International Scientific Committee separately or jointly. One person is to chair both committees. Sub-committees (*e.g.*, social, field trip) are established at the discretion of the LOC. A Student Selection Award Committee is set separately (see Guideline 10).
- Guideline 2.** International Scientific committee: Each GeoHab conference should have an International Scientific Committee (ISC) to provide support and guidance to the current Chairperson for the conference and its overall scientific direction. Most importantly, the ISC is responsible for the review of all abstracts received for the upcoming conference. Because there is a large contingent of GeoHab participants available to sit on committees, it is recommended that members on the ISC (other than the Chairperson from the previous year) should not be members of the Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee. The size of the Scientific Committee is at the discretion of the current Conference Chairperson but should include at least:
- 1) two international GeoHab members with more than four years of experience in GeoHab;
 - 2) the Chairperson of the previous year's conference; and
 - 3) the Chairperson of the following year's conference.
- Guideline 3.** Conference theme: The theme of the GeoHab conference is to be decided by the Local Organizing Committee after propositions from the Chairperson. The GeoHab Executive advises the LOC regarding the conference theme.
- Guideline 4.** Session: A single session format is the norm for the GeoHab conference. To facilitate this format, the number of delegates should be approximately 150, with some flexibility depending on the capacity of the venue. Should numbers and demand grow beyond what is manageable, parallel sessions could be considered for parts of the conference, with approval of the Executive.
- Guideline 5.** Social program: Traditionally, the social program has included a Monday evening icebreaker, a conference dinner (usually Wednesday), and a field trip on Friday. However, providing these is at the discretion of the LOC.
- Guideline 6.** Website: The geohab.org website advertises the upcoming GeoHab conference. Each local organizing committee must create and manage their own conference website based on the template provided on geohab.org. They can opt to create their website on the geohab.org server or create their own domain. A link to the conference website should be provided as early as possible to the Website Committee and the CPC.
- Guideline 7.** Registration Fees: Registration costs should be set to more than fully cover anticipated expenses for hosting the meeting. ***Any surplus funds from the registration fees are deposited into the GeoHab reserve account managed by the Circum-Pacific Council*** (see Guideline 9).

Guideline 8. Sponsorship: Each host is encouraged to seek sponsorship to reduce the delegates' registration costs and increase the budget for student support (see Guideline 10). Any surplus funds from the sponsorship fees are deposited into the GeoHab reserve account managed by the Circum-Pacific Council (see Guideline 9). Sponsorship funds are to be paid directly into the CPC account. This ensures that a surplus remains with CPC and avoids any tax on the transfer of the funds out of the host institution/country.

Guideline 9. Budget: The LOC manages the budget for the conference. The Circum-Pacific Council, on behalf of GeoHab, will facilitate advance funding to the GeoHab conference account and student grants payment from the GeoHab reserve account. Any surplus funds from the GeoHab conference will be credited to the GeoHab reserve account held and managed by the Circum-Pacific Council, less 10%, for CPC accounting assistance. Reserve account funds are used to offset any unplanned expenditures in current or future conferences. A financial statement outlining total revenue, expenditures, and net position will be presented at the AGM by the GeoHab Treasurer or nominated representative and provided to the Executive and the LOC.

Guideline 10. Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee:

Each conference year, the Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee shall be established. The Past-conference Chairperson will preside over the student committee and will nominate the membership, which should not include members of the International Scientific Committee. This committee will review applications based on established criteria.

The intention of the student awards is to create opportunities for students of marine geological and biological habitat mapping to attend the GeoHab Conference. Early-stage students (BSc, MSc) are given preference, although PhD students are allowed. Students can be awarded the Ron McDowell Student Award only once; repeat awards are not considered. (Note: The objective of the Award is to introduce GeoHab to young early-stage students in the hope of enticing them to come back using *other funding sources* like supervisor's funding).

The budget annual support fund will be composed of existing GeoHab funds accumulated during prior conferences and funds based on expected upcoming revenue. The amount contributed from existing funds will be established each year as early as possible by the GeoHab Executive Committee, while the additional upcoming amount will be allocated at the discretion of the LOC based on expected sponsorship revenue and registration surplus funds. Note that a general limit of US \$10,000 has been deemed a reliable working figure for an annual support fund, although this amount can be revised at the discretion of the Student Committee, the LOC, and the GeoHab Treasurer.

The criteria for providing student grants are available on the GeoHab website. The stipend includes airfare (based on the lowest economy airfare) and a set lodging and miscellaneous expenses amount based on student hostel housing, and the few dinners that students are unable to obtain through the conference. The LOC of the conference is not to charge the awardees registration fee or conference dinner costs. However, the

Student Committee needs to let the LOC know early the approximate number of students that will be supported to ensure that these estimates are accounted for when determining the conference registration fee.

Field trips and workshops have always been supplementary and not funded from the student support fund, but the LOC can decide if they want to include the workshop at a reduced fee for the students.

Guideline 11. Email list: The email list supplied and managed by geohab.org must only be used for matters related directly to the production of the GeoHab conference. The security of GeoHab members' data is a priority of GeoHab, and the Organization must meet the regulatory requirements of European Union GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) laws that came into effect on May 25th, 2018. GDPR is a complex area, and it has become clear to GeoHab that as a common community of interest, members and delegates can expect to continue to receive news content from GeoHab, which may include but is not limited to research, events, and workshops. Anyone can opt-out of the GeoHab mailing list at any time by following the instructions in the monthly mailing list confirmation emails issued. If members and delegates have any questions about how and why GeoHab processes personal data, they can contact GeoHab Executive Committee at any time.

Guideline 12. Selection of the GeoHab Host

- a. Expressions of interest to host a GeoHab conference, and selection of the next two locations (and their respective institutions), should be discussed at every AGM and appear in the Agenda in advance of the conference. Note that the proposed conference host (or their representative) is required to attend the two previous Conferences and Annual General Meetings prior to hosting.
- b. Expression of interest to host a GeoHab conference will be made at the AGM by the proponents employing a short (5-minute) presentation and noted in the minutes. The offer must appear in the minutes of the meeting.
- c. Preference will be given to a different continent each year: Africa, Asia, Australia–New Zealand, Oceania, Europe, South America, and North America. GeoHab will endeavour to target geographical “gaps” in participation to increase the exposure of the organization.
- d. Confirmation in writing of the conference host should be sent to the successful host by the GeoHab Executive Committee two years in advance and no more. Offers beyond the two-year period will be noted in the minutes but will not be considered a commitment.

Guideline 13. In the case of several offers to host GeoHab for the same year, two years before the conference, a discussion should be held at the AGM to find a solution; if no solution is found, the Executive Committee will decide the casting vote.

Appendix 4: Annual General Meeting Agenda Format

GeoHab 20XX Annual General Meeting

Meeting metadata

- Time:
- Date:
- Location:

AGM administration

- Participant sign-up list circulated for inclusion in the minutes
- AGM Chairperson proposed from the floor and seconded
- AGM Rapporteur proposed from the floor and seconded
- Thanks extended to GeoHab Conference Chairperson(s)

Agenda

- Agenda displayed
- Adoption of agenda proposed and seconded

Review minutes of GeoHab 20XX-1 Annual General Meeting

- 20XX-1 Annual General Meeting minutes displayed
- Discussion of, and amendments to, 20XX-1 Annual General Meeting minutes
- Adoption of (amended) 20XX-1 Annual General Meeting minutes

Financial Report

- Treasurer to provide a digital copy of the financial report to rapporteur for inclusion in the minutes in a timely manner.
- Treasurer to provide display and verbal summary of financial report to the AGM attendees
- Discussion of the financial report

Student Support

- Chair of the Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee to provide a copy of the student selection report to rapporteur for inclusion in the minutes (Note: In the past, this chair has been the host of the *previous* conference and worked with the CPC Treasurer and President to set the funds available for support. The recommended working fund is \$10,000 per annum based on the surplus of the previous GeoHab meeting. The funds to be used for this purpose may fluctuate through time. GeoHab must avoid depleting its surplus by over-spending on student support; much of the funds on hand are for contingency purposes. For example, the funds on hand would be required to relieve GeoHab of debt should that unfortunate circumstance occur).

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- Chair of the Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee to provide display and verbal summary of student selection report to the AGM attendees
- Discussion of the student selection

GeoHab Websites

- Review and discussion of GeoHab website
- Review and discussion of GeoHab Conference website

Publications

- Review and discussion of any GeoHab-related publication in progress

Summary of GeoHab 20XX

- Conference Chairperson(s) to provide written and/or verbal summary of GeoHab Science Conference 20XX, including
 - number of participants
 - funds brought in
 - funds expended
 - problems encountered
 - suggestions for future conferences
- Any details provided to the rapporteur should be included in the AGM minutes

Plans for GeoHab 20XX+1

- Identify location
- Identify Conference Chairperson(s)
- Verbal and visual presentation by Conference Chairpersons for GeoHab Science Conference 20XX+1
- Discussion
- Seek Monday workshop ideas and volunteers, if workshop to be included (Note: This should be initiated by the host(s) or LOC of the conference, but they should seek advice from others in the organization.
- Formal adoption of venue and Conference Chairperson(s) for GeoHab Science Conference 20XX+1

Proposals for GeoHab 20XX+2...

- Identify possible locations and years
- Identify Conference Chairperson(s) associated with possible locations and years
- GeoHab 20XX+2 should be prepared to provide a verbal and visual proposal
- Verbal and visual proposal can also be provided by GeoHab 20XX+3 and beyond

Other business

- Other business must be put forth prior to the adoption of the agenda

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Closure of GeoHab 20XX Annual General Meeting

- Proposal and seconding of GeoHab 20XX Annual General Meeting to be concluded

Appendix 5: GeoHab 20XX International Scientific Committee

Year	Chairperson(s)	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4
2027	2027 Chairperson	2026 Chairperson	2028 Chairperson	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab
2026	2026 Chairperson	2025 Chairperson	2027 Chairperson	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab
2025	2025 Chairperson	2024 Chairperson	2026 Chairperson	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab
2024	2024 Chairperson	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Hawthra	2025 Chairperson	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab
2023	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Hawthra	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo	2024 Chairperson	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab
2022	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo	Daria Ryabchuk (2019)	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Hawthra	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab	Member with minimum 4 years in GeoHab

Appendix 6: GeoHab 20XX Local Organizing Committee

Year	Chairperson(s)	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4
2027	2027 Chairperson				
2026	2026 Chairperson				
2025	2025 Chairperson				
2024	2024 Chairperson				
2023	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Hawthra				
2022	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo				

Appendix 7: GeoHab 20XX Ron McDowell Student Selection Award Committee

Year	Chairperson(s)	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4
2027	2026 Chairperson				
2026	2025 Chairperson				
2025	2024 Chairperson				
2024	Rodolphe Devillers, Hayley Hawthra				
2023	Federica Foglini, Fantina Madricardo				
2022	Daria Ryabchuk				

Appendix 8: Record of Amendments to the Constitution of GeoHab

Date of Previous Version	Date of New Version	List of Proposed Amendments	Adopted (Y/N)
November 10 th , 2021			