Understanding the mechanisms and history of natural climate variability is important for improving climate predictability and properly attributing ongoing climate changes to human and natural forcings. The paleoclimate record contains a much wider range in terms of duration and amplitudes of climate changes than the instrumental record, and can provide insights into how the climate system responds when forced by non-anthropogenic forcings. In order to capitalize on this record it is imperative that the scientists analysing the paleoclimate records are well integrated with the communities involved in studies of ongoing climate change and in providing future scenarios. Thus the CLIVAR/PAGES Intersection Working Group has been formed, jointly sponsored by the Past Global Changes (PAGES) project of the IGBP and the Climate Variability and Predictability (CLIVAR) project of the WCRP. The panel aims to play an important role in developing and implementing the research programmes of both CLIVAR and PAGES. The objectives of the panel are:

- To promote improved high resolution, well-dated, quantitative paleoclimate records with seasonal to interannual resolution in regions which are of direct relevance to IGBP and WCRP.
- To formulate and promote, in collaboration with PAGES and CLIVAR, a programme for analyzing and synthesizing paleoclimatic data in order to reveal evidence of patterns of variability within the climate system over seasonal to millennial time scales.
- To promote improved quantitative methods of model-data comparison and evaluation in order to understand the variability present in both the paleoclimate record and the models.
- To promote the use of paleoclimate data to examine issues of climate predictability.
- To coordinate with other modelling activities of relevance to IGBP and WCRP.

The panel has produced a 5 year vision document (see www.clivar.org/organisation/pages/doc/visionTOC-Final.pdf) and identified key scientific issues, which will promoted via a set of initiatives:

- Climate variability over the last few millennia
- Abrupt climate change
- Hydrologic, biospheric, and land-surface interactions
- Tropical-extratropical links including ocean and atmospheric teleconnections.

Aside from this issue of the joint CLIVAR / PAGES newsletter on climate forcings, which we hope will stimulate further developments of accurate climate forcing histories, the panel will in 2006 organise two special workshops:

1. Past Millennia Climate Variability: proxy based reconstructions, Modelling and Methodology – Synthesis and Outlook, June 7-10, Wengen, Switzerland.
2. Abrupt changes and the 8.2 ka event. Co-organised with the UK RAPID Programme, 24-27 October in Birmingham, UK.

Further plans for the following years are to initiate synthesis activities on hydrologic, biospheric and land-surface interactions, and a potential workshop on interactions between the Southern Ocean and the lower latitudes. The panel is also very eager to stimulate further progress in forward modelling of paleoclimate proxies, and aims to bring together scientists working on developing this promising field.

If you have comments or ideas for the panel, please contact the panel chairs or the PAGES and CLIVAR project offices.