

Hunting, Fishing, Gathering 6000 BP

Revision of 3.18.16 by Andrew Sluyter.

The basic assumption is that in 6000 BP people were hunting, fishing, and gathering in nearly all terrestrial areas, including lakes, coastal lagoons, and islands.

The main exceptions were the Lesser Antilles other than Trinidad and Tobago as well as the small islands far off the coast of northern South America and Caribbean Central America. By 8000 BP, people had occupied islands such as Trinidad, Margarita, and Tobago that lay just offshore of the South American mainland (Wilson 2007, 39). The earliest evidence for occupation of the Greater Antilles comes from Hispaniola and dates to between 4510 BCE and 4350 BCE, a few centuries prior to the target date of 6000 BP (Wilson 2007, 27). The earliest evidence for occupation of the Lesser Antilles, in contrast, dates to approximately 3000 BCE, about a millennium after the target date (Wilson 2007, 45). Similarly, the archipelago of tiny islands 100 km off the coast of northern South America—La Blanquilla, La Orchila, and Los Roques—are assumed to have gone unoccupied until the same period as the Lesser Antilles. The three Cayman Islands were uninhabited until after Christopher Columbus encountered them in 1503, during his fourth voyage (Stokes and Keegan 1996). San Andrés and Providencia, about 200 km off the Caribbean coast of Central America, are also assumed to have been uninhabited until after Christopher Columbus encountered them in 1502.

The MiddleAmericaRegion base map polygons for the mainland and all islands were therefore copied and pasted into the hunting, fishing, gathering layer for 6000 BP. The archipelago of tiny islands off the coast of northern South America (La Blanquilla, La Orchila, and Los Roques), San Andrés and Providencia, the Cayman Islands, and the Lesser Antilles north of Tobago but south and east of Puerto Rico were deleted. I made no adjustments for Holocene sea-level rise even though it remained 5-6 m below current mean sea level in Middle America, having begun to slow its rise by 6000 BP but not stop (Toscano and Macintyre 2003). Neither, therefore, did I make adjustments for the complexities of localized subsidence and emergence due to tectonic, erosional, and depositional processes.

The only other exceptions to areas of hunting, fishing, and gathering in 6000 BP would have been urban, extractive, and glaciated areas. Hunting, fishing and gathering would have taken place in most agricultural areas, certainly in areas of shifting cultivation. Hunting, fishing, and gathering would even have taken place within settlements to some degree, which would have contained substantial vegetation cover in the form of house gardens and trees.

The 6000 BP group has no Urban, extractive layer because there were no urbanized or extractive areas that reached the 500 ha threshold in 6000 BP. Only urban and extractive areas with total areas equal to or greater than 500 ha (5 km²) were mapped for LandCover6k. An area of 500 ha is approximately 8% the size of the grid cells of 8,000 m by 8,000 m (64 km²/6,400 ha) used to judge the level of generalization appropriate for the project. So even an area of 500 ha, which, if a square, would have sides about 2.25 km (2,250 m) long, is not particularly significant at the project's level of generalization, and therefore serves as an absolute lower threshold. The first urban civilization in Middle America was the Olmec, and its cities of San Lorenzo and La Venta, located in the topical lowlands along the Gulf of Mexico, did cover

areas greater than 500 ha but date to several millennia more recent than the target date, from 1200 BCE through 400 BCE (Diehl 2004). The Olmecs also quarried and mined for precious stones and other materials but, again, not as early as 6000 BP. Therefore, the Hunting, fishing, gathering 6000 BP layer was not modified by removing urban or extractive areas.

The No land use 6000 BP layer has no glaciated areas mapped because during the Holocene Climate Optimum (9,000-5,000 BP) no such areas reached the 500 ha threshold. Therefore, the Hunting, fishing, gathering 6000 BP layer was not modified by removing glaciated areas.

References

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- Wilson, Samuel M. 2007. *The Archaeology of the Caribbean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.