I hope all of the SNR team had a wonderful holiday season and have returned to campus with a high level of anticipation for the year ahead. Happy New Year! I look forward to the challenges and the opportunities of 2009.

**SNR's Five-Year Review: Status and Next Steps**

In early December, I travelled to Washington, D.C., to meet with several officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding funding opportunities for SNR. While in D.C., I also took advantage of the opportunity to meet with Louie Tupas at CSREES. Louie is the leader of our review team. The purpose of my meeting with Louie was to discuss the format of SNR's comprehensive review, scheduled for September 22-25, 2009. During the three and a half days of the review, we must provide the review team with an overview and synthesis of SNR programs, our vision for the future, and our strategic plan for how we are going to achieve our vision. One of the goals of the comprehensive review will be to seek the review team's insights and counsel on our strategic plan. Given that we only have a few days to get our message across and to solicit their input and support, we must use the time available to us wisely. Given the size and the diversity of SNR, we must carefully organize the program review schedule of activities. Louie and I had an excellent meeting and with the assistance of the SNR Administrative Team we have drafted a preliminary agenda for the excellent meeting and with the assistance of the SNR Administrative Team we have drafted a preliminary agenda for the
comprehensive review session. This agenda will soon be shared with SNR faculty and staff and then with IANR Administration for their feedback.

This past semester we completed an intensive series of listening sessions organized around current and emerging issues in natural resources and environmental science and other topics such as SNR community, SNR administration, and SNR infrastructure. Members of the SNR Administrative Team are currently drafting chapters based on these sessions. During the spring semester, faculty, staff, and students will be given the opportunity to review these chapters and provide feedback. This process will occur through another series of listening sessions. The SNR Administrative Team has scheduled a spring retreat for May 12 to summarize and conclude the strategic planning process. Over the summer months, the Administrative Team will finalize our five-year review document for distribution to the review team by early to mid-August. I would appreciate your participation in the listening sessions scheduled for this semester and your participation in the retreat. Mark your calendars for the retreat - May 12 in the Hardin Hall auditorium.

**SNR Faculties – Redefining the School’s Program Areas**

Since the formation of SNRS in 1997 and the creation of SNR in 2003, faculty have been loosely affiliated with a number of program areas in the unit. These have been organized around SNR’s primary disciplinary areas. It has been my view for some time that a more formal identification of program areas in SNR would be beneficial in stimulating discussion within each of the disciplinary areas and in enhancing two-way communication within and between faculty in these areas and with the SNR Administrative Team. We have also needed to standardize the names for the various disciplinary areas represented in SNR to help clarify both internal and external communication. The advantages of more formally identifying these areas have become even more apparent as the School has continued to increase in size and diversity. As a result, this issue was raised for

**Upcoming Travel**

No travel plans in the near future.
discussion during the SNR Administration listening sessions in October. The topic was further discussed on two occasions by the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) and at the November faculty meeting. Based on the positive feedback received from the FAC and faculty, I have moved forward with the process.

In December, SNR faculty were requested to complete a survey in which they could self-select up to three faculty areas, also to be called “Faculties,” with which to affiliate. The six official areas included in the survey were: Applied Ecology Faculty, Applied Climate Science Faculty, Geography/GIScience Faculty, Geology and Soils Faculty, Human Dimensions Faculty, and Water Faculty. The vast majority of faculty members have completed that survey. All faculty were required to choose one of the six as a primary faculty area. They were also encouraged to choose a secondary area and, if appropriate, a tertiary area. Once all faculty have completed the survey, each group will be asked to meet formally, and, through consensus, select a leader for each faculty area. I hope this process will be completed by the end of January or early February. These faculty areas will be asked to meet periodically to discuss research, outreach, and teaching issues related to their fields of science. The leaders of these faculties will form a new SNR Executive Committee that will replace the current Integration Advisory Team. I look forward to working with this group of faculty leaders in the months ahead and expect them to play a key leadership role in the upcoming five-year comprehensive review.

**International Cooperation – Pending Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)**

SNR hosted several groups of visitors in summer 2008 from various countries that had expressed an interest in collaborating with our faculty and staff on research and educational efforts. Following the visits of groups from Chile, Iraq, Portugal, and Spain, I prepared a draft MOU to identify our potential areas of collaboration and sent this document to the respective countries. The group from Chile was from the Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIA). They have
returned the completed MOU and it is now moving through the approval process at UNL. Their areas of interest are in the fields of automated weather data networks, climate and drought monitoring, decision-support tools, and drought planning. A second MOU has also been returned from the College of Agriculture, Baghdad University. Their interests are in GIS and remote sensing, soils, irrigation, and water use efficiency. Their visit to UNL was sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service through the Borlaug Fellowship Program. Discussions with Portugal and Spain are continuing, especially in the areas of drought monitoring, planning, and policy.

**UNL Climate Change Initiative**

The first steps in establishing a campus-wide climate change initiative for UNL have gone well. Last fall I received a planning grant from the Program of Excellence (POE) to prepare a proposal for this spring’s competition. Since then, I have appointed an Advisory Committee to assist with planning and preparing the proposal. In addition to myself, this committee includes Bob Oglesby, Department of Geosciences and SNR; Terry Mader, Northeast Research and Extension Center and the Department of Animal Science; Steve Goddard, Department of Computer Science and Engineering; Namas Chandra, College of Engineering; Cody Knutson, National Drought Mitigation Center and SNR; and Daniel Walters, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture. Melissa Widhalm is the project assistant for the Climate Change Initiative.

In November, we prepared and distributed a survey through Vice Chancellor Prem Paul’s office to all UNL faculty. The purpose of the survey was to inventory interest in participating in this initiative and to identify associated areas of expertise. Response to the survey was outstanding -- 156 faculty from across campus responded, most with a high level of interest in participating in the initiative, attending listening sessions, and assisting in writing the proposal. These respondents represented 62 departments and centers from across campus. The largest number of respondents, 28, came from SNR.
We have scheduled two listening sessions for early January to further discuss this project and to solicit input from faculty on the vision, mission, objectives, and outcomes of this initiative. The first listening session will be held on January 8 in the East Campus Union from 9 to 11 a.m. The second listening session will be held on January 14 in the City Campus Union from 2 to 4 p.m. In both cases, the room will be posted on the kiosks. Come and join in the discussion.

**SNR's 2008 Holiday Celebration – Fun for All!**

On December 12, SNR faculty, staff, and students gathered for a potluck lunch on the second floor lobby area of Hardin Hall. The food was great, as was the turnout. It was fun to have a chance to socialize before the holiday break, playing games and recognizing SNR’s employees and students with birthdays during the month of December. I also introduced several new SNR employees.

About 100 faculty, staff and students fired up the crockpots and ovens and helped create a blaze of good cheer at SNR's 2008 Holiday Party.

In addition, I presented the Staff Recognition Award to Stephen Vantassel for his outstanding service to SNR and to the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management. Stephen is the web manager for this activity. In addition to an attractive plaque, Stephen also received a check for $100. Congratulations to Stephen for his outstanding service.
Stephen Vantassel Wins Staff Recognition Award

Don Wilhite, director of SNR, presents a big award check to Stephen Vantassel, recipient of the SNR Staff Recognition Award, during the 2008 Holiday Party.

The next Staff Recognition Award will be presented in the spring. I encourage you to nominate our very worthy staff for this award. Competition is high, so please renominate those previously nominated.

SNR’s Faculty, Staff and Students – Sharing Gifts during the Holiday Season

I am pleased to report that SNR’s faculty, staff, and students donated 129 items for the UNL Food Drive. In addition, we collected $80 in cash donations. Thanks to our students for their involvement in this worthy project. This total placed SNR 8th out of 21 groups at UNL in the Food Drive Donations organized by Student Involvement.

We also collected coats and other items for Clinton Elementary School. Our representatives delivered five large bags of coats, hats, and gloves, as well as $280 in cash donations.

Thanks to Chris Thody, Dee Ebbeka, and others who assisted with these projects. Once again, the generosity of SNR staff helped brighten the holidays for children and families in need.

Director’s Seminar Series – Spring Semester

In 2008, I initiated a new seminar series to bring in outstanding
speakers on a wide variety of important topics in natural resources and the environment. I temporarily suspended that series during the fall semester because of the number of listening sessions scheduled in association with our comprehensive five-year review. However, I have reinitiated that series for spring semester. I have invited Dr. Ana Iglesias from the Polytechnic University in Madrid, Spain, to meet with SNR faculty and staff on April 6-7, 2009, and to present a seminar on European Climate Change Policy. I have also invited Dr. Heidi Cullen, Senior Research Scientist for a new non-profit organization, Climate Central, to visit SNR on April 30-May 1, 2009, to present a seminar. Heidi was formerly the Climate Scientist with The Weather Channel before it was purchased by NBC in 2008. Heidi and I have been discussing the possible preparation of a 10-minute television segment on the impacts of climate change in Nebraska. Stay tuned for more information on both of these campus visits and seminars.

**Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted**

SNR faculty were awarded grants totaling more than $162,000 in December. These awards were received from the National Science Foundation and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Congratulations to John Lenters, Kevin Pope, and Paul Hanson. Grant proposals submitted in December totaled $23,000. (There are very few Requests for Proposals with due dates in December.)

SNR faculty and staff submitted grant proposals totaling more than $21 million and were awarded nearly $5.65 million in 2008. There are currently many large proposals with significant funding requests under review that will hopefully provide a solid start to higher funding levels in 2009.