The Director's Report, February 2009

School of Natural Resources
From Earth to Sky and Everything in Between

It's difficult to believe that we have already completed the first month of 2009. The days are getting significantly longer now and the additional sunlight is welcome, as will be the first of March and springtime.

This semester will be another busy one, with a continuation of the five-year review listening sessions that are being organized to receive comments on the early drafts of chapters, which are products of our fall listening sessions. We must reach a near-final draft of our review document by the end of the semester. In addition, some very difficult budget decisions must be made in light of the declining economy nationally and in Nebraska. I will do my best to protect the integrity of our programs. Let's all hope for an early economic recovery so we can once again build for the future.

Planning for the Building Sustainable Partnerships Forum

On February 6, 2009, SNR will be co-sponsoring the first Building Sustainable Partnerships Forum, along with the Mayor’s Environmental Task Force. The goals of this event are to: increase visibility of sustainability-related activities and research; identify organizations and individuals with an interest in sustainability; facilitate networking and initiate collaboration between the public and private sectors; and build effective partnerships between UNL, the City of Lincoln, and others. Speakers for the Forum will include Mayor Chris Beutler, David Henderson from the Chancellor’s Commission on Sustainability, Marti Franti from Lincoln Public Schools, SNR graduate student Kyle Jackson, and Ted Weidner from UNL Facilities Management. Cecil Steward, former Dean of UNL's College of Architecture, will provide the charge to the breakout groups that will discuss issues related to renewable energy, sustainable food systems, business and industry, sustainability in education, climate change, and sustainable communities.
A great deal of planning has been invested in this event, which will be held in Hardin Hall from 1 to 6 p.m. Thanks to Donna Woudenberg for her leadership and to all members of the planning team. I hope that this forum will become an annual or bi-annual event that will provide significant benefits for the University of Nebraska and the community.

Developing Faculty Areas in SNR

Last month I reported that SNR was going through a process of reorganization into Faculties that represent our main disciplinary areas. Following discussions with the faculty in December to reach consensus on these Faculties, faculty members were asked to choose which Faculties coincide with their interests. They could choose primary, secondary, and tertiary areas of interest. The SNR faculty areas are: Applied Ecology, Applied Climate Science, Geography/GIScience, Geology and Soils, Human Dimensions, and Water. Faculty completed the survey in January and the results are shown below for the primary faculty areas and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary faculty areas. The advantages of more formally identifying these areas have become even more apparent as the School has continued to increase in size and diversity.

Primary Faculty Area Selections by SNR Faculty
UNL Climate Change Initiative

Campus-wide listening sessions were held in January to gather input from faculty who expressed interest in participating in the UNL Climate Change Initiative. Sessions were held on both city and east campus and more than 80 faculty participated in these discussions. Comments have been summarized and were analyzed at a meeting of the Advisory Committee in late January. We are now proceeding with the next steps: finalization of the vision and mission statements and proposal development. I greatly appreciate the enthusiasm of the participants and the assistance of the Advisory Committee in this effort. Melissa Widhalm, project assistant, has also done an admirable job of summarizing discussions, preparing documents, and conducting research on the topic. We are now in the process of identifying teaching efforts associated with climate change across campus. An inventory is underway and will hopefully lead to the development of a minor in climate change studies for students from diverse disciplines across the UNL campus.
Hardin Hall Occupancy Sensors: Update

The installation of occupancy sensors for offices and conference rooms in the Hardin Hall tower is now complete. These sensors are tied into the HVAC and lighting systems and are expected to result in significant savings on energy costs in the building. We appreciate the financial support from UNL’s Facilities Management for this important energy saving endeavor. It will be exciting to see the impact of this energy-reduction program on utility costs for Hardin Hall in the months and years ahead.

SNR Graduate Student Receives Fling Fellowship

Brenda Pracheil has received the prestigious Fling Fellowship for the 2008-2009 academic year. This fellowship is awarded to those students who have demonstrated the highest level of achievement in their academic performance. This fellowship allows graduate students to focus their energy on research activities without the distraction of a graduate research assistantship. Congratulations to Brenda.

School of Natural Resources Hosts Izaak Walton League Annual Meeting

On January 25, 2009, SNR hosted the Izaak Walton League Annual Meeting. The Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) was founded in 1922 and is a national conservation organization whose 35,000 members protect and enjoy America’s soil, air, woods, water, and wildlife. The SNR has maintained a partnership with the Nebraska Division of the IWLA for over 40 years. The Nebraska Division is a sponsor of the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program and has hosted several hunter education classes with the UNL Wildlife Club. We host an annual meeting for the delegates and officers of 18 local chapters of the IWLA, during which we provide information on teaching, research, and extension programs in the SNR. The meeting this
year was coordinated by Scott Hygnstrom and featured presentations on the SNR five-year review by Ed Harvey, IWL scholarships by Dave Wedin, biodiversity in organic farms by John Quinn, the Nebraska Master Naturalist Program by Annabel Major, rural mail-carrier surveys by Tim Hiller, walleye spawning habitat by Dustin Martin, and videography of white-tailed deer by Greg Clements. The Nebraska Division and several local chapters provide scholarships for students in the SNR and they have developed a substantial endowment for the generation of scholarships in the future. Although our records are incomplete, we conservatively estimate that since 1970, the Nebraska Division of the IWLA has provided nearly $100,000 in scholarships to about 400 undergraduate students in the SNR. We plan to continue hosting the annual meetings and would like to expand our fruitful relationship with the IWLA. Thanks to Scott Hygnstrom for his leadership of the Izaak Walton League program in SNR.

SNR thanks the “IKEs” – the many Izaak Walton League chapters across the state – for over $4,000 in support to our students this year:

IKE-Nebraska’s Scholarships went to Lauren Thacker-Lynn and Jed Thompson; the Fremont chapter supported William Lawyer and Rebecca Gonzales, who received the chapter’s named Jessie Benton Scholarship; the Lincoln chapter supported Lauren Thompson; Platte Valley, Scott Sorenson; Grand Island, Adam Scholle; and scholarships from the newly established Nebraska Division of the IWLA Endowment Fund went to Anne Rolfson and Brent Johnson.

**Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted**

SNR faculty were awarded grants totaling more than $75,000 in January. Congratulations to Mike Hayes, Jae Ryu, Jim Goeke, and Scott Hygnstrom. Congratulations to collaborator Karrie Weber from the School of Biological Sciences, Kyle Hoagland, Scott Hygnstrom, Paul Hanson, Stephen Vantassel, Dan Snow, Tim Hiller, Erkan Istanbulluoglu and Drew Tyre for submitting grant proposals of nearly $425,000 in January.

SNR faculty have many large grants currently pending with various federal and state agencies. I look forward to more good news.