April has finally arrived and the end of the semester is looming. This is always a busy time of year for faculty and staff as the end of the semester approaches and the field work season begins. Once classes end, plans for renovating or updating some of our facilities will be implemented and our IT staff will begin to work on updating computers and computer software throughout Hardin Hall to ready ourselves for the fall semester. Thanks to all of SNR's support staff for the excellent job they do in support of all SNR programs and activities.

Don't forget to participate in the Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium and Weatherfest scheduled for Hardin Hall on April 9. This all-day event is free to the public and brings together an outstanding group of speakers, exhibitions, and activities to provide a full day of fun for the family. Ken Dewey and his outstanding SNR planning team -- Tonya Bernadt, Deanna Ebbeka, Jacki Loomis, Sue Ellen Pegg, Brittany Potter, and Natalie Umphlett -- have done an excellent job again this year in organizing what promises to be a great educational and fun experience. Please plan to attend and bring along family members. A full description of the program and activities can be found on the SNR website at http://snr.unl.edu/cpsws/.

**Congressional Briefing on Weather, Climate, and Food: Washington, D.C.**

I was invited recently to speak at a briefing on Capitol Hill on weather, climate, and food. The event was part of a monthly Climate Briefing Series organized by the American Meteorological Society (AMS) with support from the National Science Foundation's Paleoclimate Program. The goal of the series is to strengthen the knowledge base for policy decisions and help society translate knowledge and understanding into broadly beneficial policy choices. The briefing was held on March 25 in the Senate Russell Office Building on Capitol Hill. Paul Higgins from the AMS organized and moderated the event.

The topic of my presentation was "Improving Drought Management in the U.S.,” highlighting progress to date and next steps to move the U.S. to a more risk-based drought management paradigm. One of the major goals of my research program has been to move the U.S. and other nations toward a proactive approach to drought management as a means of reducing societal vulnerability. It is very satisfying to see the progress we have made in the past two decades—but much work remains to be done. The faculty and staff of the National Drought Mitigation Center remain heavily engaged in this effort. I continue to dabble in this effort as my time allows and opportunities arise.

Also on the briefing program with me was Dr. Michael Roberts, assistant professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University. Before joining the faculty at NCSU, Michael worked for USDA’s Economic Research Service. The title of Michael’s presentation was “Extreme Heat, Crop Yields, and the Potential Effects of Climate Change on World Food Prices.” His presentation was very interesting and his results highly relevant to the campus-wide Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute.

More than 70 people attended the briefing and participated in a lively discussion following the presentations. I look forward to future follow-up on these issues with attendees, including congressional staffers.
World Climate Research Program Workshop on Drought Prediction and Predictability in a Changing Environment

I was invited to attend this drought prediction workshop in Barcelona, Spain, March 2-4, 2011. Approximately 75 scientists and government officials attended the workshop, which was organized by the World Climate Research Program (WCRP) of the World Meteorological Organization. The objectives of this workshop were to focus attention on our current capability for drought prediction, user requirements and applications of these predictions, and future research priorities. The intended outcomes were to 1) motivate climate research targeting drought and the need for coordination between members of the research community; 2) summarize drought prediction requirements; 3) document current drought prediction capabilities; 4) define research and development needs; and 5) formulate recommendations on research/development priorities. My presentation centered on drought monitoring and early warning systems as one of the critical ingredients necessary to improve drought mitigation and preparedness worldwide. A meeting of key participants followed the workshop on March 5, with the goal of modifying a draft white paper prepared in advance of the workshop. The outcomes from this workshop will guide the WCRP research program over the next decade. The workshop was very successful and broadened the University of Nebraska’s engagement in this drought prediction effort and the WCRP’s research and engagement efforts.

Autonomous University of Barcelona: A Collaboration Opportunity in the Making

While in Barcelona, I spent one day visiting with the director, faculty and students at the Institut de Ciencia i Tegnologia Ambientals (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, as a follow-up to my visit in October. This university is one of eight universities located in Barcelona and has a student enrollment of more than 40,000. During my visit to campus, I presented a seminar that provided both an overview of SNR’s administrative structure and areas of disciplinary and interdisciplinary strengths and an overview of drought monitoring, mitigation, and preparedness. The goal of this visit to ICTA was to identify key areas of common strength between ICTA and SNR. Drought is a very important topic in Spain, given recent droughts and dire predictions in increased frequency, severity, and duration of drought events in Spain and the Mediterranean region in the decades ahead.

I am now working with the director of ICTA to select dates when I will return to Barcelona with several SNR faculty to explore future collaborations between our two groups. It would appear from discussions to date that the areas of greatest potential collaboration are in the fields of applied ecology, water, and applied climate science. The ultimate goal is to establish a Memorandum of Agreement between our two universities.

Building Strategic Partnerships in Natural Resources: The Big 10

I have initiated the process of creating a partnership between natural resources units in the Big 10, given UNL’s entrance into this conference in July. The process has begun through a conversation with Rosina Bierbaum, dean of the School of Natural Resources and the Environment at the University of Michigan, and Bill Easterling, dean of the College of Earth Science and Mineral Sciences at Penn State University. Our goal is to form a new peer group within the Committee on Institution Cooperation (CIC) of the Big 10. We hope to have a meeting of all of the interested unit leaders this summer to further discuss the process and our key objectives and outcomes.

Water for Food Conference: May 1-4, 2011

Plans have been finalized for the 3rd Water for Food Conference: Pathways to Solutions. The conference is scheduled for May 1-4, 2011, at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel. The conference will feature plenary addresses by:

- Jeff Raikes, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation;
- Anil Jain, managing director, Jain Irrigation Ltd. of India;
- Anders Berntell, executive director, Stockholm International Water Institute;
- Pasquale Steduto, principal officer, United Nations/FAO Water; and
- András Szöllösi-Nagy, rector, UNESCO-IHE.
Pasquale Steduto is a good friend and colleague that I have worked with for the past decade. I hope to be able to bring him to Hardin Hall during his brief time in Lincoln to meet faculty, staff, and students and to see SNR's facilities.

Additional conference sessions will include:

- Industry Leaders panel: Industry perspectives on water for food challenges
- “A View From the Field” panel featuring an international group of agricultural producers
- Technical sessions on “Quantitative Food Security: Yield Gaps, Water and Nitrogen Productivity” and “Maximizing Water Use Efficiency in Agriculture”
- Case study on “Securing Water for Agriculture: California’s High-Stakes Challenge”
- “Evaluation of Aquifer Resources in Sub-Saharan Africa,” a workshop on aquifer characterization
- Graduate Student Poster competition focused on the conference themes and
- Networking opportunities

There will also be a juried poster competition that focuses on each of the following areas:

- Reducing the Yield Gap: Biophysics, Technologies, Policies and Economics
- Maximizing Water Use Efficiency in Agriculture
- Groundwater and Surface Water Hydrology
- General topics related to Water for Food

Check out the Water for Food website (http://waterforfood.nebraska.edu/wff2011) for more information on the poster competition, including the graduate student poster competition. Registration information is available at the website above and special rates are available for University of Nebraska faculty, staff, and students. You can register online until April 22.

Discussions on SNR’s Priority Faculty Positions: The Process

A process has been identified to determine which faculty positions are of highest priority in the years ahead for SNR. Each of the faculty areas has been asked to identify two positions of highest priority to their group and submit position descriptions to me in early April. This list will build on those faculty positions identified in our September 2009 Comprehensive Review Report. This combined set of position descriptions will be discussed in detail by our newly constituted Faculty Advisory Committee and criteria will be established for grouping these positions into priority tiers for further discussion with faculty and staff in the months ahead. This will likely be a lengthy process but one that is very important process as we map our collective vision for SNR and connect it to both the IANR and UNL visions. As this process unfolds, I’ll work with the FAC to keep faculty and staff updated on the status of the process.

National Drought Mitigation Center featured on KRVN Radio

As a follow-up to last month’s interview with Tala Awada regarding SNR’s academic and research programs, Mike Hayes was invited to join KRVN for an interview highlighting the programs of the National Drought Mitigation Center, the importance of these programs to the citizens of Nebraska and the U.S., and the potential connections between the NDMC and the newly created Water for Food Institute. This exposure for SNR and our various programs provides excellent visibility for our unit and our contributions to the state and the nation. Both interviews were the direct result of recommendations from Ronnie Green to highlight SNR programs as part of this KRVN interview series.

Graduate Student Travel Awards

The SNR Graduate Student Association Travel Grant Committee awarded $250 each to Crystal Bergman, a Ph.D. student with an Applied Climate Sciences Specialization, and to Jeremy Hammen, a Ph.D. student. Congratulations to Crystal and Jeremy! SNR provides funding to the GSA each year in support of their program activities and the student travel fund program.
Memorial for Ted Elliott, Former SNR Director

We will be planting an aspen tree southwest of Hardin Hall in honor of Ted Elliott, former SNR director. Funds from the Ted Elliott Memorial Fund will be used to purchase and maintain the tree through UNL's Landscape Services. Ted moved to Lincoln from Colorado and loved the mountains and their native aspen trees. In my conversations with Kate Elliott, she felt that planting a tree in Ted's honor would be a wonderful memorial to our former director. Ted died in June 2002.

Grants Awarded and Proposals Submitted

Only a few small grants were awarded during March. Congratulations to Don Rundquist, Sunil Narumalani, and Paul Merani. Total funding received during March was $36,000. The total value of grants awarded from July 1, 2010, to March 2011 is $6,433,730. Proposals submitted during March 2011 requested funds totaling $970,146. SNR faculty and staff submitting proposals included Martha Shulski, Ken Hubbard, Mike Hayes, Scott Hygnstrom, Steve Hu, Steve Comfort, Bruce Dvorak, Steve Ress, Tadd Barrow, John Lenters, Andy Suyker, Shashi Verma, Rusty Low, Jesse Korus, and Mark Burbach.

The total funding by source received by SNR from July 2010 through March 2011 is shown below. Funding from federal and state sources dominate, providing 90 percent of the funds to support research, extension/outreach, and teaching efforts.

Divided by agency, the funding picture becomes a bit more complicated, as the sources of funding for the unit are numerous.