The Director's Report, August 2008

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

Out with the old, in with the new

July was an incredibly busy month with the closing out of the fiscal year and the beginning of a new one. Thanks to Carol Cartwright and the entire Natural Resources Business Center staff (Lois Erickson, Pat De Stefano, Leo Masek, Jerry Schluckebier, Julie Stuckenschmidt, and Jolene Foster) for making this very difficult task a manageable one. I greatly appreciate all that they do for me and SNR. When you have a chance, please give them a “high five.” They deserve a lot of credit for making SNR run smoothly.

While I am on the subject of budget issues, I hope you are all appreciative of the sizeable investment that Nebraskans are making in each and every one of you—faculty, staff, and students. I am grateful for all the work that all of you do—faculty, staff, and students—and for the opportunities this gives us to make meaningful contributions through our research, outreach, and education efforts.

SNR's Website

As many of you are aware, the SNR website is in the early stages of a major overhaul. Mark Mesarch is leading this process, working closely with me and a small group of faculty and staff. SNR is moving to a new website architecture that will be supported by CIT. Jeff Nothwehr is taking over the daily maintenance and update of our current site and is

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working with Mark on the development of the new site. Jeff is splitting his time between the National Drought Mitigation Center and SNR. Both Mark and Jeff will be going through training for the new Content Management System. You will all have the opportunity to provide input as this process unfolds in the months ahead. The goal is to not only update our website but also to make it much more navigable for SNR’s many clientele—prospective students, stakeholders, and the science community. Our website needs to tell the full story of the exciting programs and activities in which SNR’s faculty, staff, and students are engaged.

**Student Services Program**

I am pleased to announce that SNR has hired Sue Ellen Pegg as its new Recruitment Coordinator/Manager, effective August 4. Sue Ellen brings considerable experience in recruitment to the position and she also has extensive knowledge of SNR and its programs. She will join Sara Winn, SNR’s Advising Coordinator, in the Student Services area in the Welcome Center on first floor. As previously announced, Susan Vosler will be moving from the north wing of Hardin Hall to the Welcome Center area in order to provide clerical support for SNR’s Student Services activities. What an outstanding team we have assembled. I look forward to working with them in the months ahead.

**Welcome to the Geography Program**

Over the past couple of weeks, four Geography faculty and five lecturers have moved from City Campus to Hardin Hall. They are all housed on the third floor of the tower. Joyce Hurst, Geography secretary, has also moved to the third floor. Joyce will be providing clerical support for the geography program. The geography TAs will be moving to Hardin Hall in early August and will be housed in the north wing, room 248. New office furniture was installed recently in order to accommodate these students. As many of you know, Sunil Narumalani will be serving as the geography program coordinator.
Welcome, New SNR Faculty and Visiting Scientists

In July, Dr. Deborah Bathke joined the SNR faculty as an Assistant Professor of Practice. Deborah has a joint appointment with SNR and the Department of Geosciences. She will be teaching courses for both units this fall. In addition, Deborah will be working with the National Drought Mitigation Center. Deborah comes to us from New Mexico State University, where she was the Assistant State Climatologist. She holds a Ph.D. in meteorology from The Ohio State University and an M.S. in meteorology from UNL.

Welcome also to Dr. Wayne Woldt, who transferred a portion of his appointment from Civil Engineering to SNR in July. Wayne has been a faculty member at UNL for many years. He maintains a 75 percent appointment in Biological Systems Engineering. His SNR appointment is in Extension and he will be assisting our Extension water program and also working with programs in Conservation and Survey. Wayne will also be co-teaching the Introduction to Water Science course (WATR 281) with Ed Harvey this fall semester.

In early August, Dr. Dennis Todey will join SNR part-time as the Acting Director for the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC). Dennis is filling in for Ken Hubbard, who is on an extended leave of absence. Dennis is an Assistant Professor and State Climatologist at South Dakota State University in the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. He received his Ph.D. at Iowa State University. Dennis will be spending approximately 50 percent of his time at UNL administering the HPRCC program and overseeing a wide range of contracts with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The HPRCC is one of six regional climate centers in the U.S.

Visiting Scientists to join SNR

Several visiting scientists are joining the SNR team this fall or are a carry-over from last year. New visiting scientists include:
Dr. Jon Jensen is joining SNR for one year. He is a faculty member at Luther College in Decora, Iowa. Jon is on sabbatical from Luther College and will be writing a series of essays on issues of sustainability and climate change. He will also be co-teaching (with Sandi Zellmer, Law College) a course on Environmental Ethics during the spring semester. Jon received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado in Philosophy.

Toshihiro Sakamoto will be visiting the NDMC from October 2008 through October 2010. Toshihiro is from Japan. He will be working on several remote sensing projects with Brian Wardlow of the NDMC and also conducting independent research.

Dr. Mirek Trnka will be visiting NDMC from August 18 to September 12, 2008. Mirek is working on joint research on drought, climate change and cropping patterns in the Czech Republic. He is a faculty member at the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, Brno.

Tao Sun is a visiting student with Hong Chen. He will be with SNR from August 16, 2008 through February 15, 2010. Tao is from China. He will be working with Dr. Chen & Jinxi Song on cooperative agreements with the Lower Platte North, the Central Platte, and the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource Districts, investigating streambed-aquifer-hydrologic relations in the Platte and Elkhorn River basins and groundwater recharge process and model stream-aquifer-well systems.

The following visiting scientists continue to work with SNR:

Jinxi Song is working with Hong Chen through January 31, 2008. Jinxi is from China. He is working with Dr. Chen on cooperative agreements with the Lower Platte North, the Central Platte, and the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource Districts.

Tahir Sarwar is from Pakistan and is continuing his work with CALMIT through December, 2008.

Tonghui Zhang continues to work with Dave Wedin through December, 2008. Dr. Zhang is from China. He is working with Dave on several ecological and hydrological research projects in the Sandhills.
Please join me in welcoming all of these visiting scientists to SNR. Visiting scientists present a unique opportunity for SNR faculty, staff, and students to share ideas and foster collaborative research, teaching, and outreach opportunities.

**Hatch and McIntire-Stennis Projects Completed**

SNR faculty have been very busy in recent months preparing new or revising existing Hatch and McIntire-Stennis projects over the spring and summer months. All state-funded faculty with research appointments are required to have these projects in order to receive operating dollars from CSREES/USDA. My goal has been for SNR to be fully compliant with this requirement. Those faculty with new or revised projects are: John Lenters; Pat Shea; Bob Oglesby; Mary Spalding; Betty Walter-Shea; Sue Lackey, Steve Sibray, and Jim Goeke (joint project); Paul Hanson; Ayse Irmak; Mark Kuzila and Matt Joeckel (joint project); Shashi Verma; Tala Awada, Ed Harvey, Larkin Powell, Don Runquist and Anatoly Gitelson (joint project), and Kyle Hoagland, John Holz, and Aris Holz (joint project). Jim Brandle is also working on a McIntire-Stennis project for Prairie Pines in collaboration with Chuck Francis, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, and Susan Williams, Southeast Research and Extension Center.

**SNR Retreat and Picnic, August 22 (Mark your calendars!)**

A half-day retreat is planned for August 22 in the Hardin Hall auditorium. The purpose of the retreat is to launch SNR’s strategic planning process for our five-year review, scheduled for September 2009. An intensive series of listening sessions for faculty, staff and students will be held during the fall semester, beginning in early September and ending just before Thanksgiving. The August 22 retreat will be followed by a catered picnic at Hardin Hall. Attendance at the retreat is required of SNR faculty and strongly encouraged for staff and students. The agenda for the retreat was recently distributed by Jim Merchant, coordinator for the five-year review process. Thanks to Jim for his organizational efforts and
to all of SNR's coordinators for their contributions to planning the retreat and listening sessions.

**Drought Management Conference**

I participated in a one-day conference on Drought Management and Planning in Zaragoza, Spain, on July 24. The meeting was sponsored by the Spanish Ministry of the Environment and was intended to update participants on the status of and need for drought planning in Spain. I was asked to talk about the formation and evolution of the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC), which may serve as a model for the establishment of a national drought center in Spain. This conference was held in association with a summer-long Zaragoza Expo on water. Since the Expo opened in mid-June, it has attracted over 2 million visitors. I would characterize this event as a "World's Fair on Water."

On my return from Spain, my wife and I spent a few days in Paris. We were there for the final stage of the Tour de France and were able to watch the event "up close and personal." The photo below doesn't quite capture the excitement of the final stage but at least it gives you a glimpse of the cyclists and the crowd. We also stopped at the Botanical Gardens, Natural History Museum, and the Geological Museum (the French version of the Conservation and Survey division), pictured below. Perhaps we should hang a map of the geology of Nebraska in front of Hardin Hall?
SNR faculty were awarded grants totaling nearly $715,000 during July. Kudos to Mark Pegg, John Lenters, Shashi Verma, John Holz, Aris Holz, Kyle Hoagland, Lorrie Benson, Tadd Barrow, and Julie Huddle for their achievements in grants awarded. Grant proposals were submitted in July by Dan Snow, Anatoly Gitelson, Scott Hygnstrom, and John Holz totaling $950,000. More than $2.6 million in awards have been received by SNR faculty since January 2008. The total for the fiscal year, July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, was $6.2 million. SNR faculty submitted proposals totaling more than $15 million in the past fiscal year.