

UPDATE FROM THE CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Addressing the science, policies, culture and economics of the natural environment in northern New England through collaborative research and education

Plymouth State University

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News

New Director of CFE

Acclaimed ecosystem researcher and scientist Dr. Patrick Bourgeron became the new director of Plymouth State University's Center for the Environment in late February. A native of France, Bourgeron comes to PSU from the University of Colorado Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, where he had served as research Fellow since 1997. He has nearly 30 years experience in environmental research, planning, land use policy, and teaching in the U.S., France, Canada, and Africa. He is also a former ecologist for The Nature Conservancy.

Bourgeron believes the Center for the Environment's (CFE) expertise can serve the public, the University, and the state. "A regional, comprehensive University that strives for excellence can help many constituencies achieve their goals," said Bourgeron.

PSU President Sara Jayne Steen is confident Bourgeron will help the CFE continue to be a key resource for the region. "Dr. Bourgeron is a well respected scientist, collaborator, and leader. We can expect to see wonderful partnerships generating exciting work that will benefit New Hampshire," said Steen.

Bourgeron's work as an ecologist has involved a broad range of topics including ecological classifications and mapping, biological diversity, and integrated socio-ecological assessments. "The integration of natural, physical, and socio-economic systems is an area where the Center can continue to excel," said Bourgeron.



University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Julie Bernier said Bourgeron brings an excellent record of achievement to the CFE. "We are so pleased to welcome Dr. Bourgeron," said Bernier. "His experiences will complement well the expertise of those already in the Center. He has already shown us that we made the right choice," said Bernier.

Former CFE director Steve Kahl is remaining at PSU as a research professor to continue his work with external partners, graduate student research, and

securing grant funding for new research and outreach.

Angela Uhlman Joins CFE

Angela Uhlman has joined the Center for the Environment as an administrative assistant. A graduate of Plymouth State and a New Hampshire native, Angela is an active member of the PSU community. She serves on the 2008 Operating Staff Senate, is chair of the Student Employee of the Year program, and a member of the PSU Hiking Club. In addition, she is currently pursuing her master's degree in health education.



"I am excited to be the newest member of the CFE team," said Uhlman. "I am looking forward to discovering new ways to apply my background in health education to the preservation and sustainability of our environment."

New Offices for CFE

The Center for the Environment needed additional office space because of its growth. As a result, some functions have moved to the second floor of PSU's historic Russell House, between the Boyd Science Center and Lamson Learning Commons. The CFE shares its new space with the Center for Rural Partnerships, the Institute for New Hampshire Studies, and PSU's Admissions Office.

Research

Survey for Town of Sandwich

The Center for the Environment recently completed a project for the Town of Sandwich's Historic District Commission (HDC). Surveys provide a form of public input used in community planning processes nationwide. Using social science research methods, CFE's Associate Director and Assistant Professor of Sociology Brian Eisenhauer and a team of students developed and administered a survey to help the HDC develop an informed awareness of community attitudes about the historic district and the services provided, as well as issues of growth, sustainability, and development in the community. PSU students Jennifer Hill, William Hopkins, Meghan Rodier, Danielle Ross, and Christian Weber all assisted with the project.

The HDC and project team members met several times to identify the key

issues to examine within the district and to review drafts of the questionnaire used in the project. These collaborative interactions provided a foundation for the research by identifying current issues, critical concerns, and issues relevant to future goals for the Sandwich Historic District.

The survey results showed that perceptions of the HDC are consistently positive. The vast majority of respondents feel the existence of the Historic District is a benefit to the Town of Sandwich, and most respondents feel it influences their property values in a positive manner. There is support for existing HDC policies although a few issues, such as parking, are of special concern to respondents. Respondents offered their opinions about the importance of various issues the HDC might address, which included working to preserve open space in the district as a high priority and enforcing HDC codes on all sides of a home as a lower priority.

The project also gave students a valuable opportunity to work on an applied research project.

Outreach

NH Water Conference

The second annual New Hampshire Water Conference was April 16, 2008 at the Grappone Center in Concord, NH. The conference, chaired by Assistant Professor of Hydrology Kevin McGuire, focused on science, policy, and management of water in New Hampshire.

The conference drew approximately 170 people from universities, state agencies, consulting firms, and water providers. The day featured 19 talks, a panel discussion, and vendor displays.

"The Water Conference brought a diverse group of people together to share ideas, projects, and interests as stewards of New Hampshire's water resources," said McGuire. "This conference provided a forum for discussing the current issues we face in preserving the state's water quality and quantity." This year's Conference ended with a panel discussion focused on the concept of developing a state water quality monitoring council.





Photo by Shaughn Bolton

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Center for the Environment Awarded NSF Grant for Summer Research Program

The Center recently received a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). The grant, which emphasizes the societal relevance of ecology and ecosystem science, provides opportunities for both a research mentorship and an outreach partnership with an outside organization. For the next three years, eight undergraduate students from colleges and universities around the United States will spend the summer at the Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest in the White Mountain National Forest. The students will work with two research mentors on projects in the major areas of ecosystem research at Hubbard Brook—animal ecology, biogeochemistry, hydrology and soils, and forest vegetation. Students will conduct a research project with their mentors and gain exposure to the full spectrum of ecosystem research at Hubbard Brook.

Students will also participate in a science communication project that will serve an outside organization. Working with a regional organization like a non-profit, local government, or public agency, students and their mentors will create a needed product to communicate ecosystem concepts to a broad audience. A weekly workshop examining successful science communication strategies will aid in development of the final product.

The Hubbard Brook REU will operate in partnership with the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation (HBRF), the Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study, and the U.S. Forest Service. CFE's Assistant Professor of Hydrology Kevin McGuire is leading the project and Associate Professor of Science Education Mary Ann McGarry is overseeing the science communication components. Geoff Wilson, educator and facilities manager for HBRF, will coordinate the activities and oversee the daily aspects of the REU. HBES scientists from a variety of institutions are serving as mentors.



Center to Sponsor IDID Conference July 17–18, 2008 at PSU

The Integrated Design/Integrated Development (IDID) Conference brings together architects, landscape architects, engineers, developers, contractors, real estate brokers, bankers, building owners, and others to open communications between the disciplines and to promote environmentally responsible, economically compelling design and development. The fifth IDID conference is July 17–18 at PSU. The conference is presented by the American Institute of Architects-New Hampshire's (AIANH) Environmental Guild, The Jordan Institute, and Granite State Landscape Architects in partnership with the Center for the Environment.

The conference theme is "Stepping Up to the 2030 Challenge" and features Ed Mazria, FAIA, as the keynote speaker. The 2030 Challenge asks the global architecture and building communities to adopt specific targets for reducing the use of fossil fuels, the emission of greenhouse gases, and energy use through a combination of innovative sustainable design strategies, generating on-site renewable power, purchasing renewable energy, and purchasing certified renewable energy credits.