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## **AERC UPDATES AND LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**2011 AERC Annual Meeting Dates:** October 19 - 20, 2011

**Place:** Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (more details TBA)

**Research Symposium Theme:** Will be announced soon

Dear Colleagues

The AERC's annual Congressional Briefing and Symposium last October entitled "*Using Science to Balance Society's Needs for Water, Agriculture, and Ecosystems*" was a wonderful success. The Congressional Briefing held in the morning attracted staff from 14 different congressional offices (both personal staff and committee staff) as well as several AAAS congressional fellows, representatives from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and from various federal agencies and departments. You might be interested to know that according to AIBS' Robert Gropp, Director of Public Policy, our Association is the only one that provides this kind of format and content for education of our elected representatives. As an organization, AERC has seen the attendance and audience for these functions grow and diversify over the past several years. This regular, annual congressional briefing has developed a reputation in Washington as a time where complex issues relating to ecosystem science are explored and addressed in an un-biased forum that is useful to Congressional members and their staffs alike. For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting our Web site (<http://www.ecosystemresearch.org/meetingsall.htm>), has a list of our speakers and a collection of their PowerPoint Presentations, and I encourage you to visit this site.

Speaking of our Web site, the Board this year has taken action to revamp and redesign our Web site. It is our hope that within a few weeks, a new AERC Web site will be unveiled; one that accents what exactly the AERC is and does, that draws attention to our member institutions and their programs, and one that provides some introduction to the role of ecosystem science and its benefit to our society.

Last year's Symposium, held in the afternoon of the same day as the Briefing and hosted at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, concluded with presentations from EPA, USDA, and the NSF focusing on the mission and research directions of each agency during the next year. Members attending the Symposium commented on the usefulness of this section of the Symposium for providing concise information and direct feedback with the agency representatives that were present. This is something that the AERC Board will continue to include, and expand, at our Symposium this year as well.

The elections of last November brought a large number of new Representatives and Senators to Washington and with this an opportunity to provide them with educational information about ecosystem science and the benefits of healthy ecosystems to our planet. Our Briefing and Symposium this year is scheduled for October 19<sup>th</sup> with our annual business meeting the following day, the 20<sup>th</sup> in Washington D.C. The Board is organizing an exciting theme with engaging speakers and as soon as it is finalized, I will be sending out more information. But please keep this time available so you can attend. The discussions in Washington D.C. are tending to be focused on budget issues which will affect all of us, and as these discussions are made, the need for robust, high-quality, un-biased information will be very important; just the kind of information that the AERC has been providing for many years and will continue to provide.

Thank you for your continued support of the Association, and if you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me, or any other member of the AERC Board!

David E. Smith, AERC President