



December 30, 2014

Dear AERC Colleague,

As the new president of AERC, I would like to thank you for all you do to support ecosystem research and let you know how much I appreciate your continued involvement in and support for the AERC and its mission. I look forward to the coming two years with great enthusiasm both for what we can achieve together within this great organization as well as for the opportunity to learn more about our membership and the fantastic research you conduct. Over the coming months I will be calling representatives from our various Member Organizations to learn more about your vision for AERC and to share my vision for the next two years.

Today, the members of the AERC Board of Directors and I would like to share with you our excitement about the success of our annual events in Washington DC that took place in early October, 2014. Following the new model implemented last year, Jay Arnone and the AERC leadership once again conducted an impressive and successful series of AERC events centered on our annual meeting. Building on the momentum of last year's successful events, Jay and the Board focused on AERC's main mission of communicating the importance of ecosystem science to Congress and conducted three specific events: 1) An AERC-sponsored workshop for meeting participants on Communicating Science to the Media and Policy Makers, 2) An AERC-sponsored congressional briefing on the Role of Ecosystem Research in Developing Adaptation and Mitigations Strategies to Climate Change, and 3) AERC-sponsored congressional visits on Capitol Hill. This "triumvirate" of informational and educational activities was enthusiastically received by all in attendance; 50% of whom were graduate students and postdocs! Here is a summary of these three activities.

AERC-Sponsored Workshop on Communicating Science to the Media and Policy Makers

AERC's annual events in Washington DC kicked off on the morning of October 8th with a very successful workshop conducted by Julie Palakovich Carr of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) Public Policy Office, and held at AIBS' offices in Washington. Julie's presentation and hands - on exercises focused on how to communicate with the media and included mock interviews where workshop participants (mainly graduate students) attempted to use the methods Julie described, together with prepared statements, to respond to questions from a reporter (Julie) about each person's own ecosystem research and what its importance was. During the second half of the morning, Julie described how to communicate face to face with a congressional staff person and what methods and techniques can be used to enhance that communication. For this section of the workshop on how to effectively communicate with decision makers, participants broke into groups and practiced giving their 2 min "pitches" to each other under the watchful eyes of a former congressional staffer, Julie, and those of AERC-

<http://www.ecosystemresearch.org>

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member faculty representatives who have first-hand experience communicating with congressional office staff on Capitol Hill. There were 25 participants in the workshop (11 of whom were graduate students and postdocs), primarily from AERC member institutions. More than half of those participating in the workshop applied the coaching they received during visits to their respective congressional offices the next day

AERC-Sponsored Congressional Briefing on the Role of Ecosystem Research in Developing Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies to Climate Change

This year's one-hour congressional briefing presentations were provided by Dr. Jerry Hatfield from the US Department of Agriculture, Dr. Julie Cherry from the University of Alabama, and Dr. Darrel Jenerette from the University of California, Riverside. The briefing was a huge success and was attended by a total of 85 people from a variety of governmental, non - governmental, academic, and professional organizations. Staff members from 26 congressional offices participated, 23 House and 3 Senate, with additional participants from the House Committee on Natural Resources, the House Science Committee, the US Forest Service, the US Geological Survey, NEON, the United Nations Environment Programme, and a representative of the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Also participating were members from professional societies including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Agronomy, Crop and Soil Society, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Geophysical Union, and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. Graduate students, postdocs, and faculty members from 13 universities and research institutes from across the U.S., and one from Canada, rounded out the briefing audience, with most of these coming from AERC member institutions. After the three briefing presentations, the speakers responded to numerous excellent questions. Many in the audience stayed after the formal Q & A to talk with these experts on ecosystem science and climate change issues.

AERC-Sponsored Congressional Office Visits on Capitol Hill

After attending the morning congressional briefing on the Role of Ecosystem Research in Developing Adaptation and Mitigations Strategies to Climate Change on October 9th, fifteen graduate students, postdocs and faculty members from nine AERC member institutions visited their respective House and Senate congressional offices. There they presented their own briefing statements on the importance of their own ecosystem research in addressing policy issues and why funding for ecosystem research needs to be expanded.

The 2014 Annual AERC Business Meeting was well attended with faculty, students and postdocs from member organizations participating. This year AERC welcomed its first student Board Member, Wes Flynn, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia. The meeting was productive, reflecting the hard work and accomplishments of the Board and President Argonne over the past year. Issues including retention and expansion of member organizations, increased web presence, budget, and election of new AERC Board Members were addressed. The Board once again thanked Rob Gropp and Julie Palakovich Carr of the AIBS for all of their assistance with the organization and events of the meeting – as usual they did a fantastic job. In addition, following the excellent tradition established in 2013, the new graduate Student Board Member was

asked to design and conduct a Web-based evaluation survey for meeting participants, which should be completed and the results posted on the AERC website (www.ecosystemresearch.org) in January, 2015.

I hope this letter has given you a feeling for the excitement that this year's AERC events in Washington DC generated among all who participated. In particular, I am excited about the potential for growing AERC in the coming years and for finding new ways to serve the membership as AERC works to garner support for ecosystem research, both domestically and globally. As a relatively new member of the AERC leadership team, I have been impressed by the array of activities available to members and I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the opportunities that the AERC annual meeting provides, not only for learning new methods of communicating science to policy makers, but also for networking with other ecosystem researchers and congressional staffers.

None of the good things that AERC does could be accomplished without your dues support and service. I want to personally thank you for your continued support for AERC and for making possible the efforts by AERC to promote increased funding for research that benefits us all.

I wish you a happy holiday season and a good start to 2015!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olin E. Rhodes, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Olin E. Rhodes, Jr.
AERC President