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March 31, 2009

Dear Colleague;

As I write this letter I am reflecting on the fact that as a society we are facing unprecedented challenges, yet we also feel a sense of optimism that the incoming Obama administration appears to be fulfilling its promise to return science to the decision making process. It is clear that ecosystem science will play an important role as the country begins to address the difficult issue of climate change, in particular.

Over the past three years the AERC has focused its annual symposium and briefing for congressional staff and federal agency officials on climate change issues as they relate to ecosystems. The 2006 meetings examined ecological tipping points, thresholds of rapid irreversible transformation being approached by ecosystems altered by global climate change. (See slides of the presentations on the updated AERC website at www.ecosystemresearch.org). The 2007 meetings considered the sustainability of bioenergy feedstocks, including woody crops, food crop residues, soy for biodiesel, and corn grain or grasses and for ethanol. The 2008 meeting focused on potential carbon sequestration by ecosystems, comparing major ecosystem types ranging from forests to marine ecosystems. **The 2009 meeting, scheduled for September 24-25 in Washington DC, is entitled “Out on a Limb: Sustainability of Urban Ecosystems Under Changing Climates”.** We have an exciting slate of speakers addressing this topic.

As with the previous meetings, the 2008 meetings will combine briefings for congressional staff and federal agency officials with a more in-depth symposium for interested agency staff as well as for AERC representatives and guests. A luncheon and reception will provide refreshments and opportunities for informal communication. We will coordinate our annual AERC council meeting with the briefing and symposium. Details about these meetings will be sent later this spring.

Prior to the annual symposium and briefing, AERC will collaborate with American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) to present a half day workshop entitled **“Communicating Science: A Workshop for Talking with the Media”** on the afternoon of September 23rd. AERC will subsidize 50% of the cost of this workshop, making the registration fee \$50. A maximum of 40 individuals can be accommodated. Attendees will receive coaching from experienced professionals and helpful materials, including a copy of the book **“Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media.”** Note that we will need a minimum number of participants for this workshop, so we encourage you to register early for this event. Further information is forthcoming.

We also will be adding an additional feature to our annual business meeting this year. Following the completion of our business agenda, Robert Gropp, Director, Public Policy Office at the AIBS will present a one hour briefing on policy issues on Capital Hill. I hope you can join us at the annual meeting in September.

Sincerely,

Lucinda B. Johnson
AERC President 2009