



Ecological Society of America Rapid Response Team Update

Serving Society through Ecological Expertise

Winter 2009

Informing the Public and Policymakers

➤ The Winter 2009 edition of *Issues in Science and Technology* featured an article by Robert Twilley, discussing the status of protection and restoration efforts on the Gulf Coast. Twilley emphasized the need for both additional infrastructure funding and an improved federal prioritization system capable of allocating these funds expediently. For the full article, please visit: <http://www.esa.org/pao/newsroom/files/Issues-Coastal%20LA.pdf>



Robert Twilley speaks at an ESA briefing on hurricanes

Ecosystems: Nature's Services to Humankind," drew over 100 viewers from universities, government agencies, and congressional offices. Pouyat discussed the unique ways in which urban ecosystems interact with both internal and external natural resources, explaining the concept of ecological "infrastructure" and the importance of integrating this infrastructure within the urban matrix to achieve sustainability. The webinar and associated resources will be available for the following year at:

http://live.blueskybroadcast.com/bsb/client/CL_DEFAULT.asp?Client=122&PCAT=760&CAT=1056&review=true

➤ In December, Rich Pouyat joined a panel of ecologists and environmental economists for an ESA co-sponsored webinar on ecosystem services. The webinar, "From Agricultural to Urban



Rich Pouyat's presentation addressed the challenges of managing urban ecosystem services

➤ This fall, Dianna Padilla and a colleague at Stony Brook University provided important information on the effects of ocean iron fertilization on marine ecosystems for a forthcoming ESA factsheet. The Rapid Response Team is an important source of input for many documents produced or managed by the Public Affairs Office, including factsheets, position statements, and letters to policymakers.



➤ Following ESA's workshop and briefings on the sustainability of biofuels, briefing panelist Phil Robertson led a group of 23 international experts, including fellow RRT-er Virginia Dale, in producing a paper on the status and future of sustainable biofuels. This paper, "Sustainable Biofuels Redux," was published in the October 3 2008 edition of *Science*. To view the press release that accompanied this publication, please visit:

<http://www.esa.org/pao/newsroom/pressReleases2008/10022008.php>

ESA's Public Affairs Office would like to hear from you! If you've been 'in the news' or had an opportunity to inform decision-making, please let us know. We also encourage RRT members to come to us with issues where you would like to see action. Just drop an email to Piper Corp (piper@esa.org) or Nadine Lynn (Nadine@esa.org).

Reaching Out

➤ This month, the ESA podcast *The Ecologist Goes to Washington* features an interview with Tony Janetos on the role of ecologists in communicating climate change. Janetos discusses his work at the Joint Global Change Research Institute, as well as the many opportunities for and challenges of providing scientific input. Listen to this and other ESA podcasts at: www.esa.org/podcast



Tony Janetos (second panelist from left) provides testimony for a 2008 congressional hearing on climate change

In the Media

➤ This September, the *National Public Radio* program *All Things Considered* featured an interview with Robert Twilley, who discussed the ecological and social implications of the dramatic loss in wetlands caused by Hurricane Gustav. Listen to Robert at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94176239>

Also in September, several RRT-ers provided expert commentary for news articles:

- J. David Allen appeared in a *New York Times* article covering the passage of the Great Lakes Compact, a bill restricting water diversions from the Great Lakes. Allen spoke in support of the legislation, stating, “If water could be exported willy-nilly without any ability of the Great Lakes states to evaluate the ecological and economic impact, you’d have to think bad things would come of that. You’re benefiting the country by keeping water where it serves the immediate needs of millions of people.”
- *The Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune* quoted Alan Townsend on the human-driven acceleration of the global nitrogen cycle: "Human activity has doubled the rate of formation of reactive nitrogen over natural rates on the land surfaces of the Earth. The change is recent and rapid, making accelerated nitrogen cycling one of the most immediate and consequential facets of global change."
- Bill Schlesinger provided expertise for a *Columbus Dispatch* article on the role of forests in climate change mitigation, pointing out that tree species vary in their potential for carbon sequestration. He highlighted the Southeastern pine’s year-round growing season, suggesting that it would absorb twice the carbon dioxide of other trees mentioned in the article.



➤ In October, Diana Wall and her research were featured in a *Nature* news story about soil biodiversity, and Richard Mack provided expertise for a *Seattle Times* piece on the travails of gardening without promoting invasive species.



➤ In a December *National Geographic News* article, Dee Boersma weighed in on the effects of climate change on penguin colonies, identifying anthropogenic changes in marine food webs—not climate change—as the most immediate threat to penguins.