



Ecological Society of America **Rapid Response Team Update**

Serving Society through Ecological Expertise

Fall 2008

Informing Congress

- This summer, Phil Robertson and Norm Christensen spoke at Ecological Society of America Capitol Hill briefings. Robertson participated in June's briefing, "The Sustainability of Cellulosic Biofuels,"



Phil Robertson at the "Sustainability of Cellulosic Biofuels" briefing

and also assisted ESA in developing a summary handout for the briefing, which was submitted with testimony to the Senate Agriculture committee in August 2008. Christensen spoke at July's briefing, "After the Fire: Approaches to Revitalizing Ecosystem Resources,"



Norm Christensen speaks at "After the Fire: Approaches to Revitalizing Ecosystem Resources"

Resources," which focused on the impact of human activities on fire behavior, and stressed that most fires do not require post-fire intervention, which can hurt rather than help forest management. Each briefing drew over 100 House and Senate congressional staff members, and both Robertson and Christensen met with their Congressional representatives to underscore the need for the continued funding of critical multidisciplinary research supported by federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the Department of Agriculture.

➤ Gary Lovett provided timely and critical input to environmental monitoring legislation proposed by Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD). Senator Cardin proposed the amendment as part of the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act of 2008. Although the bill died, it may act as a placeholder for the next Congress when it will be reintroduced.

Reaching Out

➤ The latest episode of ESA's policy podcast, *The Ecologist Goes to Washington*, features RRT member and former ESA Vice President for Public Affairs, Rich Pouyat, who talks about his work as a scientist and as a Congressional Fellow. In the interview, he discusses his experience at the interface between ecology and public policy, and provides a number of suggestions for ESA members interested in becoming more involved with ecological policy issues. Listen to this and other ESA podcasts at www.esa.org/podcast



In the Media

➤ Monica Turner was featured in an episode of Wisconsin Public Radio's *Here on Earth*, after receiving the ESA MacArthur Award. The hour-long broadcast centered on the theme of "When Nature and Culture Collide," a conversation that Turner informed with discussions of her own background in forest fire ecology, as well as the particularly relevant topic of flooding, both in New Orleans, Louisiana and in Gays Mills, Wisconsin. She informed the audience about her relatively new field of landscape ecology, and discussed possible solutions for future development and mitigation. Her interview succinctly and accessibly addresses the question of whether humans are at odds with nature, and is available at:



Monica Turner receives the MacArthur Award at the 2008 ESA annual meeting

<http://wpr.org/hereonearth/podcast/hereonearth080903k>

➤ Stan Temple assisted ESA by reviewing the Society's response (Op-Ed and Press Release) to the Bush Administration's proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act.

At the Annual Meeting

➤ At this year's meeting in Milwaukee, RRT members gathered for an annual luncheon where special guest speaker David Goldston discussed the intersection between science and public policy. Goldston, who is presently a Scholar in Residence at Princeton University, previously served as Staff Director of the House Committee on Science. He is also the author of a monthly column in *Nature*, "Party of One," which focuses on Congress and science policy. He spent much of his talk addressing the upcoming presidential election and what it meant for the field of ecology— he stressed that although both candidates have expressed their dedication to environmental topics, neither represents an immediate solution or "silver bullet." He encouraged members to get involved with ecological policy, while emphasizing that science usually plays but one part in policy decisions.



David Goldston speaks to RRT members at the Milwaukee meeting

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 new issues and areas where you would like to see action. Just drop an email to Piper Corp (piper@esa.org) or Nadine Lynn (Nadine@esa.org).