

NGRREC to Lead Outreach and Education Component of NSF Grant

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EAST ALTON, IL – The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRRECsm) has been chosen to lead the outreach and education component of a \$6 million grant awarded to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Civil and Environmental Engineering department.

Description automatically generated" v:shapes="Picture_x0020_7">The project, Critical Interface Network (CINet), is funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Its purpose is to study critical interfaces in the environment that affect the transport and transformation of materials such as water, sediment, carbon and nutrients.

NGRREC will receive \$375,000 over the next five years to provide educational and outreach services designed to educate the public on how to implement the study's findings.

Field Station/Special Projects Manager Ted Kratschmer stresses the importance of critical zone science.

“Advancing the fundamental understanding of critical zone science and developing new technologies for use in intensively managed landscapes create unique opportunities for long-term environmental and societal impact,” Kratschmer said. “Transforming these possibilities and changing sustainable action requires new approaches to informing public perceptions and changing human action.”

The CINet project will look at critical interfaces, which include the near-land surface, active root zone and river corridor, within intensively managed landscapes, such as large-scale agriculture, to determine how intensive management practices have contributed to a decline in soil health and other ecosystem functions.

“The idea is to study the effect of intensive management on the ecosystem and look for best practices to mitigate change and improve the overall health of the ecosystem,” Director of Environmental Education Sarah Fisher said.

NGRREC's management of the educational and outreach component will include several specific tasks including K-12 education programs, public outreach and stakeholder programs. The tasks will be comprehensively evaluated to measure participant impact, research integration, diversity and inclusion growth, scalability of the network platform and literacy of the public on critical zone science topics.

For more information about the educational and outreach programs offered through NGRREC, contact Fisher at (618) 468-2783 or saafisher@lc.edu.