

NGRREC Faculty Fellow Jim Best Presents Series on the Future of Big Rivers

September 22 2014 3:40 PM



GODFREY – National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?) Faculty Fellow Jim Best has organized an upcoming colloquium series entitled "The Future of Big Rivers: Form, Flux, Ecology and Management" that will bring leading big river researchers from around the globe to the campus of the University of Illinois.

Each presentation in the series will take place at 5 p.m. in Digital Computer Lab Room 1320 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“The big rivers of the world are undergoing dramatic change now and in the next few decades,” Best said. “It is thus vital we are in a position to better understand, predict and manage the form and functioning of such rivers. Some of the world’s biggest rivers, such as the Madeira in Brazil and Mekong in Southeast Asia are undergoing enormous changes due to new hydropower construction. Many other large rivers are faced with pressures forced by water abstraction and both increasing urbanization and industrialization, and even the rivers of the Arctic are seeing changes due to changing climate. All of this means we need a better, holistic, picture of how big rivers work, and this colloquium series will allow some of the world’s foremost researchers on Big Rivers to visit Illinois and NGRREC and present their ongoing work.”

The line-up for the colloquium series is:

Wednesday, Oct. 8, Professor Phil Ashworth of the University of Brighton, United Kingdom, will present "Why are the World's Big Rivers so Different?"

Tuesday, Nov. 11, Professor James Syvitski of the University of Colorado will present "New Possibilities in Monitoring and Modeling Hydrology and Sediment Transport for Global River Networks."

Thursday, Jan. 29, Professor Steven Goodbred, Jr., of Vanderbilt University will present "Constructing the Ganges-Brahmaputra Megadelta: From Process to Morphology to Stratigraphy."

Friday, March 13, Professor Matt Kondolf of the University of California Berkeley will present "The Mekong: Threats to a Unique Human-Ecosystem."

Thursday, April 30, Professor Andrew Nicholas of the University of Exeter, United Kingdom, will present "Computer Simulation of Large River Evolution."

NGRREC’s Faculty Fellows are helping to set the stage for ongoing learning, discovery and engagement at NGRREC, which is an innovative center for research, education and outreach located near the confluence of the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois rivers in East Alton, Illinois.

“I also strongly believe that any national center also needs to be international in its perspective and visibility, and hopefully this colloquium series will contribute toward further establishing NGRREC’s reputation and fostering understanding of big river processes between different large river basins around the globe,” Best said.

Best is a professor of Sedimentary Geology and a professor of Geography at the University of Illinois, and he also holds affiliate positions in Civil and Environmental

Engineering and Mechanical Science and Engineering. He is interested in studying the geomorphology, sedimentology, management and ecology of large rivers and has worked on the Parana, Paraguay, Brahmaputra, Mekong, Mississippi and Columbia Rivers.

Before coming to University of Illinois in 2006, Best obtained his doctorate from the University of London and held posts at the Universities of Hull and Leeds in the United Kingdom - the latter as lecturer, reader and then personal chair in Process Sedimentology. He also served as principal editor for the flagship journal Sedimentology from 1998 to 2002 and has been a participant on many research council and industrial committees.

Best has been awarded past fellowships from the Royal Society of London, Nuffield Foundation and Leverhulme Trust to advance his research, and he was also the recipient of the Warwick award from the British Geomorphological Research Group for outstanding contributions to geomorphological research.

Best's research spans from small-scale studies of turbulence, sediment transport and bedforms in the laboratory, to studies of the dynamics of contemporary large rivers, to the quantification of ancient alluvial stratigraphy and its role in resource development.

His current research projects include studying the megascours in the main rivers of Bangladesh; flow and sediment transport and bank erosion in the Mekong River; meander bend and cutoff dynamics in the Wabash River; the dynamics of large river confluences; and lacustrine density currents and deltaic processes.

Currently, he teaches courses on sedimentology and stratigraphy, big rivers of the world, alluvial boundary layer processes and deposits, advanced clastic sedimentology, and the geology of County Clare, Western Ireland.

The National Great Rivers Research and Education Center is a partnership of Lewis and Clark Community College, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Prairie Research Institute's Illinois Natural History Survey.

For more information on the series, email Best at jimbest@illinois.edu. For more information about NGRREC visit www.ngrrec.org.