

Geoscience Education Division

<http://gsaged.org/>

Winter/Spring 2006

From your Newsletter Editor

Greetings from sunny Florida! Please note the new web address for the Geoscience Education Division. The full story will follow below, but suffice it to say that our original web address was essentially snatched away and held for ransom by internet pirates! Thanks to Hugh Rance for quickly re-establishing our web presence at our new address: <http://gsaged.org/>.

As always, if you have any news items for the next GED newsletter (Summer 2006), send them to me at mhafen@cas.usf.edu.

Mark R. Hafen
Department of Geography, University of South Florida

GED Web Site Pirated!

From Hugh Rance, one of our stellar GED Web Managers:

Sorry to say that the Geoscience Education Division website was pirated by someone in India. However, I have established a new website URL which will be <http://gsaged.org>. I noticed that all correspondence is usually with GED as the reference, and so GSA GED is probably better than the cumbersome name the website had before. I received no warning from the URL Registrar that <http://geosciedu.org> was to expire in December, and thus was open to being pirated.

The new Registrar that I have is also the Provider of the website (1and1.com) and so pirating in the future will not be possible. I don't think the pirate will recoup his/her expense, as I do not have any intention of buying back the name, and I do not imagine that anyone will be too distressed with its loss.

I was going to suggest a URL name change to GSA GED anyway, but this was forced by the circumstances.

Hugh Rance
Queensborough (NY) Community College

Anti-Evolution Bills Reach Alabama Legislature

Two bills recently introduced into the Alabama legislature would, if enacted, affect Alabama science teachers in the K-12 public schools and public colleges and universities. This note is to provide information about the anti-evolution nature of HB 106 and SB 45, and to provide contact information for those who wish to inform their legislative representatives about their opinions on this bill. It would be particularly helpful for those who oppose this bill to also contact Scott Brande at sbrande@uab.edu. HB 106 and SB 45 are "stealth" creationist bills. The stated purpose of both HB 106 and SB 45, entitled the democratic-sounding "Academic Freedom Act," is to "...expressly provide rights and protection for teachers concerning scientific presentations on views and students concerning their positions on views." Such vague and innocuous language requires a more careful reading of the bills to discern its true purpose and the motivations of the sponsors, Rep. Scott Beason (51st district,

Jefferson) and Sen. “Walking” Wendell Mitchell (30th district, Autuga, Butler, Crenshaw, Elmore, Lowdnes, Pike).

The bill explicitly refers to *Edwards v. Aguillard*, a U.S. Supreme Court case which overturned a 1982 Louisiana creationism law. Although the Supreme Court decision banned the legislation mandating creationism into the classroom (when evolution was taught), both majority and minority opinions affirmed that teachers were free to teach science in the schools, including ideas critical of evolution, and any scientific alternatives. Beason and Mitchell apparently believe that these rights declared by *Edwards v. Aguillard* are not now widely respected in Alabama public schools and institutions of higher education. Similar bills were introduced in 2004 and 2005, but failed enactment. When asked about the need for the “Academic Freedom Act” in 2004, Sen. Mitchell was quoted by the *Montgomery Advertiser* (Feb. 18, 2004) as stating “I think there is a tremendous ill-balance in the classroom when you can't discuss all viewpoints. This bill will level the playing field because it allows a teacher to bring forward the biblical creation story of humankind.” But the Alabama bill does not explicitly identify creation in its text. However, its creationist influence is identified in appended keywords which include “Origins,” “Creationism,” and “Intelligent Design.” Today these are code words for anti-evolutionary information. It is clear from Sen. Mitchell’s comment, and the keywords, that the motivation behind these bills is to provide a vehicle for including creationism or some other religious, non-scientific instruction, such as Intelligent Design, in the public school science classroom.

The bill’s “protections” for teachers and students are not needed. HB 106 and SB 45 purport to protect teachers (K-12 and those in higher education in Alabama) from negative consequences if they discuss presently unprotected “scientific views.” “No K-12 public school teacher or teacher or instructor in any two-year or four-year public institution of higher education, or in any graduate or adult program thereof, in the State of Alabama, shall be terminated, disciplined, denied tenure, or otherwise discriminated against for presenting scientific information pertaining to the full range of scientific views in any curricula or course of learning...”. The protection of teachers against seemingly unfair disciplinary action or even dismissal is an important safeguard. HB 106 and SB 45 may be correct that protection from such actions in these particular circumstances (expression in the public school science classroom of “scientific views” critical of evolution) is not part of existing law. (It should also be noted that state legislative bodies do not typically consider bills that address content of specific courses in the public schools – that role in Alabama is normally left to the state board of education, which adopts curricula for the K-12 public school system developed by committees of employees of the department of education, outside experts, and lay persons). However, the bill is wrong to imply that the lack of existing legislative protection means that teachers are unprotected and subject to dismissal or disciplinary action due to their “scientific views” in the public school classroom.

For example, the UAB faculty handbook explicitly addresses protections that, for example, tenure brings to the faculty, and the narrow set of circumstances under which tenured faculty may be terminated. Faculty are “protected from arbitrary dismissal and from transient political and ideological currents...”. Further, faculty may only be terminated 1) for cause, 2) in cases of bona fide financial exigency or crisis, or 3) due to the closure of an academic unit. None of these circumstances are applicable to a UAB faculty member discussing allowable controversial issues in the classroom, including information against evolutionary theory. The UAB faculty handbook specifically notes that “Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.” As information critical of evolution would, for example, be directly related to a course in geology or biology, it would therefore be protected discussion under the UAB faculty handbook. Clearly, the types of protection HB 106 and SB 45 purport to provide are already embodied in protections provided in the UAB faculty handbook. Descriptions for circumstances of faculty dismissal at UAB (cause, financial exigency, academic unit closure) are identical to those advocated by the American Association of University Professor (AAUP) statement on faculty protections. A brief survey of other

colleges and universities demonstrates that the same three categories noted above are common components of policies for the dismissal of tenured faculty, including those at Auburn University, the University of Alabama, the University of Montevallo, and the University of South Alabama.

The protections of tenured teachers at institutions of higher learning offered by the Alabama bill are unnecessary. Anti-evolution bills HB 106 and SB 45 should not be enacted. Current Alabama anti-evolution bills HB 106 and SB 45 are bad legislation for the following reasons:

- “Stealth” creationism – The bills purport to be protective of controversial views (generally) in the science classroom. In fact, the specific target for protection in these bills is religion, embedded in creationism (and Intelligent Design), identified indirectly by reference to the U.S. Supreme Court case *Edwards v. Aguillard*, and explicitly by keywords appended to the bills: “Origins,” “Creationism,” “Intelligent Design.” The sponsors of these bills, Rep. Scott Beason and Sen. Wendell Mitchell, must think their deception would not be detected because most people would not read the text of the bills.
- Unnecessary protections – Teachers already possess the rights and protections these bills purport to provide. Teachers may discuss any relevant issue, including controversial ones such as those critical of evolutionary theory, as long as these alternatives are scientific.
- Intrusion into internal governance of schools and universities – Policies for the dismissal of teachers would in part be governed by state law if these bills were enacted. Schools, colleges and universities would thus lose a degree of internal control of their faculty.
- Lawsuits and legal expenses – Actions by anti-evolution proponents are targets for lawsuits. The Dover Area School Board lost its recent court battle in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, and the court found the board responsible for thousands of dollars in legal fees and expenses, funds that could have supported teachers and students in the public schools.
- Objectionable and controversial “scientific” controversies would be protected – As the bills seek to protect “...scientific information pertaining to the full range of scientific views in any curricula or course of learning”, these bills would provide protected classroom discussion of other published scientific controversies, such as the now-discredited conclusions about the association between IQ and race as advocated by Herrnstein and Murray in “The Bell Curve.”
- Time for classroom instruction is wasted – For the Alabama K-12 public education system, classroom content is partially driven by standardized exams, such as the Alabama high school graduation exam. Creationism, Intelligent Design, or other anti-evolution alternatives are not components of these exams. Time spent in the classroom on these anti-evolution issues diminishes time for instruction on tested areas, and thus could lead to lower student scores.
- Alabama bill is linked to national anti-evolution movement – Alabama’s bills are nearly identical in substance to HB 2107, a bill recently introduced in Oklahoma. Alabama’s anti-evolution legislation is part of a national effort to reduce the influence of evolution in the public school science classroom.

For these reasons and others, HB 106 and SB 45 are bad for all Alabama science teachers, from K-12 to higher education. Legislators listen to constituents. Telephone calls and personalized letters are very important and help legislators to decide their vote. If you wish to express your opinion on this issue, particularly if you live in one of the regions represented by these legislators, you should contact the bills sponsors: Sen. Mitchell at wmitchell@faulkner.edu, senate telephone-(334)242-7883, business telephone-(334) 244-1877; Mr. Beason at Box 31, Gardendale AL 35071; house telephone-(334)242-7720; work telephone-(205)631-4094, home telephone-(205)631-4094. It is particularly important for you to contact your representative. You may find your Alabama House representative by your zip code at: <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/house/house.html>, and your Alabama Senate representative at <http://www.legislature.state.al.us/senate/senate.html>.

Scott Brande
sbrande@uab.edu
University of Alabama – Birmingham

[*Editor's Note*: due to space considerations, I was unable to include the substantial list of web site references that Scott used for this piece. If you would like a copy of the full text piece, contact Scott at sbrande@uab.edu.]

Urban Geology for K-12 Teachers at GSA 2006

We need everyone's help on this. As some of you are already aware, we are planning a one-day combination field trip and workshop for K-12 teachers at the GSA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia this October. The planned focus is Urban Geology and Building Materials. This can be a wonderful opportunity to spread the good (geology) news to children by sharing a day with their teachers. There are several people working on this, but most of us are geographically far removed from the Philadelphia area. We need some contact people in the Philadelphia area to help us pull everything together and to spread the word to the local K-12 teachers. We also need people who are not in the Philadelphia area to help us gather some excellent introductory-level activities that deal with urban geology and building materials so that we can share them with the K-12 teachers. The teachers are usually great at adapting these ideas for the appropriate age levels, and they may teach us a thing or two about getting novel ways to get the basic concepts across!

I am the contact person for this project, so please email me at bccooper@purdue.edu with your ideas and to offer your help. It is up to us to help spark the interest in geology for the next generation!

Barbara Cooper,
Purdue University

GIS in GED at GSA in Philly

Rich Schultz (Elmhurst College) and Mark Hafen (University of South Florida) are organizing Topical Session Number 132 for the technical program at GSA 2006 in Philadelphia, entitled "A Visual Showcase for Diverse GIS Applications: A Cornucopia of Case Studies."

This interdisciplinary session, emphasizing the diverse applications of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), showcases broad applications for GIS and creates an awareness for the infusion of spatial concepts across the geosciences from the perspective of both professional and academician. This session strives to present the various applications of GIS in problem-solving across a variety of disciplines in the geosciences, as well as the development of GIS training applications in Geoscience Education. Both professionals and educators are welcome to share in the cross-fertilization of GIS applications.

The due date for electronic abstracts is July 11. The electronic submission form will be available on GSA's Web site <http://www.geosociety.org> April 1 through July 11. GED members are especially encouraged to submit their papers to this special session.

The co-conveners are currently seeking sponsors for the session, as well as suggestions for invited speakers. Contact Rich Schultz at richs@elmhurst.edu or Mark Hafen at mhafen@cas.usf.edu for more information.

Rich Schultz, Elmhurst College
Mark Hafen, USF

GEOINFORMATICS Conference

On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I would like to invite you to participate in the upcoming GEOINFORMATICS 2006 Conference to be held at the U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, VA, May 10-12, 2006. The meeting provides a forum for presentation of research data and models that deal with the broad theme of cyberinfrastructure for earth and planetary sciences. We encourage researchers in earth and planetary sciences, as well as information technology and computer sciences to share new theories and applications that emphasize management, discovery and semantic integration of data resources, as well as development of tools and software to facilitate visualization, modeling and new computational techniques. Please visit <http://www.geongrid.org/geoinformatics2006/> for registration, abstract submission and lodging information.

This conference is hosted by U.S. Geological Survey and GEON (NSF), and sponsored by National Science Foundation (NSF), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Geological Society of America (GSA), and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI)

You will also be pleased to know that a new Geological Society of America publication on Geoinformatics is now available at <http://rock.geosociety.org/bookstore/default.asp?oID=0&catID=9&pID=SPE397>; it presents the research activities of the broader Geoinformatics Community.

Organizing Committee:

Margaret Banton, Chair; San Diego Super Computer Center, mbanton@sdsc.edu

Linda Gundersen, U.S. Geological Survey, Reston, lgundersen@usgs.gov

A. Krishna Sinha, Virginia Tech, pitlab@vt.edu

A. Krishna Sinha
Virginia Tech

Earthquake Workshop for Teachers

A one-day workshop for teachers in grades 5-12 on earthquakes will be held in conjunction with the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) convention this spring, in Anaheim, California. Teachers will learn about earthquakes, seismology and plate tectonics with visiting seismologists, participate in hands-on activities that easily transfer to the classroom, and obtain free materials, maps, curriculum guides, and books.

Partial travel support is provided to cover the cost of an extra day at NSTA. This workshop takes place April 5, 2006, and is being offered by the Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS) Consortium with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF). For further information or to apply, please visit <http://www.iris.edu/edu/DEVcalendar.htm> or contact Michael Hubenthal, Education Specialist (hubenth@iris.edu)

Michael Hubenthal
IRIS Consortium

GED Sponsors Guest Speaker at NSTA

The Geoscience Education Division is sponsoring guest speaker Dr. Rosaly M.C. Lopes at the upcoming National Science Teachers Association meeting in Anaheim, California. Dr. Lopes, principal scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, will speak on "Planetary Volcanoes through the Eyes of a Scientist" at NESTA's Earth and Space Science Resource Day Breakfast. The breakfast, which takes place on Saturday, April 8, 7:00-8:30 am, is ticketed (\$25/person) and registration forms must be submitted by **March 25, 2006**.

Registration forms: <http://www.nestanet.org/nsta/Bfstreg.pdf>

Information: <http://www.nestanet.org/>

Dr. Rosaly Lopes is a Principal Scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Lead Scientist for the Geophysics and Planetary Geosciences Group, and Investigation Scientist for the Cassini Titan Radar Mapper. Rosaly started working in volcanology while a graduate student in London, England, and has traveled to many of the world's most fascinating volcanoes. Her work on planetary volcanism has included Mars, Io, and Titan. She worked for several years on the Galileo mission studying the active volcanoes of Jupiter's moon Io, where she discovered 71 new active volcanoes, resulting in a mention in the 2006 Guinness Book of World Records. She currently works on the Cassini mission studying ice volcanism on Titan, Saturn's largest moon. She has written numerous academic papers, as well as popular-level publications. She is the editor of "Volcanic Worlds: Exploring the Solar System Volcanoes" (Praxis-Springer, 2004) and author of "The Volcano Adventure Guide" (Cambridge University Press, 2005), the first travel guidebook to volcanoes. She is a member of several scientific societies and a Fellow of the Explorers Club. In 2005 she was awarded the Carl Sagan Medal by the Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society for her efforts in communicating science to the public.

David Mayo, Chair GED
California State University-Los Angeles

New Movement in Mathematical Geology

In the Summer 2004, Abani Samal initiated a student chapter of "International Association for Mathematical Geology" <www.iamg.org> in the Geology Department of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale (SIUC). The IAMG chapter is now a registered student organization (RSO) on the SIUC campus.

They were recognized as "the first IAMG student chapter." Following them, a second student chapter was begun in China. Now three more chapters are under consideration by the IAMG council. The members of the chapter are working towards promoting computational methods in geoscientific research. Certainly, they have started a new movement in scientific research: promoting students' participation in mathematical geology.

Last year, Abani was invited to join as a member of the IAMG student affairs committee. He is serving as a member of the committee for the term 2005-2008.

The chapter also received financial assistance for the academic year 2005-2006 for supporting some of the chapter activities and research activities on the SIUC campus. The chapter will support part of student travel expenses if the student presents his/her research (on computational techniques in geosciences) in national/ international conferences. The chapter also hosted IAMG distinguished lectures over the last three years, including Dr. Lawrence Drew from USGS, Reston in 2005.

For any questions, please contact Abani R. Samal at arsamal@yahoo.com. Visit the chapter's website at www.siu.edu/~er&p/IAMG/.

Abani R. Samal
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

Report on Two Earth2Class Workshops for Teachers

2nd New York State Earth Science Teachers Conference

Twenty-four educators gathered at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) of Columbia University from 29-31 July to begin development of exemplary middle and high school curriculum units as part of the 2nd New York State Earth

Science Teachers Conference. Their goal is to create a resource that will succinctly provide lists of key ideas, science education standards, critical vocabulary terms, examples of hands-on activities and investigations, and pertinent Internet resources. When completed, the guides will be available through the Earth2Class website, www.earth2class.org.

Dr. Michael Purdy, LDEO Director, provided the keynote address dealing with the necessity for research scientists and classroom teachers to interact effectively in order to create a future educated electorate. He described the benefits investigators gain from working with teachers, as well as the new ideas for lessons teachers get from meeting scientists.

Conference participants also enjoyed three field experiences. One involved a walk through the forest on the Palisades, NY, campus, overlooking the Hudson River. A "virtual walk" is available at <http://www.earth2class.org/virtualtour/>. A second allowed participants to look at the area from a different perspective – from a kayak on the Hudson. More about this is available at <http://www.earth2class.org/virtualtour/sparkill/sparkillrev.php>. On the last day of the meeting, LDEO scientist Dr. Kim Kastens provided a cross-county tour that focused not on "Here's what you see," but rather on "What do you see here?" By the end of the five stops, participants combined what they had observed and interpreted to develop their understanding of the region's geologic history.

This meeting built on ideas that emerged at the 1st NYS Earth Science Teachers Conference about how to provide greater support for classroom teachers. It received partial support from NSF Geoscience Education grant 0331232 to the Earth2Class Workshops for Teachers. For more information: <http://www.earth2class.org/er/conferences/2nysestc.php>.

Teachers and Scientists Collaborate on Gas Blowout Learning Materials

A dozen classroom teachers met with Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO) scientists to learn about the nature and hazards of gas blowouts on the continental margin, then developed curriculum activities for middle and high school science courses based on the discoveries. The two-day workshop was sponsored by NSF Award 0242426 for "Collaborative Research: An AUV Investigation of Fluid Expulsion (Past and Present) in the Large-scale Elongated Gas Blowouts, Offshore Virginia/North Carolina."

The teachers came from New York and New Jersey schools to hear from the co-PIs, Dr. Jeffrey Weissel and Dr. Marie-Helene Cormier, and Columbia grad student Kori Newman, about their investigations aboard the R/V "Hatteras." Then, working with Dr. Michael J. Passow of the Earth2Class Workshops for Teachers program at LDEO, the educators produced four classroom activity units that can bring the scientists' discoveries to a wider audience. These will eventually be available through www.earth2class.org.

Michael Passow

Michael@Earth2Class.org

Hit the Wall!

I re-designed my Stone Wall Education web page. Seems as if the demand by teachers/school systems is picking up. The web site can be found at: <http://stonewall.uconn.edu/Education.htm>

The section on middle and high school education would be of interest to geologists to share with other teachers: <http://stonewall.uconn.edu/InvWall-Intro.htm>

The Stone Wall Initiative promotes the appreciation, investigation, and conservation of stone walls in New England. Though modern rebuilt walls are important, the SWI emphasizes the cultural, natural, and aesthetic resources provided by historic walls, which are the closest thing New England has to classical ruins.

Robert Thorson
University of Connecticut

Honoring Women Geoscientists

Is there a women geoscientist professor who made a difference in your life? Please take the time to honor her by nominating her for the **2006 AWG Outstanding Educator Award**.

The Association for Women Geoscientists (AWG) established the Outstanding Educator Award in 1988 to honor well-established college or university teachers who have played a significant role in the education and support of women geoscientists, both within and outside the classroom. Examples of support include encouraging women to enter and continue in a geoscience career, providing opportunities for field and laboratory experience, and serving as a positive role model. In addition, awardees are selected on the basis of their contributions as professionals, involvement with professional societies or groups, and/or participation in science education programs in their community. **Deadline for nominations is April 1, 2006.**

Nominations must include: 1) a nominating letter, 2) a current vitae, and 3) at least six letters of recommendation from professional colleagues, former students, and current students. Send nominations and supporting material to the Chair of the AWG Outstanding Educator Award selection committee:

Suzanne O'Connell
Dept. of Earth and Environmental Sciences
Wesleyan University
265 Church St.
Middletown, CT 06459
E-Mail: soconnell@wesleyan.edu

The AWGF presents the Outstanding Educator Award at the AWG Breakfast held during the annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America. Previous recipients are Maria Luisa Crawford (1988), Sharon Mosher (1990); Laurie Brown (1991), the late Marie Morisawa (1992), Margaret Delaney (1993), B. Charlotte Schreiber (1994), Mary Savina (1995), Linda Abriola (1996), Lisa Pratt (1997), Jan Tullis (1998), Pamela Hallock-Muller (1999), Suzanne O'Connell (2000), Judith Schiebout (2001), Gail Ashley (2002), Patricia Kelley (2003), Patricia Manley (2004), and Molly Miller (2005)

Suzanne O'Connell
Wesleyan University

NSF Is Looking for Your Input!

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is working on the development of its 2006-2007 strategic plan. In December 2005, Drs. Arden Bement and Kathie Olsen, respectively the Director and Deputy Director of NSF, sent a letter to the S&E community. NSF is asking the broad communities we serve to provide their input on two key questions:

- 1. Does NSF's current Strategic Plan effectively communicate NSF's roles and responsibilities as part of the science and engineering (S&E) community? If not, what is lacking and how can the next plan be improved?*
- 2. What broad characteristics of the near- and long-term environment for S&E research and education should NSF consider and address in its next Strategic Plan?*

The letter was distributed through MyNSF (formerly the Custom News Service). Groups covering NSF's major constituencies were informed and a link to the letter appeared on the NSF Homepage. The NSF document (formal letter) is at www.nsf.gov (NSF 06-009). The current strategic plan is NSF 04-201 (there is a link in the letter).

There will be additional opportunities for staff, Advisory Committee, and direct community input as we work toward completing the Strategic Plan by September 30, 2006.

The GSA Education community will want to participate in the opportunity to communicate with NSF leadership on the Strategic Plan and the role of NSF in S&E (education).

Marilyn J. Suiter
National Science Foundation

Cochise Web Site Continues to Expand

The Cochise College Geology Instructional Resources website continues to expand. The purpose of the website is to provide free Internet resources in the following areas: physical geology, historical geology, planetary geology, and gemstones. Over 1000 new photographs have been added to the collection this past year, bringing the total to more than 5400 copyright free illustrations available to students and instructors in the areas of rocks, minerals, fossils, gemstones, crystal models, meteorites, and virtual geology field trips. There are also over 10,000 organized geology links plus an illustrated physical geology vocabulary.

Some of the newest attractions include a large collection of rock photos (which appear to be the most popular web pages) and a collection of photos of geologic features on the island of Maui. Also being added this month are at least 200 photos of fossils and gems from the Tucson gem and mineral shows. Photos of an outstanding 1995 carat Australian fire opal are a highlight. Dozens of web pages created by Cochise College students over a wide variety of geological topics have also been added to this rapidly growing website. This website is becoming an encyclopedia of geology.

The website is located at <http://skywalker.cochise.edu/wellerr/aawellerweb.htm>. If this is too much to remember, just use Google to search for "Cochise Geology." The Cochise College geology website will be the first or second listing that pops up.

If you have a photo or link that you would like to add to the collection, please send an email to Roger Weller at wellerr@cochise.edu for more information. Credits will be posted at the bottom of each photograph.

Roger Weller
Cochise College

UN Declares 2008 “International Year of Planet Earth”

Dear Colleague,

It is my great pleasure to announce that the General Assembly of the United Nations, at its Plenary Session of 22nd of December 2005, proclaimed 2008 as the UN Year of Planet Earth by consensus. This UN Year is the core year of the 2007-2009 triennium during which the International Year of Planet Earth (Earth Science for Society) will operate. This will be the first ever UN Year for the Earth Sciences.

The Press Release issued by the UN, is reproduced below.

"By a draft on the International Year of Planet Earth, 2008, which the Committee approved without a vote on 11 November, the Assembly would declare 2008 the International Year of Planet Earth. It would also designate the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to organize activities to be undertaken during the Year, in collaboration with UNEP and other relevant United Nations bodies, the International Union of Geological Sciences and other Earth sciences societies and groups throughout the world. Also by that draft, the Assembly would encourage Member States, the United Nations system and other actors to use the Year to increase awareness of the importance of Earth sciences in achieving sustainable development and promoting local, national, regional and international action."

The International Year of Planet Earth aims to demonstrate the great achievements made in the geosciences and to urge politicians and decision-makers to apply such knowledge for the benefit of humankind. Now that this IUGS and UNESCO initiative has collected the political support of 191 UN member countries, our fund-raising campaign will begin with approaches to a broad sweep of the private sector including extraction industries, governments, foundations, insurance companies, banks et cetera.

The International Year of Planet Earth will soon be incorporated as a legal entity with tax exempt status for donations. It will consist of a Board of Stakeholders (IUGS, UNESCO, Chairs of the Outreach, Science and Development Committees, Founding Partners, Sponsors, donors and regional representatives) and a Secretariat.

The Secretariat will be outsourced, and the call for proposals will be open until 15th of April 2006. We invite all professional geoscientific and other qualified bodies to consider hosting the International Year's Secretariat. For more details, please go to the Year's website:

<http://www.yearofplanetearth.org/tender.htm>

National implementation of the Year of Planet Earth is essential for its success. We kindly invite all of you to approach your national IUGS representative, UNESCO Commission, or any other relevant geoscience body in your country to start preparations for your own national Year of Planet Earth in connection and cooperation with the International Year's Secretariat. For that purpose you may wish to select 2007, 2008 or 2009, as best suits your national needs. As the preparation for UN proclamation and promotion of the International Year has been the joint responsibility of IUGS and UNESCO and of the Founding Partners, we propose that representatives of these bodies be included in your National Committee. In order to maximize advantages to be gained from the International activities and the services provided by the international Secretariat of the Year's Corporation, as well as adding an international dimension and outreach component to your national activities, we propose to formalize such relations through written agreements. Suggestions for developing national committees for the Year of Planet Earth can be downloaded from the Year's website: www.yearofplanetearth.org.

Calls are open now for submitting international project proposals on the outreach program and on selected science themes. Again, please go to our website for downloading Expression of Interest forms and submit these to the (IUGS) Secretariat.

Finally, I invite you to 'spread the word' about this major global event in the history of the Earth Sciences; never before have all nations of the world explicitly invited our geoscience communities to convey their knowledge to society with a view to having decision-makers and governments make use of that knowledge for the benefit of all humankind. Let us work hard together to ensure that this unique triennium will be the greatest (geo)show on Earth!

With my kind regards,

Eduardo F.J. de Mulder
Chair of the Management Team of the International Year of Planet Earth
Past-President IUGS
<http://www.yearofplanetearth.org/proclamation.htm>

This item provided by:
Heather L. Petcovic, First Vice-Chair GED
Western Michigan University

Alaskan Volcano Providing Teachable Moments

Every so often, nature offers educators an instant when nature and science combine to capture the attention of our students, a truly "teachable moment." The recent activity on Augustine Volcano in Alaska's Cook Inlet is one such moment. Scientists used earthquake data from local seismometers and improved GPS data from EarthScope Project stations on the island to detect the changes presaging the subsequent eruptions. EarthScope has tried to capture the excitement of the recent eruptions in a flyer aimed at middle school students.

The Augustine flyer takes the systems approach of examining the plate tectonics process through the lens of the event that created the teachable moment, and is flexible enough to fit into most earth science lesson plans. This flyer includes information on the Alaska Volcano Observatory's recent change of their Level of Concern for Augustine Volcano to red, indicating an active eruption. Topics covered in the flyer include eruption precursors, comparison of volcano characteristics, evidence linking plate tectonics to volcanoes, and deep time. Information on how the flyer fits into the National Science Education Standards is given on the Teachable Moments page:

<http://earthscope.org/education/tm/>.

The flyer itself is downloadable as a 1.2 Mb pdf: <http://earthscope.org/education/tm/TM1.pdf>.

John DeLaughter
EarthScope
www.earthscope.org

Cordilleran Section Meeting in The Last Frontier

The GSA Cordilleran Section Meeting will be held in Anchorage, Alaska on May 6-11, 2006.

A Short Course that will be offered:

Alaska's Volcanoes, Earthquakes, and Subduction Zone-Real-Time Earthly Data for Classroom Use.
Sponsored by National Association of Geoscience Teachers. For more information, contact Jennifer Adleman, U.S. Geological Survey-Alaska Volcano Observatory, 907-786-7019, 4200 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508,

USA; or Cathy Connor, University of Alaska-Southeast, 907-796-6293.

One theme session that will be of particular interest to GED members is:

Geoscience Education and Public Outreach in Alaska-Unique Problems, Unique Solutions. For more information, contact Catherine L. Hanks, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, chanks@gi.alaska.edu, 907-474-5562.

<http://www.geosociety.org/sectdiv/cord/06cdmtg.htm#thm>

Cathy Connor

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Geology in Da House

Mike Phillips, (D-Lostant, IL), has filed to seek the Democratic nomination for Illinois State Representative in the 106th House District. Phillips holds BS ('86) and MS ('90) degrees in Geology from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Phillips is a licensed professional Geologist in Illinois and is a member of the Geological Society of America (GSA), the American Geological Institute, and the National Association of Geoscience Teachers.

From 1989 through 1997, Phillips worked as an environmental geologist for several private consulting firms and for the Illinois State Geological Survey. Currently, Mike teaches Geology at Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) in Oglesby.

“I began teaching to help increase awareness of Earth’s processes and resources. My focus has grown to include developing students’ abilities to make intelligent, informed decisions. The Earth is comprised of complex systems that interact on multiple levels, and geologists learn to make decisions in the face of that complexity. Those reasoning skills are very important and translate well into other areas.”

Phillips is a member of GSA’s new Geology and Society Division (as well as GED and QG&G) and believes that scientists need to become more politically active. In 2002, Mike began coordinating a voter registration and education drive at IVCC. In 2003, he was elected to the Lostant, Illinois, School Board and now serves as the Board President.

“I think that the perspectives I bring, as a geoscientist and educator, provide something that we too rarely find among our political decision-makers. As a scientist, I hope to bring some rationality to the table. As an educator, I want to promote the importance of a good science education to the future of Illinois and the nation. In both roles, I will be able to take issues ranging from the environment to evolution to resource extraction and translate them into a form more easily understood by my fellow legislators.”

The 106th District is currently represented by Keith Sommer (R-Morton, IL) and covers a large portion of central Illinois. Mike is unopposed in the Democratic primary and will face Mr. Sommer in the November General Election. Anyone interested in finding out more can visit Mike’s campaign web site at www.phillipsforhouse.com.

Mike Phillips

Illinois Valley Community College
