

TEXAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY -  
SAN MARCOS

DEPARTMENT  
OF GEOGRAPHY

TEXAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
SAN MARCOS  
*The rising STAR of Texas*



# GeoNews

Volume 16, Issue 1

Fall 2009

## James and Marilyn Lovell Center Hosts International Flash Flood Laboratory Workshop



Submitted by Pam Showalter

The James and Marilyn Lovell Center for Environmental Geography and Hazards Research “launched” the International Flash Flood Laboratory (IFFL) via an on-campus inaugural workshop Monday, October 19, 2009. In addition to the Lovell Center, the workshop was internally supported by the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Geography, the River Systems Institute, the Texas Center for Geographic Information Science, and Gamma Theta Upsilon. (A special “Thank You” goes to our Breakout Group facilitators - Kevin Barrett, Denise Blanchard, Terry Colgan, and Hector Guerrero, as well as the students who assisted them - David Hickman, Eric Samson, Susan Street, and Jason Vickery. We also appreciate the many students who generously volunteered their time throughout the day.) The workshop also attracted major external sponsorship from the following:

Sutron Corporation (stream gauging, weather monitoring, and flood warning systems), High Sierra Electronics, Inc. (hydrological monitoring systems and meteorological instruments), Half Associates, Inc. (flood warning systems, stormwater, and floodplain management), and Texas A&M’s Texas Spatial Reference Center (dedicated to improving our understanding of Texas’ elevation, geodetic, and vertical datums).

Annually, the James and Marilyn Lovell Center hosts the Lovell Center Distinguished Lecture. This year, in honor of the IFFL’s inception, the Lecture served as the keynote address, was used to launch the workshop’s activities, and included introductory remarks by the President of Texas State University, Dr. Denise Trauth. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Eve Gruntfest, a widely published and internationally recognized expert in warning systems, flash floods, and the challenge of integrating the social and atmospheric sciences. Gruntfest was presented the 2009 Kenneth E. Spengler Award from the American Meteorological Society, and is currently Chair of Societal Impacts on the American Meteorological Society’s Board and Director of Social Science

Woven into Meteorology (SSWIM) at the National Weather Center in Norman, Oklahoma. Some of her numerous accomplishments include: research scientist at the National Center or Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado; founder and co-Director of the “WAS\* IS” (Weather and  
*(continued on page 2)*



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## Greetings from the Chair... Dr. Philip Suckling, Professor and Chair

The Texas State Geography Program has passed another milestone this Fall. For the first time, we have over 600 undergraduate geography majors! This is an increase of about 100 majors over last Fall's total. For several decades now, the Department has hosted the largest number of undergraduate geography majors in the nation. Obviously, the outstanding reputation of the program continues to attract more and more students to our major degree programs.

Increased interest in our programs is not confined to the undergraduate majors. This semester, we have almost 200 graduate students, including a record 72 enrolled in our PhD programs. Our graduate enrollment is up by 22% over last year (while university-wide graduate enrollment is up 12%). Of the 72 enrolled PhD students, a record 42 are full-time in-residence on assistantship support. Given that we provide "office" space for each graduate assistant, we had a big challenge last August to find the space needed to house all of our graduate assistants. Ten new cubicles were created in a room formerly used as meeting/research space. This kind of administrative

problem is just fine with me since it reflects the strength of our program! (By the way, space is a critical issue throughout the university—for Geography, some relief is on the drawing boards, but this is about three years down the road.)

We welcome three new faculty members to the department this Fall—these new colleagues are highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter. I am pleased to report that the Department has been granted a new faculty line effective Fall 2010. Ms. Nikki Williams, who is a specialist in the rapidly emerging field of medical/health geography, recently accepted our offer for this position as a new Assistant Professor. Nikki, who will join us next August, is currently in the final stages of completing her PhD dissertation at Texas A&M University. Ms. Williams will be the first African-American faculty member in the history of the department.

It is hard to believe that I have now started my fifth year as Chair of this department. Last Spring, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts conducted the required four-year summative review of my chairship. As a required part of the review, the Dean met with the tenured faculty members to solicit a formal secret-ballot vote regarding whether they supported my reappointment as Chair. I am deeply grateful for the unanimous vote in favor of my reappointment, as well as the additional motion, reported to me by Dean Ellis and also passed unanimously, expressing "appreciation and encouragement to Dr. Suckling." I look forward to continuing to provide stewardship for this amazing department!

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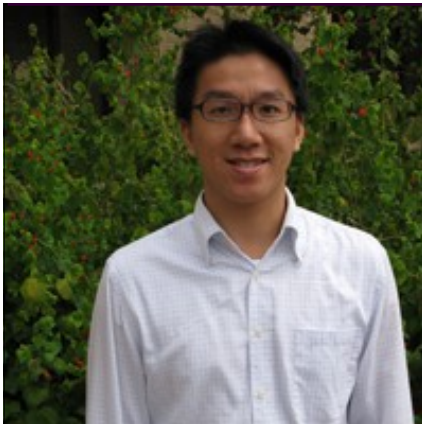
## IFFL Workshop (continued from page 1)

Society Integrated Studies) movement ([www.sip.ucar.edu/wasis](http://www.sip.ucar.edu/wasis)); recipient of National Science Foundation funding to evaluate warnings for short-fuse weather events; Fulbright Scholar at the University of Trieste, Italy; co-editor of *Coping with Flash Floods* (Kluwer 2000); organizer of the 1998 NATO Advanced Studies Institute in Ravello, Italy, on which *Coping with Flash Floods* is based; invited senior scholar at the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, and Associate Editor for the *Journal of Flood Risk Management*. Dr. Gruntfest originated the concept of creating the IFFL, and has agreed to serve as co-Director of the laboratory.

Workshop attendees represented a wide variety of organizations and agencies from local/regional/state/national and international levels, meeting the event's goal of building the IFFL "from the bottom up" via participants' observations and experiences. After Dr. Gruntfest delivered her lecture ("Hydro-Socio-Meteoro-logy: Essential Elements for Flash Flood Mitigation and Research"), workshop participants spent the day determining what the laboratory's "first steps" should be to meet the common goal of reducing flash flood fatalities and property losses.

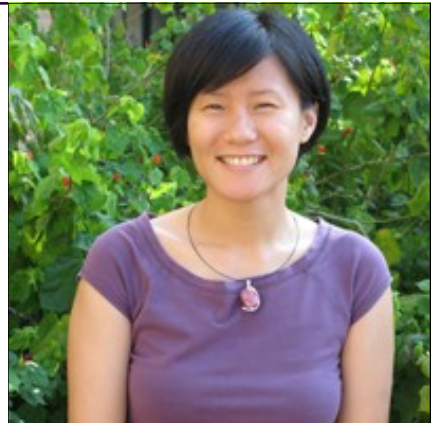
A formal synopsis of the workshop's findings is under development, and will be posted on the IFFL webpage (<http://www.geo.txstate.edu/lovell/IFFL/Workshop.html>) as soon as it is available. Until then, the basic conclusion by day's end was that there is a pressing need for coordinated flash flood "Data/Research/Communication." We (IFFL co-founders Gruntfest, Showalter, and Ruin—see main IFFL page at <http://www.geo.txstate.edu/lovell/IFFL.html>), spent the day following the workshop discussing different approaches to tackling the data/research/education "directive" and have begun communicating participants' observations to individuals and agencies who may be able to assist in achieving these goals. We're extremely grateful to all who attended the workshop to share insights and offer suggestions that will ultimately serve to improve the "flash flood community's" ability to effectively address these events.

## Geography Welcomes Three New Assistant Professors to the Department



Dr. T. Edwin Chow was born and raised in Hong Kong. He came to the U.S. in order to study abroad and began studying geography, which would remain his focus in all of his subsequent degrees. He earned a B.S. from the University of Texas, and then went on to earn his M.S. and PhD from the University of South Carolina. Upon completion of his dissertation, he joined the faculty in the Department of Earth and Resource Science at the University of Michigan - Flint for four years. As a Texas Longhorn alumni, he is excited to be back in Texas and brings with him his expertise in Geographic Information Science (and a few cold breezes from up North!). Dr. Chow's research interests include scale, lidar, hydrologic modeling, and Internet GIS. He enjoys soccer, hiking, and traveling and is the father of a six month old child.

Dr. Niem Huynh is of Chinese descent, born in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly known as Saigon), Viet Nam. Due to the political unrest, her family departed and was kindly accepted by Canada. She grew up in Toronto, Ontario, and enjoyed a multicultural atmosphere. In her undergraduate studies, she trained to become a high school geography and biology teacher, but graduate school changed her life course. Her research interests stem from inspirational teaching moments in the classroom. Currently, Dr. Huynh is excited to explore geography learning (e.g., what geospatial concepts should be taught when and how) and the process of problem solving with technology (GIS). A secondary research interest has roots from her Master's thesis, how cognitive processing might be illuminated by sequence of analysis of sketch map creation.



Dr. Jennifer Jensen, originally from Sacramento, California, began her academic career with the intention of becoming a Forester. However, after becoming completely absorbed in a GIS course toward the end of her undergraduate education, she decided to pursue a graduate degree in Geography. During her M.S. coursework and thesis research, two pivotal things occurred. First, she was exposed to satellite-based remote sensing, and second, she had the opportunity to teach undergraduate physical geography labs. The combined exposure motivated Dr. Jensen to continue on to earn a PhD at the University of Idaho so she could pursue a rewarding academic career that involves continued learning, teaching, and remote sensing-based interdisciplinary research.

### National Council for Geographic Education to Host 2012 Conference in San Marcos

**Dr. Richard Boehm** has received word that the National Council for Geographic Education has accepted the Texas State University Department of Geography's offer to host the 2012 NCGE annual meeting in San Marcos, TX. The meeting will be held in early October. Thank you to **Dr. Boehm** and his collaborators for their efforts in securing this honor for the Department!



## Drs. Stroup and Romig Attend AWRA Conference in Alaska

*Submitted by Dr. Kevin Romig*

In May 2009, Dr. Laura Stroup and Dr. Kevin Romig attended the American Water Resources Association Spring Specialty Conference entitled “Managing Water Resources and Development in a Changing Climate.” The conference was held in Anchorage, Alaska. They presented a paper based on their funded research on the potential of resilient management of regional water supply utilities in the Austin-San Antonio corridor. The research engages the dualistic challenges of climatic variability and rapid population growth within a semi-arid region, and their presentation was one of the few social, environmental science papers within a conference largely attended by scientists, water engineers, and planners.

While the conference was held in downtown Anchorage, Kevin and Laura acted as any good geographer should and, with the additional company of Kevin’s spouse, Julie, explored other parts of Alaska—specifically the Kenai Peninsula. While in Homer, the three chartered a boat to view wildlife diversity in Kachemak Bay, particularly for puffin viewing. A few puffins were visible, but the Bald Eagle population was astounding. The boat captain spoke of Bald Eagles like many Central Texans do of Black Vultures or other carnivorous scavengers! The trio also attended a museum exhibit in Homer dedicated to the Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989. While much of the visible environmental damage has faded, the Prince William Sound ecosystem and economy has been forever altered. The group experienced climate change first hand in Seward, as they witnessed evidence of Exit Glacier retreating. While driving along the Kenai Peninsula, they were often within sight of Mt. Redoubt as it was spewing volcanic ash. This trio offered the opportunity to share important environmental research from our department and also gave two of our Assistant Professors a chance to visit Alaska for the first time and gather information about Alaskan geographic processes and landscapes.



### Dr. Butler Invited to Switzerland, Serves on Swiss Dissertation Committee

*Submitted by Dr. David Butler*

Dr. David Butler traveled to Switzerland in August 2009 upon invitation from the Department of Geosciences, Geography at the University of Fribourg. He was invited to serve on the dissertation committee of Dominique Schneuwly, whose defense examined the use of tree-ring analysis for reconstructing rockfall hazard chronologies in the canton of Valais. Dr. Butler was hosted by Dr. Markus Stoffel, formerly of the University of Fribourg and now of the University of Bern. Stoffel accompanied both Dr. Butler and the newly minted Dr. Schneuwly on a two day field trip to the Valais Alps region, where they examined some of Dr. Schneuwly’s field sites and several locations where natural hazards pose significant impact on the Swiss landscape. They

also visited the Eddishorn, with its panoramic view of the Aletschgletscher (Aletsch glacier). At 24 kilometers, this glacier is the longest in the Alps and has undergone significant recession due to climatic warming in the past several decades.

Dr. Butler was accompanied on the trip by his wife, Dr. Janet Butler of the Texas State Department of Accounting. After their Swiss experience, the Drs. Butler traveled via train from Bern to Paris, where they spent the week “seeing the sites.” They ended their trip just in time to return to Texas State and prepare for the start of the fall semester.



## Congratulations to Geography Faculty!

Geography is proud of the hard work and dedication put forth by its faculty, and these awards and accomplishments are a testament to their success.



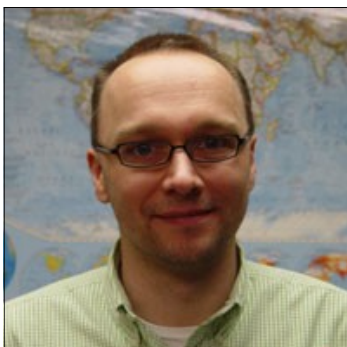
**Dr. Byron "Doc" Augustin** was one of the recipients of the Mariel M. Muir Excellence in Mentoring Awards for 2009. Each year, the award is given to one faculty member and one staff member who provide exceptional support and commitment to individuals with less experience in order to strengthen their abilities in their professional and academic endeavors.



**Dr. Brock Brown** was promoted to full Professor on September 1, 2009. He has also been named one of the two newest Center Scholars for the James and Marilyn Lovell Center for Environmental Geography and Hazards Research.



**Dr. Lawrence Estaville** and **Angelika Wahl**, Staff Council President and Geography staff member, accepted the 2009 National Marrow Donor Program's Collegiate Award on behalf of the Cancer Awareness Month and Community Outreach Committee for its 3,240 marrow donor registrants. Texas State was honored for having the largest number of registrants ever in a two-year period on a university campus in the U.S.



**Dr. Sven Fuhrmann's** paper "Teaching Disaster Preparedness in Geographic Education" was selected as the 2008 Journal of Geography Best Secondary Teaching Article. Eight Texas State graduate students co-authored the paper. Student Mary Curtis accepted the award at this year's NCGE Conference in Puerto Rico.

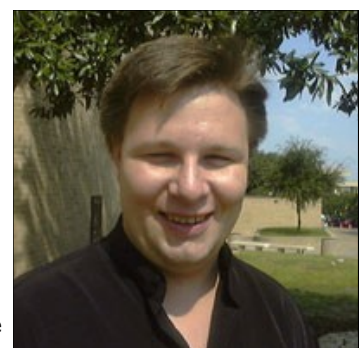
**Dr. Richard Boehm** and **Dr. David Butler** were presented Texas State medallions during a ceremony honoring past recipients of the Presidential Seminar Award on October 27, 2009. Dr. Boehm received the Texas State Presidential Seminar Award in 1995, and Dr. Butler received it in 2006. The recipient is honored with a reception and the invitation to deliver a university-wide presentation on their research.



**Dr. David Butler** is the senior co-author on a book entitled *The Changing Alpine Treeline: The Example of Glacier National Park, MT, USA*. The book summarizes several years of research at the alpine treeline ecotone by Dr. Butler, his collaborators, and students. **Dr. Mark Fonstad** and four doctoral alumni co-authored chapters within the book.



**Dr. Mark Fonstad** has been appointed Environmental Sciences Editor for the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. The *Annals* is the flagship journal for the AAG and the Geography discipline internationally. This outstanding appointment brings considerable prestige to the department and University.



**Dr. Laura Stroup** has been named one of two new Center Scholars for the James and Marilyn Lovell Center for Environmental Geography and Hazards Research.



## Jo Beth Oestreich Honored with NCGE's Higher Education Distinguished Teaching Award



Dr. Jo Beth Oestreich, adjunct professor for Texas State Geography, has been selected to receive the 2009 Higher Education Distinguished Teaching Award from the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). This NCGE award is designed to recognize and support excellence in geography teaching among two-year college, college, and university educators, honoring teachers who have displayed continued dedication to geography education.

Jo Beth earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science, in addition to a teaching certification, from Texas Lutheran College in 1983. She continued her education by obtaining a Masters of Applied Geography from Southwest Texas State University in 1991, and in 2002, Jo Beth was awarded a PhD from the University of Texas at Austin.

Jo Beth first became involved in the discipline of geography in the mid-1980's while engaged as a classroom instructor. After attending Summer Institutes offered by the Texas Alliance for Geographic Education in 1987 and 1988, followed by a National Geographic Leadership Institute in 1989, Jo Beth became committed to improving the quality and quantity of geography taught in Texas classrooms, and beyond. Her history of providing in-service training for teach-

ers, along with the long list of presentations that she made at professional meetings and conferences, is a testament to her dedication to the field of geography.

By starting out as a classroom educator and now as a university instructor at Texas State, Jo Beth is able to help mold future generations of classroom teachers by using a sound knowledge of what does and does not work when it comes to geography teaching and learning. She has kept her finger on the pulse of Texas K-12 social studies by maintaining an active involvement in professional organizations such as the Texas Council for the Social Studies and Texas Social Studies Supervisors Association, but has also taken an active role in national professional organization such as the National Council for Social Studies. Whether she is leading a professional development workshop for in-service educators or lecturing to university students who strive to become classroom teachers, Jo Beth Oestreich has been able to synthesize the knowledge and skills that she has acquired from all aspects of her education and employment background to be the most inspiring, driven, and vocal supporter of quality geographic education at all levels.

The Department is honored to have Dr. Oestreich as part of its adjunct faculty. Past recipients of this award have included Drs. James Petersen, Byron Augustin, Richard Boehm, Brock Brown, David Butler, Lawrence Estaville, Robert Larsen, James Kimmel, Fred Day, Richard Earl, Denise Blanchard-Boehm, and Richard Dixon.

***In August 2009, Emariana Taylor was honored as the sole PhD graduate from the Department. Her advisor, Dr. David Butler, was unable to attend the ceremony, but Dr. Richard Dixon, a member of her dissertation committee, had the honor of hooding her.***

**Pictured from left to right: Dr. Richard Dixon, newly minted Dr. Emariana Taylor, and Dr. Philip Suckling, Department Chair**





## ***Geography to Offer New Meteorology Course for Science Credit***

*Submitted by Dr. Richard Dixon*

**Starting this spring semester, the Geography Department will be offering a new course which meets the General Studies Natural Science requirement. Introduction to Meteorology (GEO 1305/1105) is a first course in atmospheric science appropriate for all students regardless of their mathematical background.**

**The lecture portion of the course will cover the basics of atmospheric composition, processes, and disturbances. The goal of the course is to impart to students an understanding of weather and its impacts on everyday life. The accompanying laboratory class will give students hands-on experience working with meteorological data, weather maps, and weather forecasting techniques. In both classes, students will master the fundamental principles and laws of physical science which form the basis for meteorology by investigating the expression of these processes in everyday life.**

**This class was developed by Dr. Rich Dixon with the assistance of Drs. Rich Earl and Phil Suckling. Questions should be addressed to Dr. Dixon at [rd11@txstate.edu](mailto:rd11@txstate.edu) or 512.245.7436. In order to receive General Studies Natural Science credit, students must complete both the lecture and laboratory courses. It is anticipated that these courses will be offered each long semester of the academic year.**

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## ***Dr. Butler Co-hosts Alpine Treeline Workshop in Glacier National Park***

*Submitted by Dr. David Butler*

Dr. David Butler and former Geography faculty member Dr. George Malanson co-hosted a workshop on Alpine Treeline in Glacier National Park, Montana, in July 2009. The workshop was funded by the U.S. Geological Survey's Western Mountain Initiative program, under the auspices of which Drs. Butler and Malanson have been conducting research at treeline for several years. The purpose of the workshop was to invite international treeline experts to examine the Glacier Park treeline in the field and compare the Glacier situation with conditions in their study areas. Participants included international experts Dr. Friedrich-Karl Holtmeir of the University of Münster, considered to be the world's leading expert on alpine treeline; Dr. Maaik Bader of the University of Oldenburg; and Dr. Lori Daniels of the University of British Columbia. Participants from the U.S. included Dr. Dan Fagre of the U.S. Geological Survey's Glacier Field Station and co-principal investigator of the Western Mountain Initiative; Dr. Lynn Resler, Assistant Professor of Geography at Virginia Tech (and 2004 PhD graduate of the Texas State Geography Department); Dan Weiss, ABD from the University of North Carolina; and Will Butler, undergraduate physical geography major from Texas State. The workshop participants are in the process of producing a manuscript that will serve as an overview of treeline characteristics that are particularly sensitive for monitoring climate change.





## From the Graduate Coordinator... Dr. David Butler, Professor

I am writing this column on November 1, the day after Halloween. Where has the bulk of the fall semester gone?? Time flies in our department, especially with an array of active graduate students involved in such a broad range of academic activities! I have never seen such an active group of graduate students anywhere else. For example:

- During Summer 2009, four doctoral students (Jon Kedrowski, Joey Ostling, Steve Tsikalis, and Clayton Whitesides) carried out fieldwork in Glacier National Park. Jon Kedrowski also conducted fieldwork at Denali National Park in Alaska in May and at Mt. Rainier National Park in July. Jacob Maas, doctoral student under the supervision of Dr. Fonstad, carried out fieldwork on the San Marcos River as part of his dissertation work.
- In addition to the nearly 40 students who participated in the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Las Vegas this spring, many of whom were involved in, and received awards from, specialty group honors programs (details in the most recent newsletter), several students participated and had papers *published* in the proceedings volume of the recently completed Applied Geography Conference. Participating students, and their published paper titles include: doctoral students Sherrie Houlton, Catherine Cooper, Joey Ostling, Clovis Perry, and Angela Wranic (with Dr. Sven Fuhrmann), "Assessing 3D Web-Mapping and Topographic Maps in Physical Geographic Education"; doctoral student Jacob Maas (with Dr. David Butler and former PhD student Carol Sawyer), "Traumatic Resin Ducts in Tree Rings: Advancing Tree-Ring Dating of Snow Avalanches in Glacier National Park, Montana"; doctoral student Andy Day, "An Assessment of the Historical Hydroclimatology of the Animas River Basin at Durango, Colorado"; master's students Tara Noah and Jason Arbogast (with Dr. Rich Earl), "Sediment Management and the Upper San Marcos River, Texas"; doctoral student Jiao Wang (with Dr. Nate Currit), "Spatio-Economic Characteristics of Water Use in El Paso County, Texas: An Assessment of the 1991 Water Conservation Ordinance"; doctoral student Keith Bremer, "Socio-Economic Characteristics of Different Land Use Areas in Austin, Texas 2000"; and doctoral student Eric Samson, "Daylight Savings Time as an Expression of Rebellion in Chilón, Chiapas, Mexico."
- The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) annual conference was held in late September in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Graduate students presenting at NCGE included doctoral students Mary Curtis, Jiao Wang, Catherine Cooper, Waverly Ray, Edris Montalvo, Lara Bryant, Matt Melancon, and Eric Samson.
- During the last week of October, four graduate students presented at the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG) annual meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas. Papers were presented by master's student Xingjian Liu and doctoral student Desserae Shepston, with poster presentations by master's student Matt Anding and doctoral student Christi Townsend.
- At the 40th Annual Binghamton Geomorphology Symposium held in early October in Blacksburg, Virginia, poster presentations were given by doctoral students Jane Atha, Melanie Stine, Steve Tsikalis, and Clayton Whitesides.

All these activities by both our doctoral and master's students make for an exciting, dynamic graduate program. Several graduate students have also been authors on recently published papers in refereed journals. A complete list of these papers will be published in the Spring 2010 Alumni Newsletter. Keep up the great work, folks!

**The Society of Geographic Information Science (SoGIS) held a logo contest in October 2009. SoGIS has been without a logo since its inception and the officers felt that it was time for one. Six logos were entered into the competition and SoGIS members voted on their favorite design. The top three winners received a one year student license of ESRI's ArcView 9.3.1. The grand prize winner of the logo contest was Mark Olden. All SoGIS members are very excited and pleased with the new logo.**





## Congratulations Geography PhD and Master's Students!

Since the Spring semester, our students have received various honors, awards, and recognition for their hard work and dedication.



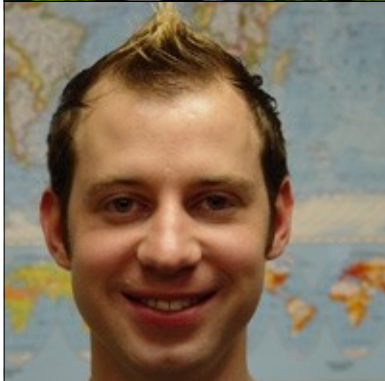
Environmental Geography PhD Student **Jane Atha** received a scholarship from the Binghamton Geomorphology Symposium Conference Organization for participation in the 40th annual BGS Conference. Jane presented a poster entitled "Identification of Fluvial Wood."

Geography Education PhD student **Lara Bryant** was awarded the Texas Alliance Distinguished Service Award during the Texas Council for Social Studies Conference in Dallas. The award recognizes individuals for their outstanding work in improving the quality and quantity of geography in Texas schools.



PhD student **C. Andrew Day** received word that his snowmelt modeling paper was accepted for publication in the journal *Progress in Physical Geography*, which is published in the United Kingdom.

Environment Geography PhD student **Jon Kedrowski** was awarded the 2009 American Alpine Club Research Grant in the amount of \$1,000. The purpose of the award was to fund research in Denali National Park and Preserve. Kedrowski performed a pilot study surveying climbers' perceptions of the National Park's current permit system for the West Buttress approach to climbing Mt. McKinley. This study is a precursor to his anticipated dissertation research.

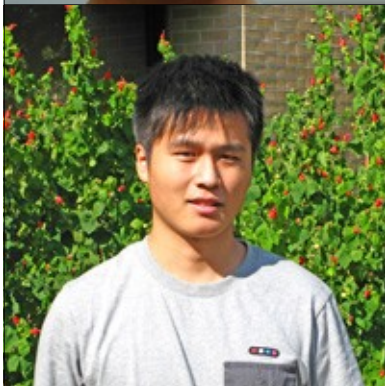


Master's student **Xingjian Liu** won first place in the Best Student Paper Competition in the Graduate Student Affinity Group of the AAG and was a finalist in the Student Paper Competition at SWAAG. He has had three first-authored articles published this year - "Road density analysis based on skeleton partitioning for road generalization," in *Geo-Spatial Information Science*; "Arc\_Mat: A Matlab-based spatial data analysis toolbox," in *Journal of Geographical Systems*; and "Road Selection Based on Voronoi Diagrams and 'Strokes' in Map Generalization," in *International Journal of Applied Earth Observation and Geoinformation*.



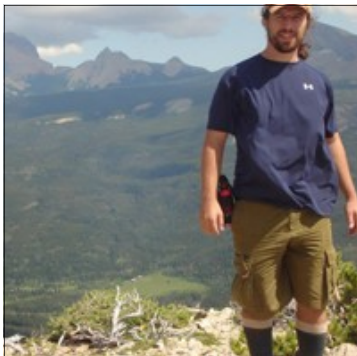
PhD student **Xuelian Meng** has had two articles published this year. Her article (co-authored with Dr. Nate Currit) "Morphology-based building detection from airborne LIDAR data" was published in *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*. Her second article (co-authored by Dr. Le Wang, Dr. J.L. Silván, and Dr. Nate Currit) entitled "A multi-directional ground filtering algorithm for airborne LIDAR" was published in *ISPRS Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing*.

Third year doctoral student **Johanna Ostling** is the first-author on a paper published in the July issue of *Geography Compass*, the refereed international Wiley/Blackwell online journal. Her paper is entitled "The Biogeomorphology of Mangroves and Their Role in Natural Hazards Mitigation."



Clockwise from top left: Jane Atha, Lara Bryant, Jon Kedrowski, Xuelian Meng, Johanna Ostling, Xingjian Liu, Andrew Day

## Graduate Student Awards (continued from page 9)



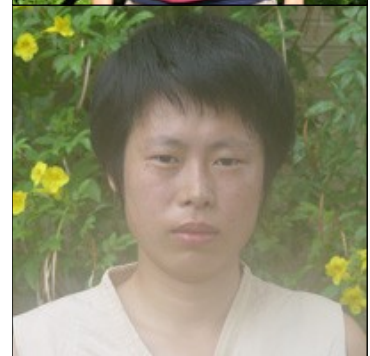
Clockwise from top left: Stephen Tsikalas, Melanie Stine, Jiao Wang, and Clayton Whitesides

PhD students **Melanie Stine**, **Stephen Tsikalas**, and **Clayton Whitesides** also received scholarships from the Binghamton Geomorphology Symposium Conference Organization for participation in the 40th annual BGS Conference. Melanie's poster was entitled "Geomorphic Factors of Tree Succession at a Southern Appalachian Peatland." Stephen presented a poster entitled "Cliff Swallows in San Marcos: A Case Study in Zoogeomorphology," and Clayton's poster was entitled "Gopher Esker Soil Temperature and Possible Impact on Conifer Establishment in Subalpine Meadows."

**Jiao Wang** was awarded a Water Resources Specialty Group travel grant during the annual Association of American Geographers Meeting in Las Vegas.

**Case Watkins**, M.S. student, was awarded the Gilbert F. White Thesis Award - Honorable Mention by the AAG Hazards Specialty Group for his thesis entitled "Through the Lens of Katrina: A Historical Geography of the Social Patterns of Flood Exposure in New Orleans, 1970-2005."

PhD student **Clayton Whitesides** was also named runner-up for the Student Proposal grant from the Mountain Geography Specialty Group of the AAG. Clayton's proposal deals with his initial dissertation work looking at the role of marmot excavations as potential sites for tree seedling establishment at tree-line in Olympic National Park.



**Congratulations to our  
Geography students!**



For more information on The Society for Geographic Information Science, visit their website at <http://geoweb.evans.txstate.edu/studentorgs/GIScience/index.htm>

SoGIS would like to thank everyone who participated in our Food and School Supply Drives. They were a huge success. We donated 99 pounds of food and at least \$20 (some donated directly to the food bank) to the Hays County Food Bank. Two backpacks filled with school supplies and several bags of food were donated to the Southside Community Center. Both organizations were very grateful for our donations and thank you.

Thank you again for your participation!

Sincerely,

The Society for Geographic Information Science (SoGIS)





*Faculty, staff, and students welcomed in the Fall 2009 Semester with the 6th Annual Undergraduate Welcome Back Picnic on the banks of the San Marcos River. The picnic gave everyone the opportunity to get to know each other, while enjoying Dr. Rich Earl's master grilling.*







## Geography Undergraduate Students Recipients of 2008-2009 Liberal Arts Awards

On April 2, 2009, the College of Liberal Arts hosted its annual awards ceremony, honoring students within the college for their academic achievement. The following undergraduate students were honored with the award, presented by Dean Ann Marie Ellis: Robert Harrison, Grady Hillhouse, Mason Ellis, Sarah Mammel, Amanda Knapp, Giancarlo Daneri, James Tennant, Nicholas Maulding, Casey Oldham, Leo Stearns, Larissa Matin, Marshal Brandt, Mariah Chude, Angelika Fuller, Jason Pickett, Melissa Rowell, Jacquelyn Powell, Clayton Smallwood, Paul Daugherty, Gabriel Villapando, Jason Arbogast, Megan Wilson, Christopher Brown, Viktor Auzenne, Cody Clarke, Richard Morgan, Bonnie Guess, Manie Davis, Justin McCreight, Chase Chapman, Andrew Glanville, William Butler, Hayat Qurumful, and Randy Burt. The Department wishes these students a congratulations and the best of luck in their continued success!



Above: Dean Ann Marie Ellis and Dr. Philip Suckling with the 2008-2009 Geography Liberal Arts Award winners.

## NAEP & GTU Celebrate International Day of Climate Action



Submitted by Leah Gibson & Corina Salmon,  
Co-Presidents of NAEP

Members of the National Association of Environmental Professionals and Gamma Theta Upsilon joined with the San Marcos Greenbelt Alliance to celebrate the 350 organization's International Day of Climate Action. NAEP and GTU cleaned up the remains of an old trash dump site in Upper Purgatory Park on October 24, 2009. Enough garbage was removed to form the numbers "350" with trash bags.

According to its website, 350 is "the most important number in the world - it's what scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Two years ago, after leading climatologists observed rapid ice melt in the Arctic and other frightening signs of climate change, they issued a series of studies showing

that the planet faced both human and natural disaster if atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> remained above 350 parts per million.

Everyone from Al Gore to the U.N.'s top climate scientist has now embraced this goal as necessary for stabilizing the planet and preventing complete disaster. Now the trick is getting our leaders to pay attention and craft policies that will put the world on track to get to 350."

For this and more information on the 350 Organization, visit their website at <http://www.350.org>.



## My Summer Volunteering with No More Deaths

Submitted by Angelika Fuller, Undergraduate Geography-Resources & Environmental Studies Major

I wanted to do something useful this summer. After watching a film on campus about the wall along the U.S./Mexican border and the issues surrounding it, I decided to experience these issues first hand. The perfect opportunity to do so was featured in the film via a human aid group called *No Mas Muertes* or No More Deaths. The primary goal of No More Deaths is to change the U.S. border policy and to end deaths of migrants crossing the border. They do this by reporting abuse of migrants in Border Patrol custody; setting up aid stations in Mexico where migrants returning from a dangerous journey can obtain food, water, clothing, and medical aid; and having a desert camp about thirteen miles north of the border where volunteers provide food, water, and medical aid to migrants who need it. I chose to spend five weeks in the desert camp, and it was an experience that I will never forget.



**Above:** Angelika Fuller in the Southern Arizona Desert  
**Below left:** Bottles of water provide inspirational messages to migrants along the trails.

A typical day at camp started at 5:30am, where we were sometimes awoken with a serenade by the camp coordinator. Breakfast normally consisted of cereal or oatmeal, but sometimes we were treated with eggs, pancakes, or French toast. After breakfast, most of us would pile into one of the four-wheel drive vehicles and slowly make our way on rough roads to one of the many migrant trails in the area. What is remarkable about some of these trails is how easily they are to see and follow - they almost look like maintained trails but they are actually only used fairly often. We would split up into small groups and follow the trails, our packs weighed down with food, water, and medical supplies, calling out phrases like, 'Hola compañeros! Tenemos agua, comida, y ayuda medica! Gritennos si necesitan algo!' If we didn't find anybody who needed our help within a few hours on the trails, we would return to camp and sit out the hottest hours of the day. We would then drive out to a different trail and do the same thing. We were normally exhausted and hungry by the time we returned to camp, so we would sit and eat, talk about how the day went, and go to sleep in our tents or on a cot under the stars.

Over the course of five weeks, we met many migrants on the trails, and many found their way into our camp. All of them were willing to tell us about their lives, families, and why they were crossing the border. Many of them had grown up in the U.S. or had spent more than a decade here before they were deported for a minor traffic violation or racial profiling. When they were sent to Mexico, they had nowhere to go - all of their family was in the U.S., so their only option was to risk their lives crossing the border to return to their families. Southern Arizona (south of Tucson) is nothing but mountains. There is no wall or other security along this part of the border. Because of this, the migrants are funneled into this difficulty terrain. As the crow flies, their destination is about thirty miles north of the border through the Sonoran Desert. They cannot possibly carry enough food and water to make this journey safely. Many people have died trying to achieve a happier life for themselves and their family.

I met many interesting people during those five weeks—fellow volunteers, migrants just passing through—and I made many new friends. I have also taken a side on the border issues, realizing that the current policy regarding the border is causing the deaths of fellow human beings and that has to change. I witnessed government officials disrespecting migrants and not extending an ounce of compassion towards them. It's hard not to be angry about what our government is doing to our southern neighbors, but it's better to turn that emotion into something more constructive. I plan to continue my work with No More Deaths. I hope to obtain material and money donations to send to the group and to organize a trip there with a group of Texas State students during Spring Break. I will also be making presentations about my experience to spread awareness about these issues on campus.

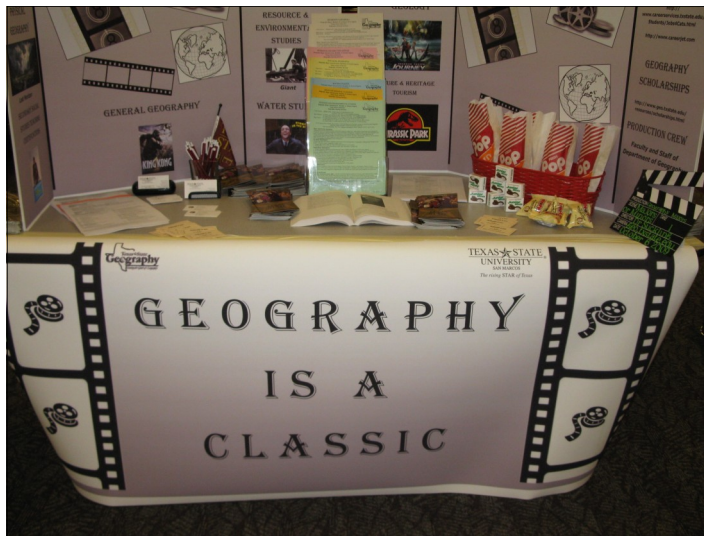


There is much more to those five weeks than I could possibly relay here, so if anyone would like more information about my experience or is interested in the Spring Break trip, please email me at [af1256@txstate.edu](mailto:af1256@txstate.edu).

## Department of Geography Wins Best Display at University Major's Fair

Undergraduate Staff Administrator, Ms. Joyce Lawson, took home the prize for Best Display at this Fall's Undergraduate Major's Fair. She chose a movie theme, stating that Geography was a "classic" under our "director," Dr. Philip Suckling. The display was a hit, pulling in a number of interested students and winning Joyce a certificate and a cake to share with the Department!

**Clockwise from top right:** Joyce Lawson receives her award from the University College for Best Display; Dr. Rich Earl and Mark Carter share information with a potential student; "Geography is a Classic" display at the Undergraduate Major's Fair



## NAEP Hosts Texas Recycles Day in the Quad



*Texas State Geography students and members of the San Marcos community gathered in the Quad on November 12, 2009, to celebrate Texas Recycles Day. The group provided information to students on recycling, sustainability, and the ways we can reduce our impact on the environment.*



## Coming Home - Matthew Lewis Joins Development Services Staff

*Adapted from City of San Marcos New Release, June 16, 2009*

*Photo by Don Anders*

Matthew B. Lewis, formerly the Community Development Director for the City of Hutto, Texas, joined the City of San Marcos on June 8 as Assistant Director of Development Services. He will be responsible for overseeing the development regulations that govern the growth of San Marcos. Lewis will work with developers and applicants to ensure that developments meet the needs of the community. He will monitor zoning, land use, and subdivision cases to achieve the regulations outlined in the code of ordinance. He will also examine the current regulations for potential modification to achieve the City's development goals and collaborate with regional agencies to match the planning efforts of San Marcos to the regional efforts.

"Matthew returns to San Marcos with a broad background in the development arena," said Chuck Swallow, Director of Development Services. "He has a great ability to look at community development from a very balanced viewpoint."

Lewis is a 2003 graduate of Texas State University with a Bachelor's degree in Geography and Urban & Regional Planning. He is also a graduate of San Marcos High School. He joined the City of Hutto in 2004 as a Planner and rose through the ranks to become the Community Development Director at the end of 2006. In Hutto, located northeast of Austin, Lewis oversaw the Department of Community Development, including Administration, Planning, Building, and Geographic Information Systems divisions. There he created a City wide SmartCode for the city, as well as a downtown master plan. He also used the collaborative development methods, such as the charette process to engage the public and achieve community support in creating several successful projects, including a pedestrian-oriented 475-acre vertical mixed use development.

Lewis has been honored by the Texas American Planning Association in 2006 and 2008 with Planning Excellence Awards and as Community of the Year plan honoree. He also received an Outstanding Planning Award from the Student Planning Organization at Texas State University. Most recently, Lewis was awarded the Community Stewardship award for the City of Hutto SmartCode by Envision Central Texas. Lewis has conducted lectures at Texas State University planning classes, Texas Municipal League workshops, and several other training sessions. He is an active member of the Congress for the New Urbanism, American Planning Association, and the Texas Municipal League, and is the Co-Chair on the Congress of New Urbanism Education Committee.



***Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Department of Geography's 16th Annual Alumni Reunion and Student Celebration! The all-day event will be held on Saturday, April 24, 2010. Check the departmental website for additional information and updates.***

***<http://www.geo.txstate.edu/alumni/reunion.html>***



## Geography Alumnus Tim Staskus Inducted into the Texas State Athletic Hall of Honor



Adapted from Texas State Official Athletic Site

<http://www.txstatebobcats.com>

Tim Staskus, Geography Alumnus, was inducted into the Texas State Athletic Hall of Honor on November 20, 2009. The Hall of Honor is the highest athletics honor given to former Texas State letter winners. Each person selected is nominated by their fellow letter winners and selected for induction by the "T" Association Board of Directors.

Tim Staskus played for the Bobcat football team from 1980-83. He lettered all four years at Texas State (then Southwest Texas State University) and was a member of the school's two NCAA Division II national championship teams.

A graduate of Bellaire High School in Houston, Staskus was a two-time Kodak and Associated Press All-American, chosen All-Lone Star Conference First Team in both 1982 and 1983 as a linebacker, and named to the LSC All-Academic Team twice. He also earned Texas State's J.C. Kellam award, which is given to the team's outstanding senior player in 1983 and was named the school's defensive Player-of-the-Year in 1982. He also earned the Erwin 50 Yards Award and the Lone Star Conference Award for top defensive and outstanding lineman.

After earning his Bachelor's degree with a major in Psychology and minor in Geography, Staskus was a salesman with Brown Distributing in San Marcos and worked with several prominent companies, such as Labatt USA, InBev USA, and Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Recently, Anheuser-Busch appointed him as a senior accounts manager.

He received the Texas State Department of Geography's Distinguished Service award in 1996 and 2004, the Department of Geography's Distinguished Alumni award in 2004, and the College of Liberal Arts Distinguished Alumni award in 2008. He is also a member of the College of Liberal Arts Development Advisory Board.

Staskus has served in charity events for the Children's Miracle Network, Muscular Dystrophy, United Way, and United Cerebral Palsy. He was also the 2005 group director in the United Nation's Sian Kaan World Heritage Site Beach Clean Up project.

Staskus and his two siblings established an endowed scholarship in the Geography Department in memory of their father, Phillip A. Staskus, with Tim donating over \$20,000 to the endowment. He and his wife, Lynn, have been married for eight years and currently reside in Chandler, Arizona.

***The Gilbert M. Grosvenor Center for Geographic Education is pleased to announce that Alex Trebek will present the 12th Annual Grosvenor Distinguished Lecture on Wednesday, April 12, 2010. The Jeopardy host has served for many years as the moderator for the National Geographic Bee.***



Jeopardy host Alex Trebek congratulates 13-year-old Eric Yang of Texas for winning the 2009 National Geographic Bee. Yang won with a perfect score in what was the toughest National Geographic Bee to date.

Photo by Rebecca Hale/NGS



## Cinde Thomas-Jimenez Receives Award for Outstanding Support for Geographic Education

At the 2009 National Conference on Geographic Education in Puerto Rico, Cinde Thomas-Jimenez was recognized with the 2009 Outstanding Support for Geographic Education Award. This NCGE award is designed to recognize and honor individuals whose work takes place outside of the formal classroom, but who have made outstanding contributions to support geography education or geography educators.

As the Education Coordinator for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, Cinde is responsible for developing and implementing an innovative education program that provides an interdisciplinary approach to the study of water resources in Central Texas. Through partnerships forged with school districts, cities, utility companies, universities, and other like-minded organizations, Cinde is able to provide professional development workshops for K-12 teachers, as well as conducting water-related outreach activities for school children and the general public.



**Cinde Thomas-Jimenez led hands-on learning activities for school children during the 2008 Groundwater Festival at Texas State's Aquarena Center.**

After earning a Bachelor of Science in Education with a Social Studies Composite certification from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State), Cinde Thomas-Jimenez assumed the role of secondary teacher, providing instruction in Science, Math, and Social Studies in middle and high school classrooms. Cinde also returned to Southwest Texas State to earn a Master of Applied Geography with a concentration in Land Use Planning and Natural Resources. After a decade of classroom teaching, Cinde embarked upon a career as an Environmental Educator, initially with a position at Edwards Underground Water District in San Antonio. She held similar positions at the Texas State University's Aquarena Center and the Bexar Met Water District, until being hired by the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority in 2003.

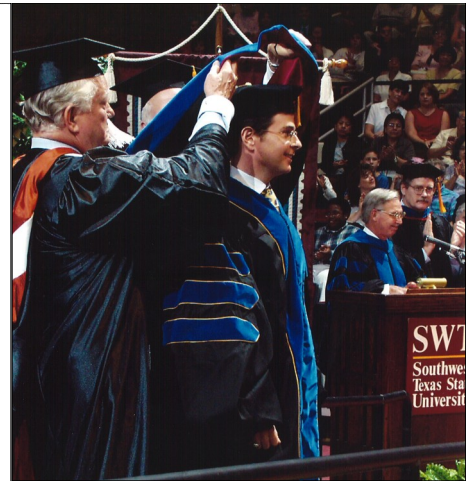
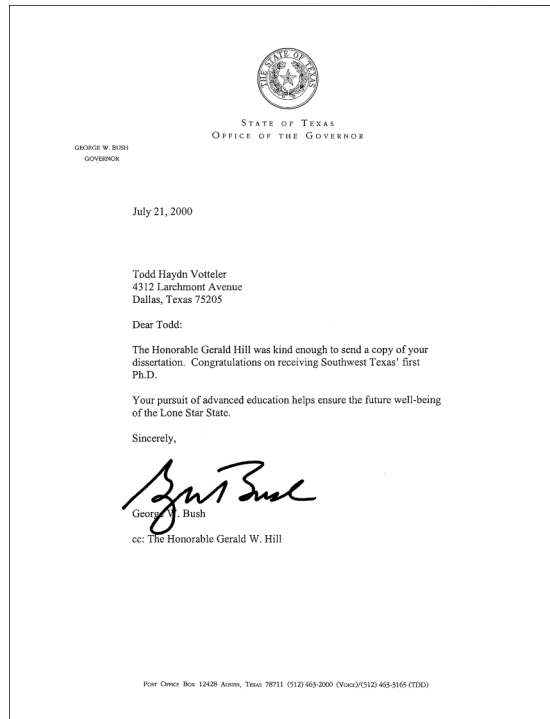
Cinde's academic and work experiences have helped her to develop a unique set of skills that allows her to move effortlessly between the realms of formal and informal education, providing training and resources for K-12 teachers, students, and the general public. Her knowledge and understanding of geography has played a central role in Cinde's water-related activities, including the development of curriculum and educational publications. Although most of her work is interdisciplinary in nature, Cinde has remained active in a number of geography-related organizations, including the Texas Alliance for Geographic Education and the San Antonio-Austin Geographic Educators.

***Geography Alumnus, Collin McCormick, and his wife, Marisa, stand on the beach in Portugal with their new baby boy this fall.***

***Congratulations, Collin and Marisa and welcome to the Geography family, Baby McCormick!!***

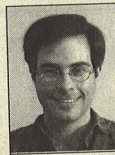


On May 12, 2000, Todd H. Votteler was awarded Southwest Texas State University's first PhD. He is now the Executive Manager of Intergovernmental Relations and Policy at the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and is a member of the Texas State Liberal Arts Advisory Board. We share the documents below in remembrance of this great accomplishment for Dr. Votteler, the Department of Geography, and Texas State.



Clockwise from top left: A letter from Governor George W. Bush congratulating Votteler on his accomplishment of becoming SWT's first PhD graduate; Votteler is hooded during the May 2000 commencement ceremony; an article published on March 8, 2000, in the University Star, celebrating SWT's first PhD graduate.

## Votteler receives SWT's first Ph.D.



By Timothy  
Inklebarger  
Star Reporter

SWT's first Ph.D. degree will be awarded during the SWT Graduate College commencement ceremonies, May 12 in Strahan Coliseum.

After successfully defending his 500-page dissertation, *Water from a Stone: The Limits of the Sustainable Development of the Edwards Aquifer*, Todd H. Votteler will receive SWT's first doctorate in geography.

The geography department became the first college at the university to offer a doctorate program in 1996.

Votteler said there were advantages and disadvantages to being the first person to complete the program.

"I was a guinea pig, but that was all right," Votteler said.

Votteler earned a bachelor of science from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. and a master of science from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and the Environment; he enrolled in the SWT geography program in 1997.

The geography department has been ranked three times as the top undergraduate program of its kind in the nation.

Lawrence Estaville, geography department chair, announced the decision to

accept Votteler's dissertation on Feb. 23, two days after Votteler completed the final segment in a series of oral and written examinations.

Votteler first gave a presentation and was then publicly questioned about his research for more than an hour by a committee of five geography professors.

After answering the committee's questions, Votteler took questions from an audience of about 70 people.

Votteler said he felt strongly about the aquifer and wanted to address the issues in a comprehensive manner.

Research for the dissertation lasted 11 months, and Votteler said it examines water conservation for areas that get their water from the aquifer such as San Marcos, San Antonio and Uvalde.

Three of the central findings Votteler discovered during his research include:

In the fall, critical conditions can be predicted for the following summer, the Edwards Aquifer Authority's current drought management plan needs to be redesigned and the aquifer can be managed during wet periods to ensure additional supplies of water during dry periods.

"When spring flow reaches a low point in the fall, critical flows are likely to follow the next summer," Votteler said. "That is when endangered species will face potential harm."

Votteler said the Edwards Aquifer

See EDWARDS, page 4

March 8, 2000

NE

## Edwards Aquifer researcher claims SWT's first Ph.D.

Continued from page 1

Authority's current method of depending on groundwater wells in its drought management plan is not a good way to prevent critical flows at the springs.

His research calls for redesigning the current plan to focus on the spring flow of Comal and San Marcos Springs, which are the homes to eight threatened and endangered aquatic species.

Votteler said if the springs dry up, the entire area could face severe economic repercussions. Spring

flow not only is important to the species, but it also provides critical surface water to the Guadalupe River Basin during droughts.

For this to happen, Votteler said it would probably require the drought to last through August 2001.

"We could have a problem this summer with critical flows," Votteler said.

Votteler said he became increasingly interested in the aquifer while working as a special master for Lucius Bunton, a federal judge who is presiding over Endangered Species Act cases.