



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

School of Forest Resources

April 12, 2010

To: Friends, Faculty, and Partners associated with the University of Washington – Seattle Water Center

Re: Future of the Water Center

At this year's Annual Review meeting, you were told that the Water Center would undergo a significant transformation in the near future. Unfortunately, this letter represents the June 30, 2010 termination of the Water Center as part of the School of Forest Resources and as a major player on the University of Washington – Seattle Campus¹.

In late spring 2009, we knew that survival of the Water Center was at risk. A number of individuals devoted considerable energy and effort to first preserve the Center and then to efficiently and effectively transfer many of the functions and components of the Center to others. At this point, we have been unsuccessful in our efforts to preserve the Center and, also important at this stage, only partially successful in enabling an efficient and effective transfer of function or components. This is a painful and disappointing loss for our School and the Seattle campus. The noble and dedicated services of Interim Director Robert Edmonds and Program Manager Debbie Livingstone will end June 30, 2010.

At this point, I would like to reflect on the history of the Center and the legacies that it has left in terms of teaching, research and outreach.

Research: The Center has a twenty plus year track record of providing research conducted by affiliated faculty driven by community need. Two examples illustrate the impact of the Center's research: (1) The Center's research has transformed the practice of stormwater management locally and nationally and has made the region a well known and respected national leader in the field of stormwater management, and (2) Research on stream temperature helped the National Marine Fisheries Service and the EPA to establish water quality criteria across the Pacific Northwest (<http://water.washington.edu/Research/research.html>).

¹ In 1987, the Center for Streamside Studies was formed and in 1991, the Center for Urban Water Resources management was established. In September 1, 2002, the Center for Streamside Studies and the Center for Urban Water Resources Management on the University of Washington-Seattle campus merged to form the Center for Water and Watershed Studies. In 2004, the Center for Water and Watershed Studies became the Water Center.



Teaching: Over the past ten years, the Center has provided funding to more than 120 graduate students. Most importantly, the Center is well-known for providing students practical experiences with real-world water problems. There are 128 theses and dissertations of past graduate student affiliated with the Water Center and these are listed on the Center's website at:

<<http://water.washington.edu/Theses/thesesabstracts.html>>. The first person on this list is Lee Benda (1988. Debris flows in the Tyee sandstone formation of the Oregon Coast Range. MS). The last is Jessica Taylor (2008. Effects of Riparian Buffers on Soil Nitrogen Mineralization and Stream Nitrogen Concentrations in Headwater Streams of Western Washington. M.S.). The list reads like a who's-who.

Outreach: The Center has a successful history of outreach—working with agencies, organizations, industries, and the public, and providing them access to UW resources including faculty, students, and scientific studies. The following events and services provide the bulk of the Center's outreach activities:

Events

- Over the last thirteen years, the Center has offered weekly seminars covering water resources and watershed topics with lectures from scientists on and off campus. There are 110-120 attendees each week from off-campus and on-campus.
- Each year during the past 20 years, the Center has held an Annual Review of Research showcasing UW research to the public. The last eight Reviews have had an average of over 400 attendees.

Newsletters

The Center sends out a yearly newsletter, presenting UW water-related research and updates, to over 3,000 constituents.

E-mail

The Center maintains e-mail lists to which we send out event and job announcements.

- 1350 total recipients
- 350 on-campus (faculty, students, staff)
- 1000 off-campus (industry, agency, other schools)

This is an incredible and very successful legacy. We hope to pass much of this legacy to the relatively new Center for Urban Waters at the University of Washington – Tacoma.

From legacy to current reality, as I close the Water Center, I make the following observations.

In particular, I acknowledge and honor the work of Ms. Debbie Livingstone, Program Manager. She has been much of the energy and devotion that has held the Center together over the last several years. Her role in organizing and managing the 8:30 Tuesday academic quarter seminar series (as an example, for the last three quarters there were 357 registered students from SFR, SAFS, PbAf, and CEE as well as many

drop-ins) and the annual review of research (e.g., 275 – 400 attendees; the associated Water Career Fair) are merely the easily visible products of her work. Managing the advisory board, the consortium, affiliate faculty, the web site, the listservs, and the Center's budget all fell on her shoulders.

The University of Washington – Tacoma's Center for Urban Waters has agreed to lead some of the educational and outreach functions in the coming year. It is important to note that emerging at the University of Washington – Tacoma is the Center for Urban Waters, a research partnership between UW Tacoma, the city of Tacoma and the state agency Puget Sound Partnership and under Professor Joel Baker's leadership. Some recent developments at the Center should provide opportunities for former Water Center advisors, partners, participants and affiliate faculty to collaborate. These are as follows: first, the Department of Ecology has recently funded a joint program between UW-T and WSU to establish the Washington Stormwater Technical Resource Center, to be co-located at Center for Urban Waters and WSU-Puyallup. The SWTRC is a state-wide resource serving stormwater permittees and those developing innovative control strategies. The SWTRC is currently establishing external advisory and stakeholder boards, these will likely include most if not all of those jurisdictions involved in the Water Center over the years. Second, the Center for Urban Waters is now operational, and will soon issue a call for UW faculty and staff to participate as Fellows--working in many ways like the Water Center affiliate program. The goal is to provide organization around which the considerable strengths in water science and engineering across UW can coalesce. I would strong encourage you to contact Professor Baker regarding your interests in water related issues in the Puget Sound Region.

There are supposed to be sunsets for Centers, but it is always difficult to witness and be part of such a sunset. It is important that we honor the legacy of the Water Center and recognize the role that directors and staff have had in piloting the Center over the last two and half decades.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas Hinckley
Interim Director, School of Forest Resources
David RM Scott Professor of Forestry

cc. Professor Joel Baker
Stephanie A. Harrington, Ph.D.
Interim Dean Dennis Hartmann