



# DIMINING ROD

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## WRRI welcomes Karl Wood as new director

Dr. M. Karl Wood began his tenure as WRRI's new director on June 1, 2000. After a lengthy search to replace Tom Bahr, WRRI's director for the past 21 years, Karl recently was given the nod.

"Karl has a long history of outstanding research in water-related issues in New Mexico and the Southwest, particularly in the field of watershed management," according to NMSU Vice President for Research Gary Cunningham, who chaired the national search for a new director. "He also has administrative experience and a proven ability to work with faculty and the water resource managers and users who are served by WRRI."

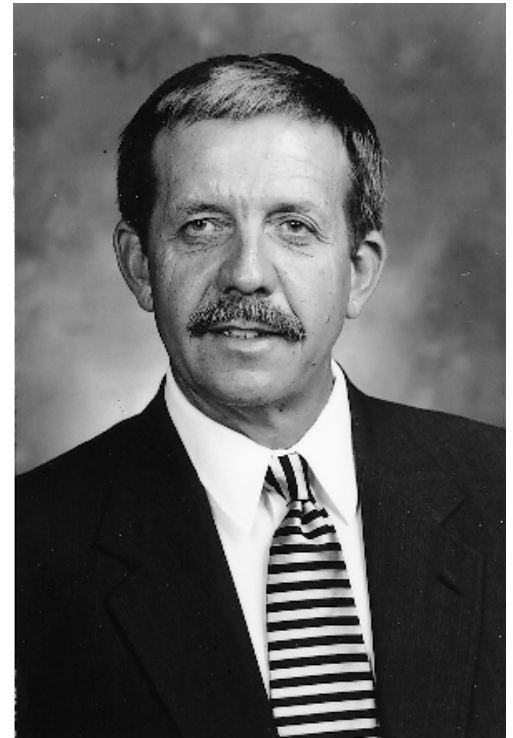
Karl joined the faculty at New Mexico State University in 1979, and most recently, was assistant department head and range coordinator for NMSU's Department of Animal and Range Sciences. Much of his research has been related to water resources. For 20 years he has been a member of the Range Improvement Task Force, which provides scientific expertise to help resolve disputes over management of water and other natural resources.

He is a member of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum of the

International Boundary and Water Commission, the Society for Range Management's Riparian/Watershed Task Force and the New Mexico Riparian Council's Research Committee.

After completing a B.S. in 1974 in forestry and range management and an M.S. in 1976 in range science with field emphasis on soils and range improvements from the University of Nevada/Reno, Karl attended Texas A&M for doctoral studies. He graduated in 1978 with a Ph.D. in range science with field emphasis on watershed management. His doctoral dissertation was entitled, "The Influence of Grazing Systems on Infiltration Rate and Sediment Production in the Rolling Plains of Texas."

Karl has nearly 150 journal articles, research bulletins, special reports, and conference proceeding publications to his credit, mainly in the areas of range hydrology assessment, range vegetation and soil assessment, and rangeland management, including reclamation of disturbed lands, range improvement techniques, grazing systems and management of rare and endangered



species. He also has served as associate editor of hydrology-related articles for the *Journal of Range Management*, and as a reviewer for numerous journals including *Water Resources Bulletin* and *Journal of Hydrology*.

Karl was raised in Henderson, Nevada, and came to Las Cruces in 1979 to begin his university career. He and his wife, Janelle, have five sons. The youngest, Kelly, will start

his undergraduate work at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs this fall. Karl has received numerous awards including the Silver Beaver Award from the Boy Scouts of America, a prestigious award given to only a few individuals who have dedicated many years of leadership and service to the Boy Scouts. An avid runner, Karl can be seen nearly every day running on campus with a group of NMSU faculty members.

Fresh on the job, Karl talks about his ideas for leading the New Mexico WRI.

*Divining Rod:* What will be your role as the WRI director?

*Karl Wood:* I will continue to support the long-standing mission of the WRI to (1) develop and disseminate knowledge that will assist the state and nation in solving water problems, (2) provide training opportunities for students who will someday become our water professionals, and (3) translate and disseminate research results to the academic community, water professionals, decision makers, and the general public.

*Divining Rod:* You've been a range scientist with extensive research experience in water issues for the past 25 years. How do you think

your background will assist you in providing the leadership needed for the WRI to make an impact toward solving the water problems facing New Mexico?

*Karl Wood:* I bring to this position senior leadership and state, regional, national, and international experience. Besides having knowledge of the hydrologic sciences, I am familiar with water issues, laws and policies, and the compacts of the West. I have a thorough knowledge of New Mexico's people, cultures, and natural resources. As a member of New Mexico State University's Range Improvement Task Force, I have had significant experience working on water resource problems of a multi-disciplinary nature. The Range Improvement Task Force provides technical assistance to resolve disputes between government agencies and private agriculture producers. This has led to a familiarity with the operation of public agencies concerned with water and natural resource policy and management.

*Divining Rod:* What research priorities do you see for New Mexico in the coming decade? In the short-term, can university faculty assist the state in dealing with the myriad of environmental problems that will present themselves due to current crises such as the devastation caused by wildfires and the possibility of major flooding events later this year?

*Karl Wood:* Water researchers tend to be fascinated by the hydrologic processes of nature, whether they be in the atmosphere, on the earth's surface, or underground. But they need to ask if their interests will help the priorities, needs, and desires of society. As a nation, we have adequate water, it is just in the wrong places at the wrong times, and in the wrong quantities and qualities. As a state, we have all these problems plus questions of adequate supply. I see our research priorities being more than physical, but including social and economical priorities that reach beyond the state borders to a region that includes northern Mexico. There will continue to be greater demands for and shortages of municipal water at local, state, and regional locations. Water managers need information to live with increasing government regulations, especially at the federal level with the Clean Water Act and Clean Water Action Plan, the Endangered Species Act, and Federal Reserved Water Rights.

*Divining Rod:* The WRI is considered to be the statewide nucleus for coordinating water resources research. What are your plans for continuing to develop interaction between the research community and various state, federal and local agencies that are on the frontlines dealing with New Mexico's critical water issues?

*Karl Wood:* Obviously, the annual Water Conference is a key opportunity to develop this interaction. I plan to conduct monthly seminars for experts to attend and share research ideas and needs. We can increase our exposure through news

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releases and increased contacts using existing research relationships and personal contact. Avoiding lawsuits and court rooms is always a priority.

*Divining Rod:* Cultivating funding sources for university research is one responsibility facing the WRRRI director. What is the outlook for federal and state research funding? Are there private sources of funding available for water-related research?

*Karl Wood:* There have always been a few but limited opportunities for research with long-term umbrella projects. Hopefully, these projects will continue to have increased funding, but it is expected that the increases will be small. However, there are various opportunities for state and federal funding of specific projects. These will be pursued on a case by case basis. This is where there is the most potential for water-related research for New Mexico in the future. Research opportunities funded by private sources are more variable and sometimes come with more strings attached. I don't have a feel yet on how to obtain these funds in New Mexico. Fortunately, the Assistant Director, Dr. Bobby Creel, has been with the WRRRI for going on two decades and has a wealth of experience in obtaining funding for water research in New Mexico. His expertise will be used extensively.

*Divining Rod:* What do you see as the major water issues facing the nation in the coming years?

*Karl Wood:* I see most of the old major water issues such as wetlands mitigation and management plus a few new ones. Many headaches will continue in learning how to comply with the Clean Water and the Endangered Species Acts as all three branches of the Federal Government attempt to interpret and apply these laws to point and non-point sources of pollution. Indicators of watershed health will be argued at length.

*Divining Rod:* Over the past

twenty years, the WRRRI has been closely involved with various water-related litigations and formal mediation processes. Also, the previous WRRRI director served as co-chairman of the New Mexico/Texas Water Commission, a group representing nearly every entity with policy or management authority over water resources in the Lower Rio Grande, and charged with maximizing the utilization of Rio Grande Project waters to meet everyone's long-term needs. Water conflicts, as you know, can be extremely contentious and lead to years of expensive legal wrangling. How do you think you'll approach the role you will be playing in these conflicts as director of the WRRRI?

*Karl Wood:* Being effectively involved in litigation and mediation processes was one of former Director Tom Bahr's greatest

talents and a great contribution to New Mexico. It is expected that he will continue for at least a while to be involved in these activities. They are just too complicated and important for someone new to come in and do effectively. I view it as an opportunity to have Tom Bahr as a mentor as there probably will be no

decrease in water conflicts in the future.

***"...there are various opportunities for state and federal funding of specific projects. These will be pursued on a case by case basis. This is where there is the most potential for water related research for New Mexico in the future."***

*Divining Rod:* Part of WRRRI's mission is to provide training opportunities for students who will become our future water professionals. As a

university profes-

sor, you have taught and advised hundreds of university students. Do you have plans on how to increase the visibility of the institute among students and encourage their participation in water-related research?

*Karl Wood:* There are several approaches that I would like to try. While we encourage student participation on all WRRRI-funded research projects, personnel from WRRRI were not asked to be on many graduate committees in the past. I would like to work closely enough with the research faculty and their graduate students that they would ask us to participate on committees at universities throughout New Mexico. WRRRI's role can be expanded beyond undergraduate and graduate participation to kindergarten through high school and post-baccalaureate levels to increase

exposure and quality of research. Linkages can be explored with existing programs such as Ag in the Classroom, Cooperative Extension, 4-H, and Vo-Ag programs. Distance education opportunities are expanding at a phenomenal rate. Unfortunately, most undergraduate and graduate students at NMSU are unfamiliar with WRRRI and its home, Stucky Hall. We can make Stucky Hall available for meetings and activities for student organizations.

*Divining Rod:* As you begin your tenure as Director, what initiatives and priorities would you like to undertake?

*Karl Wood:* In the August 1999 *Divining Rod*, retiring Director Tom Bahr was asked what advice he

would like to give to the new director. I think his advice is worth repeating. He said, "The new director should get to know as many of the water managers in the state as soon as possible and maintain these contacts on a regular basis. Travel to every corner of the state and get to know what and where the problems are. Get to know the legislators. The WRRRI Director needs to be the 'window' to the university water research community through which water managers look. The job is like an agent—you get people in need of a solution to their problem together with researchers who can help them solve their problems." I think this advice is a good start.

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