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IALC Approves \$800K in Grants for Multilateral Arid Land Research and Development Projects

Grant Approved for Israel, Jordan and University of Arizona to Work on Joint Project

April 30 - Tucson, AZ – The International Arid Lands Consortium approved nearly \$800,000 in grants for multilateral research and development projects in arid lands, including one grant for a demonstration project with Israel, Jordan and the University of Arizona that will create a web site for a Deserts of the World website.

The Jordan-Israel-U.S. project is representative of the ability of the IALC to bring scientists together from countries in the Middle East. Jordan, Israel and Arizona have similar climates.

“The purpose of the "Developing Model Components for a ‘Deserts of the World’ Website" IALC demonstration project is to collaboratively build the technical foundation for a Web-based gateway that will ultimately include all of the major arid regions of the world. This first phase will focus on Jordan's Badia Desert, Israel's Negev Desert, and North America's Sonoran Desert,” said Ms. Barbara Hutchinson, Director of the Arid Lands Information Center at the University of Arizona.

“Much of the world’s population live in arid and semiarid land, where water is a scarce and valuable resource. Unfortunately, politics often get in the way of good science. The advantage of the IALC is that we can work through those issues to do solid peer-reviewed research,” said Dr. Kenneth E. Foster, President of the IALC Board of Directors.

The Board approved five research projects out of 24 submitted and four demonstration projects out of 8 submitted. To be eligible for a grant, the principal investigator must be from one of the IALC member countries (United States, Israel, Jordan and Egypt). With only one exception, the projects each have an American researcher involved in the project. Four of the five research proposals and two of the four demonstration projects have an Israeli investigator.

“It is important that we understand these ecosystems so that there can be sustainable development – a balance between the environment and the needs of the people. The International Arid Lands Consortium, through generous funding from the USDA Forest Service and the USDA CSREES, is able to fund much needed research on arid and semiarid lands,” said Dr. Foster.

The proposals (see list of approved proposals below) were recommended by scientists from the IALC Research and Demonstration Advisory Committee, which reviewed proposals submitted from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, the University of Arizona, New Mexico State University, the University of Illinois, Desert Research Institute. Most of the proposals were collaborations between two or more principal investigators. Funding of all IALC projects is contingent upon receipt of federal funding.

Research Projects:

Dryland Vegetation Dynamics and Landscape Vulnerability to Wildfire – a collaboration between the University of Arizona, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, University of Alicante, Spain; Technion Israel Institute of Technology, and the University of Haifa, Israel. Principal Investigator: Dr. Barron Orr, Assistant Professor & Geospatial Extension Specialist; Associate Director UA/NASA Space Grant Program, Office of Arid Land Studies, University of Arizona.

Sustainable Management of Coastal Dunes to Preserve Biodiversity – a collaboration between Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel; The University of Illinois; and New Mexico State University. Principal Investigator: Pua Bar Kutiel, Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Geography and Environmental Development, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Reducing Runoff/Soil Erosion by Afforestation in a Semiarid Area – a collaboration between University of Arizona and Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Principal Investigator: Dr. Jonathon Laronne, Professor, Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

Faunalperturbation Effect on Soil Biodiversity-Desert Ecosystems – a collaboration between Bar Ilan University, Ben Gurion University of the Negev and the University of Arizona. Principal Investigator: Dr. Yosef Steinberger, Bar Ilan University.

Entomopathogenic Nematodes in Jordan: An Environmentally Safe Alternative to Benefit Agriculture in Desert Systems - a collaboration between the University of Arizona and University of Jordan. Principal Investigator: Dr. Patricia Stock, Assistant Research Professor, Division of Plant Pathology and Microbiology, the University of Arizona.

Demonstration Projects

Urban Erosion Control and Storm Water Harvesting in Northern Mexico – a collaboration between the University of Arizona, Instituto Tecnológico de Nogales, and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Principal Demonstrator: Dr. Donald Slack, Professor, & Head Dept. of Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering, University of Arizona.

Animated Simulations of Semi-Arid Watersheds – a collaboration between the University of Arizona and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service. Principal Demonstrator: Dr. Michael Haseltine, Systems Support Analyst, University of Arizona.

Developing Model Components for ‘Deserts of the World’ Website – a collaboration between the University of Arizona; Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel; and the Badia Research and Development Programme, Jordan. Principal Demonstrator: Ms. Barbara Hutchinson, Director, Arid Lands Information Center, University of Arizona.

Ancient Desert Agriculture Systems Revived -a collaboration between Bar Ilan University, Jewish National Fund and Nitzana Youth Village, Israel. Principal Demonstrator: Dr. Moti Mordechai Haiman, Bar Ilan University.