



THE BANFF CENTRE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Mountain Conference Examines Climate and Air Quality Issues

Scientists from around the world will converge in Banff in September to consider the state of the world's mountains. From September 6 to 10, The Banff Centre will host the Ecological and Earth Sciences in Mountain Areas (EESMA) conference. The conference will focus on how climate change impacts alpine environments, natural hazards in mountain areas, air quality issues, and the importance of mountains as biological reserves.

EESMA is organized by Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the University of Alberta, and is sponsored by Environment Canada - Canadian Wildlife Service, with support from Parks Canada and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative.

A key focus of the conference will be climate change. In the Canadian Rockies, glacier cover has decreased by 25% during the last century and scientists believe glaciers have receded to positions last occupied over 3000 years ago. Conference sessions will address the extent of global glacial melting and the associated release of contaminants in glacial meltwater, increasing winter temperatures in arctic alpine environments, and the impacts of climate changes on alpine plants and animals.

The EESMA conference will also examine air quality issues in mountain areas. Deteriorating visibility has been documented in mountain ranges throughout North America as a result of fossil-fuel consumption and forest and agricultural burning. Other emerging air pollution issues in the western mountains include elevated concentrations of persistent organic pollutants in snowpacks, the influence of climate change on air pollution and deposition, and the effect of prescribed fire on air quality.

Other conference sessions will address recent advances in our ability to predict mountain hazards (such as avalanches, rock slides, and river flooding), endangered species in mountain areas, and mountains as ecological reserves.

Scientists, academics, and field researchers from several countries, including Canada, the United States, Mexico, Switzerland, Japan and Australia, will attend the conference.

Mountain Culture at The Banff Centre promotes understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places by creating opportunities for people to share – and find inspiration in – mountain experiences, ideas and visions.

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EESMA participants/topics include:

The State of the World's Mountains

Larry Hamilton, Vice-Chair, Mountains, World Commission on Protected Areas, IUCN
Bruno Messerli, Professor Emeritus, University of Berne, Switzerland

Freshwaters as Indicators of the Cumulative Impacts of Climate Change and Human Activities in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta

David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology, University of Alberta

Global Change in High Elevation Ecosystems

Christian Koerner, Professor, Institute of Botany, University of Basel, Switzerland

Air Quality Issues in North American Mountains

Kathy Tonnessen, U.S. National Park Service, Rocky Mountains Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit, University of Montana

Microbiological contamination of mountain streams by tourism and recreation.

Ralf Buckley, Director, International Centre for Ecotourism Research. Griffith University, Queensland, Australia

Conservation of mountain carnivores: sharing the mountains with fierce creatures

David J. Mattson, U.S.G.S. Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center, Colorado Plateau Field Station

Documenting recent environmental changes and their impact in the Canadian Rockies

Brian Luckman, University of Western Ontario, Canada

Airborne contamination of North American western mountain ecosystems

Dixon H. Landers, Senior Research Environmental Scientist, Environmental Protection Agency, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Corvallis, OR.

A complete conference schedule and participant biographies can be found at
www.banffcentre.ca/mountainculture/mtnconferences/eesma/

For more information or media accreditation to the conference, contact:
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