G E O P H Y S I C I S T S

Honors

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Rita Colwell, distinguished professor at University of Maryland and the Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health, and director of the U.S. National Science Foundation from 1992 to 2004, has been selected as the 2010 Stockholm Water Prize laureate. Her citation indicates that her "numerous seminal contributions towards solving the world's water and water-related public health problems, particularly her work to prevent the spread of cholera, [are] of utmost global importance." Colwell's "pioneering research on the prevention of waterborne infectious diseases has helped protect the health and lives of millions," a 22 March news release notes, adding that Colwell "has shown how changes in climate, adverse weather events, shifts in ocean circulation and other ecological processes can create conditions that allow infectious diseases to spread, and through that link she has led the ability to craft preemptive policies to minimize outbreaks." HM King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is the patron of the prize, which includes a $150,000 award.

Kenneth H. Nealson has been awarded the 2010 American Society for Microbiology's D. C. White Research and Mentoring Award "for applying new and innovative approaches to environmental microbiology." The society's news release notes that Nealson, Wrigley Professor of Geobiology at University of Southern California, Los Angeles, is a founding father of geobiology, a pioneer of the bioluminescence field, and a key member of the astrobiology community.

LETTER

Comment on "Examining the Scientific Consensus on Climate Change"

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In the 20 January 2009 issue of *Eos* (*90*(3), 22–23), P. T. Doran and M. K. Zimmerman gave some interesting data about scientists' responses to the question of whether they think human activity is a significant contributing factor to changing global temperatures. The statements given in the article are in fact "scientific" in that they are cautious. In my opinion, they miss the point.

While scientists are yet discussing the importance and potential magnitude of human influence, the public expects an answer to this simple question: "Would the warming be stopped or even reversed if the requested rigorous actions were taken?" Scientists have carefully avoided answering that blunt question, but most of the public and the politicians, at least in my country, are convinced that an overwhelming majority of scientists is answering "yes."

A strange situation! Is any scientific organization daring enough to answer the public with a "yes" or a "no"?

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MEETING

Site Selected for Colorado Plateau Coring

Colorado Plateau Coring Project Workshop, Phase 2: 100 Million Years of Climatic, Tectonic, and Biotic Evolution From Continental Coring; Albuquerque, New Mexico, 8–11 May 2009

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A workshop was convened in New Mexico to plan for the Colorado Plateau Coring Project (CPCP) and identify the target site for initial coring. The giant continental and nearshore to shallow marine epicontinental basins of the American Southwest are particularly well exposed on the Colorado Plateau and its environs and contain a rich record of early Mesozoic (~251–145 million years ago) strata. This time period was punctuated by two major mass extinctions and is notable for the evolutionary appearance of the modern biota and its apparent dramatic climate changes.

Classic studies of these basins, their strata, and their fossils have made this sequence instrumental in framing the context for the early Mesozoic world. Ambiguities in temporal resolution, uncertainties in global correlations with other early Mesozoic strata, and major doubts about latitudinal position still hamper testing of competing climatic, biotic, and tectonic models for the evolution of western Pangea.

A scientific drilling experiment is essential because the most continuous sections in outcrop are either inaccessible in vertical cliffs or are weathered and geochemically altered, making observations and sampling at the appropriate level of detail impossible. Characteristic shallow bedding attitudes and facies changes also compromise scientists' ability to determine superposition in sections compiled over long distances.

Thirty-seven researchers from nine countries participated in the CPCP workshop and focused discussion on the initial phase of a coring plan for the American Southwest. In a 2007 workshop, participants identified five major stratigraphic packages on and near the Colorado Plateau as key coring targets (see Figure S1 in the electronic supplement to this *Eos* issue (http://www.agu.org/eos_elec/)): Early to Middle Triassic (~251–230 million years ago) Moenkopi Formation; Late Triassic (~230–201 million years ago) Chinle Group; latest Triassic to approximately Middle Jurassic (~203–160 million years ago) Glen Canyon Group; Middle to approximately Late Jurassic (~160–155 million years ago) San Rafael Group; and the Late Jurassic (~155–145 million years ago) Morrison Formation. These targets involve three long (~1-kilometer) cores and two shorter cores designed to recover the critical early Mesozoic transitions.

The Triassic section (Moenkopi Formation and Chinle Group) at Petrified Forest National Park, northern Arizona, was identified in the workshop as the initial target for coring. The Petrified Forest core, about 460 meters in length and HQ gauge (~6.4 centimeters in diameter), will provide a robust reference section where geochronologic, magnetostratigraphic, environmental, and paleontologic information can be registered to a common thickness and unambiguous superposition of observations. Several levels in this section of Triassic strata have recently yielded high-precision uranium-lead (U-Pb) zircon dates; these and further age dates will provide an age-calibrated chronostratigraphic framework to link data from numerous outcrop studies and address questions concerning early Mesozoic biotic and environmental change. It is anticipated that drilling could commence as early as fall 2010. The core will be logged on site and then

shipped to a core slabbing service facility, with ultimate storage at the Rutgers University Core Repository.

The workshop was supported by the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program and the U.S. National Science Foundation and was hosted by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science.

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ABOUT AGU

Vithanage Receives 2009 Natural Hazards Focus Group Award for Graduate Research

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Meththika Vithanage has been awarded the Natural Hazards Focus Group Award for Graduate Research, given annually to recent Ph.D. recipients for outstanding contributions to natural hazards research. Vithanage's thesis is entitled "Effect of tsunami on coastal aquifers: Field studies and tank experiments." She was formally presented with the award at the Natural Hazards Focus Group reception during the 2009 AGU Fall Meeting, held 14–18 December in San Francisco, Calif.

Vithanage received her B.S. in natural resources from Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka in 2002 and an M.S. in environmental science from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, in 2005. In 2009, she attained a Ph.D. in hydrogeology under the supervision of Karsten Jensen and Peter Engesgaard in the Department of Geology and Geography at University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Her research interests include groundwater flow modeling, density-dependent flow and solute transport modeling, and water quality analysis.

Meththika Vithanage