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## Scientists from 30 Nations to Discuss Global Water system

David Sims

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## Scientists from 30 Nations to Discuss 'Global Water system' Oct. 7-9 in Portsmouth

Contact: [David Sims](#)  
603-862-5369  
Science Writer  
Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space

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DURHAM, N.H. – When people talk about global change, conversation often centers around the rising levels of carbon dioxide and other gases that generate greenhouse warming. But central to the planet’s climate and overall health is the “global water system,” which is undergoing profound transformation. Humans have had a huge impact on Earth’s water resources but don’t yet understand how this vast, interconnected system works. Water is important to the entire Earth system, as a fundamental part of climate and weather, biology and human societies. Scientist Charles Vörösmarty of the University of New Hampshire is working with colleagues in the United States and abroad to pull the parts together to get a clear look at the big picture.

Vörösmarty, of UNH’s Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS), will lead more than 100 research and social scientists, policy-makers and agency representatives from more than 30 nations at the Open Science Conference of the Global Water System Project (GWSP) in Portsmouth, N.H., Tuesday through Thursday, Oct. 7-9, 2003. GWSP, co-chaired by Vörösmarty, is an international, multidisciplinary effort to quantify how humans are using and changing the global water cycle and develop policies that will help protect the planet’s water resources.

“We have begun to articulate the role that humans play on the global stage with respect to water, and it’s not just climate change that we have to be concerned about, it’s a whole host of other issues having to do with human health and access to water,” Vörösmarty says.

Those other issues include pollution of inland waterways, overusage of water, changes in land cover, problems with erosion, and large reservoirs that block the movement of fish and disrupt ecosystems. Just as the issue itself is complex, so, too, is the task of bringing together the numerous and disparate networks of scientists, researchers, and policy-makers who work on various aspects of the global water system.

Referring to the experts who “must put heads together” to make sense of the water system from all angles – from biogeochemist to sociologist – Vörösmarty says, “We don’t have a history of working together as a community.” And this is where GSWP and its holistic approach to the subject comes in. “This issue now is one that goes well beyond the climate change question. It’s a multiheaded beast and in order to tackle the question in a coherent manner, we ought to start

thinking about ways in which we can integrate our knowledge about the physical, biogeochemical, biological, and socioeconomic systems. We're trying to articulate all dimensions of the issue to see what the future is going to look like."