

... a report to Soil & Crop Sciences Faculty

by David Baltensperger



TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY



Happy 4th of July!

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Summer session I draws to a close and we have a brief opportunity to reflect as the 4th of July arrives. Have a great 4th as we celebrate the birth of this great country. I will be in the final stages of developing budgets over the next month, but in general, budgets are bit below (\$10,000 teaching and a fee for covering the terminal leave program of 1% for AgriLife Research and Extension) the 2 % base and 1% merit raise opportunity and increase for positions that we have filled, so we will have a bit of belt tightening as we approach the new year.

Congratulations and thanks to the Quantitative Genetics search committee that completed their efforts this month when Seth Murray accepted our offer (see box). We continue to search for several positions around the State, but we also got news of positions being filled at Beaumont and Weslaco this month (see box).

Since the last newsletter I have had an opportunity to meet with Ms. Jenna Kurten and Jack Vitek to get our plans for our Academic Review rolling. We are finishing up the process of identifying a review team and Dr. Smith will be developing the protocol for our review in the near future. We appreciate the early engagement of our faculty in this process and hope that this continues as we develop the appropriate documentation.

Rapid increases in the interest in algae based bio-fuels have provided the opportunity for several discussions during the past month. If you are interested in research in this area, it appears that there may be several opportunities at the Federal level during the next year. Please contact Bob Avant or myself if you have ideas that have not been shared already.

Aflatoxin continues to be a big issue for Texas corn producers and crop insurance programs for corn in Texas. This month we met with corn groups from several Southern States to explore potential research initiatives that might lead to mitigation of this problem. It appears that solutions will require long-term efforts to develop resistant hybrids, better management, in crop treatments and post-harvest treatments and it is pleasing to see our Texas corn producers taking the lead on developing funding opportunities that will provide for this kind of long-term research.

Summer visitors have been numerous with a group from Europe, Westlake Chemical, Advanta, Ceres and Chevron making extended visits during the month. It seems that interest in our programs continue to build as I realize this is only a small compliment that has visited with individual faculty. Keep up the good work on developing and extending these relationships.

Stiles field day once again provided a great opportunity for us to show case some of the

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Aggie Agenda

Continued from first page.

efforts of our faculty. Congratulations to all that made this such a successful event again this year.

In addition to the numerous faculty searches that we have all been involved with in June, I have had the opportunity to participate in interviews for the Department Head of Ag Leadership and the Provost position with the University.

This week I will be meeting with the Space Committee to initiate a review of our space and to initiate a process for allocating space as we move forward. I will also be meeting with the Faculty Advisory Committee to discuss issues they bring forward as well as discussion of some issues of particular concern to me.



Congratulations to this weeks Golden House-keeping Award, the turf team, for their above and beyond efforts to maintain their



present facility and prepare the land at the new urban ecology site for future research. Special thanks to Mr. Ralph Davila for working so closely with Drs. White, Steinke, and Chalmers, and their staff.

Make sure to mark your calendars for our next Faculty Staff meeting on July 9th at noon.

David

Position Updates - See job descriptions at: <https://greatjobs.tamu.edu>

- ✕ Extension Agronomist, Commerce - **New interviews scheduled**
- ✕ Grass Breeding - **Advertised**
- ✕ Quantitative Geneticist - **Interviews Completed** (see note on Seth Murray)
- ✕ Soil Scientist, Stephenville - **Interviews Completed** (see note on Dr. Donald McGahan)
- ✕ Agronomist, Weslaco - **Completed** (see note on Dr. El-Hout)
- ✕ Nutrient Management, Beaumont - **Completed** (see note on Dr. Kalidas Subedi)
- ✕ Extension Agronomist , Uvalde, TX - **Interviewing**
- ✕ Extension Water Quality, College Station - **Advertised**
- ✕ Extension Agronomist, San Angelo - **Interviewing**
- ✕ Wheat Geneticist, Amarillo - **Negotiating**
- ✕ Water and Crop Research, Uvalde - **Advertised**
- ✕ Soil Scientist, Overton - **Developing Ad**

Good-bye Lunch

We will be taking Wendy Barnett to lunch on Wednesday, July 9. Wendy will be leaving us for a position with the Rockdale ISD nine miles from her home. Best Wishes Wendy! Call Judy for details if you are interested in attending. 845-3041

<http://soilcrop.tamu.edu>

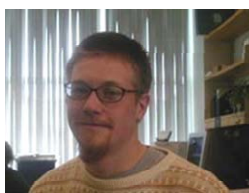
WELCOME

Dr. El-Hout, soil scientist at US Sugar Corporation, has accepted the Cropping Systems Agronomist position with emphasis on bioenergy crops at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Weslaco. Nael received BS, MS, and PhD degrees from Iowa State University. He has more than 20 years of experience with the sugarcane and vegetable industries.

Dr. Kalidas Subedi has accepted an Associate Professor position at the Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Beaumont, pending Visa approval. Kalidas received a B.S. from Haryana Agricultural University in India, where he studies weed science, an M.S. in Tropical Crops Production from the University of Reading in the U.K., and a Ph.D. in Agronomy/Plant Nutrition, also from the University of Reading.

Kalidas is scheduled to begin his employment with the Texas A&M University System on August 1, 2008. A significant aspect of his research is expected to focus on nutrient transport as affected by edaphic, climatic, and biotic variables that impact the rhizosphere, and the response of rice and bioenergy crops to nutrient availability. It is anticipated that his research will result in the development of web-based management decision aids that will be used to address nutrient management and the movement of nutrients within the soil, to the plant, and as pollutants in rivers and ground water. Kalidas will also participate in the development and implementation of mechanistic plant population models to address the biological complexity inherent to cropping systems and to predict genotype yield performance as impacted by abiotic and biotic stresses. The more applied aspect of his research is expected to result in the development of fertility recommendations for commercial cultivars and elite lines of rice.

Dr. Donald McGahan will be joining our faculty for fall classes at Tarleton State University with a 25% AgriLife Research appointment in soil and environmental sciences at the Stephenville Research and Extension Center. He received his Ph.D. in soils and biogeochemistry at the University of California, Davis this past year and has been teaching at Sierra College in Rocklin, CA since then. His research has focused on serpentinic landscapes in California. He will be working on regional soil, water and environmental issues. Welcome aboard Donald.



Dr. Seth Murray recently completed his Ph.D. at Cornell University in Plant Breeding and Genetics. His dissertation research focused on the molecular characterization of biomass production and composition in sorghum for which he spent most of the summers of 2005 and 2006 in Texas collecting the phenotypic data. He is joining the department as an Assistant Professor, Quantitative Genetics and he will assume responsibility and coordination of the Corn Improvement Program and provide leadership for our instruction in quantitative genetics, previously led by Dr. Javier Betran.



Dr. M. Jahangir Alam is a postdoctoral research associate working to further develop a statewide bacterial source tracking library. This project is being funded by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board. Dr. Alam is a native of Bangladesh and received his Ph.D. in Microbiology from Okayama University in Japan. He is working with Dr. Terry Gentry.

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Upcoming Dates

JULY

4

HOLIDAY

9

Faculty Staff Meeting - 12pm

14 - 17

Rio Grande Basin Initiative Conference, Las Cruces, NM

20 - 22

Texas Turfgrass Association Summer Conference, Moody Gardens, Galveston

22

Lynn County Cotton Production Meeting

AUGUST

12 & 13

Small Grains Workers annual meeting – Amarillo, TX

14th

Wheat Heart Wheat Conference-Perryton, TX



Congratulations !

Congratulations to Jennifer Peterson on her completion of the grueling IronMan Coeur d'Alene triathlon that took place June 21, 2008, in Coeur d'Alene, Iowa. Jennifer has participated in several triathlons and decided to try for the IronMan title. Her main goal was to make it across the finish line. To attain this goal she needed to swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and run 26.2 miles. Not only did she accomplish her goal of crossing the finish line, she came in 792 out of 2753 participants. **Way to go Jennifer!** Jennifer is a Program Specialist with Dr. Mark McFarland's group.

Awards

Yufeng Ge has been selected to receive a 2008 Association of Former Students Distinguished Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Doctoral Research.

Yufeng works with Dr. Cristine Morgan doing his post doc managing a project in: *Assessment of Soil Carbon Storage Using Analytical and Spectral Methods*. This a new multi-state project involving Biomass Investment Group and Florida State University. We are assessing the soil carbon change associated with conversion of hay meadow and row crops to a perennial biofuel crop (*Arundo donax*). As part of our exploration, we are integrating proximal soil sensing, remote sensing, and GIS to model and map spatial variability of soil carbon storage. Congratulations Yufeng!

Sympathy

Please keep Linda and Stan Francis in your thoughts and prayers as Stan's father passed away Monday night. There will be a viewing at Hilliard's Funeral home Thursday evening from 5:00 to 7:00 pm and the funeral service will be Friday, 10:00 am at Cottonwood Baptist Church at Tabor.

New Family Member

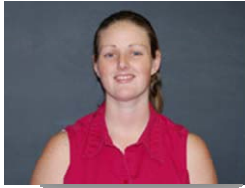
Congratulations to Dr. Wayne Smith and family on the birth of a grandson. Matthew David Cook arrived at 3:55 am weighting 6 lb 12 oz and 19 inches with an IQ off the charts. Mom, Dad, Grandma and grandpa are doing well.

CONTACT US:

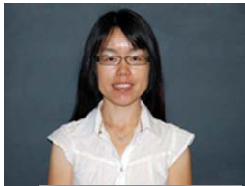
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WELCOME *(continued from page 3)*



Dr. Amanda Engledow is a postdoctoral research associate working on the Expanding and Transforming Options for Biofuel Production: Optimization of Microbial Conversion in the Carboxylate Platform project funded by the Texas A&M Energy Resources Program. Dr. Engledow received her Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from Texas A&M. She is working with Dr. Terry Gentry.



Dr. Autumn (Shengchung) Wang is a postdoctoral research associate working on the environmental assessment portion of the Identification and Enhancement of Texas Oilseed Crops for Second Generation Biodiesel Feedstocks project funded by Chevron Technology Ventures. Dr. Wang is a native of China and received her Ph.D. in Soil Microbiology from the University of Maryland. She is working with Drs. Terry Gentry and Frank Hons.

45th Stiles Farm Field Day



Mr. Bohac, a Granger farmer, dressed in his Wrangler blue jeans, Hawaiian shirt and sandals, attended the Stiles Farm Field Day for his 45th time. He has been coming to Thrall for the field days as long as they had been in existence. "I always learn something," he said. Mr. Bohac also has six children who are avid learners just like their father. They all received scholarships from the Stiles Farm Foundation and attended Texas A&M University. Bohac favors Paul Baumann and his weed control demonstrations. On the tour he teased Paul, "You spray herbicides every year and you have more weeds this year than you did last year!" Other presenters on the tour were Mark Matocha, Mark McFarland and Travis Miller. At the end of the sun baked morning tour, participants were extremely happy to see Carol Rhodes, Lindra Blum and Barbara Bracken serving ice cold snow cones.

<http://soilcrop.tamu.edu>