About AGU

Mass Media Fellows Sought for 2001

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AGU's student members are eligible for the 2001 Mass Media Fellowship program of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Mass Media Fellows are placed with a major news outlet for 10 weeks during the summer. Under the mentorship of an experienced journalist, they cover science-related events, peruse journals, conduct interviews, and prepare articles or broadcast scripts. AGU sponsors one of the fellows each year.

The fellowships are intended primarily for graduate students in the sciences, although junior and senior science majors are eligible. Students who have some experience with the media, for example, at a campus newspaper or radio station, have an advantage, but some successful applicants have experience in other kinds of public outreach activities. Reporting assignments during the fellowship are likely to cover a wide range of sciences, not just those with which the fellow is most familiar.

Following the fellowship, students are expected to complete their degrees. Some remain in science, but better able to communicate the nature and value of their work to lay audiences. Others become journalists, with a good grounding in both the methods and content of scientific research. Either way, both science and journalism benefit from the fellows experience.

Eos articles describing the experiences of former Mass Media Fellows may be read on the AGU Web site, at the end of the brochure, You & the Media, http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/MediaGuide.pdf. Two AGU alumni of the Mass Media Fellowship program will participate in a seminar at the AGU Fall Meeting in San Francisco, discussing their experiences during and after the program. Details of this session, which will also cover the Congressional Fellowships, will be announced later.

To learn more about the Mass Media Fellowships, including eligibility requirements, go to http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/2001Bro.pdf. An application form is available at http://www.agu.org/sci_soc/2001App.pdf.

Mineral & Rock Physics Listserv Available

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A listserv has been created for those interested in mineral and rock physics. It will be used for disseminating information to those interested in these fields; for example, announcements of general interest to researchers, funding opportunities, meeting announcements, and information regarding the work of the AGU Mineral and Rock Physics Technical Committee.

To subscribe, do one of the following:

1. Go to http://agu.org/archives/minrkphys.html and fill out the Web form;
2. Send an e-mail to listserv@agu.org with SUB minrkphys@agu.org xxx xxx (without the quotes; replace the xs with your first and last name) in the body of the message; or
3. Send an e-mail to dmoore@agu.org requesting to be added to the list.

In Brief

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Challenging the rhetoric of water wars In the West, whiskey is for drinking, and water is for fighting over, goes an adage coined by author Mark Twain. Over the years, concerns over water scarcity have threatened to boil over and led to conflicts in the American West and around the globe.

In many of these instances, dams and potentially conflicting uses of water are at the heart of the conflict.

Pakistan, for instance, is worried that an upstream dam on the Indus River in India could lead to water shortages. Syria is upset about Turkey's 20-dam development along the Euphrates River. And Argentina opposes plans by Brazil and Paraguay to construct a hydropower dam on the Parana River.

As competition for water intensifies, further disagreements over access and use are likely to erupt, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said during an Earth Day address on April 10. And unless properly managed, water scarcity can be a major source of strife, as well as a roadblock to economic and social progress.

However, Kader Asmal, chair of the World Commission on Dams, recently rejected what he called water war rhetoric, and the proposition that water scarcity leads to conflicts. In an August 14 speech to the Stockholm Water Symposium, Asmal said that water scarcity is a crisis of biblical proportion, and that 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. But he said water can be a catalyst for cooperation between nations rather than an impetus for war, and that there is not a shred of evidence to back up water war rhetoric.

Asmal, who also serves as South Africa's minister of education, said that since 805 AD, political bodies have signed 3,600 water-related treaties, and that there have only been 7 minor water-related skirmishes all of which began over non-water issues.

Asmal said the reasons for this lack of military action is in part due to strategic concerns including that, in only a few cases is the downstream country totally dependent on the dammed river for water as well as to open communications and principles of equitable use of water resources.

No nations have gone to war strictly over water and, even with supply running low, let me go on record to say that I doubt they ever will, said Asmal. That is not naivete, or even blind optimism. That is a belief based on our growing awareness of water scarcity weighed against the historical evidence of water as a catalyst for cooperation that we can infuse each generation who comes with the capacity, understanding, and political will to experience, use, and enjoy waters as much as our own generation has.

The World Commission on Dams, which grew out of a 1997 workshop sponsored by the World Bank and World Conservation Union, is scheduled to release its report about water and power development in mid-November 2000.

For more information, visit the Web site: http://www.dams.org.

Paleo postings A new Web site will help to satisfy the thirst for information about drought. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has created a site called North American Drought: A Paleo Perspective, which is a sibling to another NOAA Web site, A Paleo Perspective on Global Warming.

Both sites are packed with information about their topic areas and have links to a number of other sites.

For more information, visit the Web site: http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/paleo/perspectives.html.

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