

Larry Kolenbrander to Retire

With very mixed emotions we are reporting that Larry Kolenbrander has recently announced that he will be retiring from Western in the summer of 2008. In 1985, Larry was hired as the founding Director of the Natural Resources Management Program. Under his vision and leadership, the program has grown into one of the most successful programs at Western. During Doc's tenure, over 300 students graduated from the program, and those students are truly making a difference in the conservation and management of natural resources. Scanning our alumni database we see that Doc's students are active as professional resource managers across the region, state, and around the globe.

Larry is leaving an impressive legacy.

Larry and his wife Nancy (who will also be retiring from her position with Hunter Library) plan to remain in Cullowhee where they will enjoy the streams, mountains, lakes, and their own backyard. They also plan to do some traveling.

Be on the lookout for more information on plans to commemorate Doc's service to Western and his students. We hope to schedule a reunion this spring. Please let us know if you would like to participate in the organization and planning of that event (email Pete at bates@email.wcu.edu). We are particularly interested in finding alumni who can contact others from their era.



*Doc training for retirement
(Bear Lake, 2007).*

NRCM Club News *by Staci Mellon*

Welcome freshmen and returning students! Now that we've been able to get settled into our routines I'd like to take the time to tell you about the Natural Resource Conservation & Management Club. The NRCM Club is about giving students extra opportunities for hands on experience through volunteer work, service learning projects,

and internships. In addition, club members are able to socialize and network with other students in the NRCM program. This fall we have several different volunteer opportunities such as our service-learning project on Saturday, September 15th on the Blue Ridge Parkway where we will clean up a section of trail that runs along the crest of the

Plott Balsams. This year is shaping up to be one of our most exciting yet and we want you to come be a part of it. Contact current Club President Jenny Mozeley for more information. (jgmozeley1@catamount.wcu.edu)

Staci Mellon is a NRCM Junior (Landscape Analysis) from Frederick, MD.

NRCM Highlights

Our Name Has Changed—NRM has changed its name to *Natural Resource Conservation and Management (NRCM)*. The program is part of the Geosciences and Natural Resources department (name change too).

NRCM Minor now available—This year also marks the first year that WCU students can get a minor in NRCM. These students add to the ranks of NRCM majors concentrating in forest resources, soil and water conservation or landscape analysis.

We are pleased to announce the addition of **Anna Mathis** as the new Administrative Support Assistant. Anna joined us in August and is busy learning Banner and other software to keep the department running smoothly. We are sorry to lose **Holli Thompson** and wish her well in her new position.

Stillwell Updated—the department office is now located in room 331 in the newly renovated Stillwell Building.

Alumni Profile: Henry Kunzig (Class of 2006)

Henry Kunzig is an Assistant County Ranger for the NC Forest Service in Rutherford County, N.C. Henry graduated in 2006 with a concentration in forest resources.

There are so many different things that are done on a day to day basis that it is hard to narrow down what I do. There are always people wanting Forest Management Plans which is done free of charge for the landowner. Forest management objectives could be timber production, wildlife habitat or even tax reductions.

We do inspections on harvesting operations to make sure that they are following the guidelines for water quality and to prevent sedimentation.

Regeneration is another important aspect. We might plant one acre of white oak or 1000 acres of loblolly for an individual or a company.

Fire control and prevention are also a very big part of the job. We can be called out to a small fire in a backyard that had gotten out of hand, or a 100-acre fire on top of a mountain caused by a lightning strike. Most of our prevention is done with Smokey the Bear in parades or group functions like Girl Scouts and Field days.



Henry Kunzig, Assistant County Ranger, NC Forest Service

Stream Temperatures and Summer Ventures *Larry Kolenbrander*

This has been a busy and productive year for me. Since I stepped down as department head in summer of 2005, I have been able to get back into doing more research. I presented a poster session in Savannah in January that summarized some of the stream temperature and water quality work that I and a number of students have been doing on the streams at the Whitmire Farm.

I continue to be involved in the Summer Ventures in Science and Mathematics for high school students during June and July. The photo was taken while doing a macro-

invertebrate sampling of Cullowhee Creek. This year I worked with 16 students from around the state. I always have a great time working with some of the brightest high school students in North Carolina.

I have announced my intentions to retire at the end of this academic year. I have been involved in the NRM program since the fall of 1985 and have seen the program grow from 7

students then to over 300 graduates from the Program.

I'm proud to be able to say that I have had every one of our graduates in one or more classes, and I'm proud of what our graduates have been able to do with their degrees.



Macro-invertebrate sampling of Cullowhee Creek

Student Perspective: Land Conservancy *Carey Burda*

Western North Carolina landowners are increasingly turning to land trusts for assistance in protecting their holdings from development. Land trusts are non-profit organizations that buy the development rights (or the landholder may donate the rights) while providing flexible conservation methods to meet the needs of landowners (e.g., farmland preservation, timber management, watershed protection). Local land trusts include the Land

Trust for the Little Tennessee, Carolina Mountain Conservancy, and Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy among others.

Under the stewardship of trusts, the land will be monitored and held in perpetuity which will likely promote and benefit healthier communities. Landholders not only preserve a precious land resource but they may also experience some tax benefit by relinquishing development rights.

In addition to providing valuable services to the region through preserving open space, vistas, and farmland, land trusts also present Western Carolina University students with opportunities to gain experience through volunteering, contracting, and possibly even landing that perfect natural resources conservation job.

Carey Burda is a NRCM Junior (Landscape Analysis) from Madison County.

Western Carolina Forest Sustainability Initiative *Pete Bates*

I am pleased to write this column after a year of humbly trying to follow in Larry Kolenbrander's footsteps as Director of the NRCM program, and following a busy summer that was highlighted by our daughter Jenna's wedding in Montana.

The Western Carolina Forest Sustainability Initiative continues to grow and provide real-world forestry experiences for our students. Rob Lamb joined the staff in the spring of 2006 bringing valuable expertise to our initiative. We are now working with over a dozen landowners with nearly 20,000 acres in holdings.

This year we initiated a project with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission to evaluate the effects of prescribed burning, herbicide application, and shelterwood harvests on oak regeneration on the Cold Mountain Game Lands in Haywood County. Our students

were excited to participate in the first burn this past April.

Eight students plan to attend the Society of American Foresters Convention this fall in Oregon. Students will report on their work related to deer browse effects on forest regeneration at the Biltmore Estate, and crop tree release treatments at Balsam Mountain Preserve.



WCFSI intern Weston VanDenaBeele participating in the Cold Mt Burn

Students need your support!

Our students are trying to raise nearly \$3000 to support their travel to the National Convention of the Society of American Foresters in Portland, Oregon this October. If you would like to support this or other activities; please make a tax-deductible contribution to the NRM Development Fund, C/O NRCM Program, 331 Stilwell, Cullowhee, NC 28723.

Mapping River Cane Habitat *Joni Storie*

Joni Storie joined the NRCM Faculty in Fall 2005. She teaches courses in remote sensing, weather & climate and land suitability classification.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians are interested in locating potential and existing river cane sites in WNC. To meet this goal, the first objective was to develop a GIS database that included landscape variables such as elevation, hydrology, soils, county boundaries and

roads of WNC. Once the database was developed, Torry Nergart (graduated May 2007) performed buffering and re-class analysis based on optimal river cane habitat determine by field data collection. Existing river cane were found to be at elevations less than 760 m, within 76 m of rivers, and on sandy or sandy-loam soils.

The final product was a map showing 750 hectares (1800 acres) of potential



Torry Nergart at the AAG in San Francisco (April 2007).

river cane habitat in WNC. Torry presented a poster of the results of this project at the American Association of Geographer's meeting in San Francisco. This project was funded through a grant provided by the Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources.

Laura DeWald *Biography*

After earning degrees in forestry from Michigan Tech (BS), Penn State (MS) and Virginia Tech (PhD), I conducted research in Florida and Minnesota and then joined the forestry faculty at Warren Wilson College (Asheville, NC), Green River Community College (Renton, WA), and then for 10 years at Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff, AZ).

I returned east to join the Biology and NRCM faculty at WCU in 2004. I enjoyed working for the USFS in McCall Idaho during the summers while working on my BS degree, and also had great fun managing Warren Wilson College's commercial forests when I taught there.

My research focus is forest restoration and conservation genetics and my projects focus on conserving forest biodiversity and restoring healthy ecosystems.



**NATURAL RESOURCE
CONSERVATION &
MANAGEMENT**

Stillwell 331
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, NC 28723

Phone: 828-227-7367
E-mail: bates@email.wcu.edu

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Upcoming Events

Saturday September 15th—NRCM Service Event—Blue Ridge Parkway trail maintenance followed by picnic. We start from Water Rock Knob at 9:00 am and start the picnic at 12:30 pm. Contact Pete Bates at bates@wcu.edu for more information. If you need a ride from campus, contact jbugden@wcu.edu (limited spaces available in the vans).

September 29th—Wildland Firefighting 32-hour Training starts at Southwestern Community College. See Pete for more details (bates@wcu.edu).

October 6th—Tentative date for Amphibian/Reptiles wildlife volunteering. See Ron Davis for more details (rdavis@wcu.edu).

October 27th—Bog Turtle Habitat wildlife volunteering. See Ron Davis for more details (rdavis@wcu.edu).

October 24th—Career Day. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service among other potential employers will be there and are looking forward to meeting NRCM students. See Larry Kolenbrander for details.

Wednesday November 14th—GIS DAY hosted by Geosciences & Natural Resources and the Hunter Library. Contact Joni Bugden-Storie at jbugden@wcu.edu for more information regarding workshop registration.

On-going—Wildlife Volunteering opportunities are available to do road surveys for Whippoorwills, small mammal surveys, radio telemetry with flying squirrels. See Ron Davis for more details (rdavis@wcu.edu).

Tracking Timber Rattlers *Ron Davis*

Ron Davis joined the NRCM Faculty in Fall 2006. He teaches courses in GIS, Ecology and Wildlife.

My original title was “whose bright idea was this to follow a venomous snake through the steep mountain laurel and briar infested hillsides of western North Carolina?” It seemed a little long.

Actually, while I started out interested in these animals, as I track them, I’m more and more impressed. Timber rattlers are remarkably well suited for living in these mountains, and despite their reputation are not aggressive. These snakes’ survival depends



Female snake nicknamed “Little Mama” in Haywood County

upon not being seen and so given any chance at all they will stay put and let other animals (including us) go on by.

My main interest with these and other animals in NC is in how they make use of

the landscapes in relation to how we manage or conserve it. Some interesting trends are showing up with their response to forest management and as time goes by I’ll be looking closely at how they respond to increased development pressure.

I’m always glad to talk about wildlife, GIS or anything natural resource related so feel free to email me (rdavis@wcu.edu) if you have any questions or comments.

“Timber rattlers are remarkably well suited for living in these mountains, and despite their reputation are not aggressive.”