

WVU's National Environmental Services Center Hosts Central Asian Visitors

Water Resources Issues Explored during D.C. Meeting



Dr. Gerald Iwan, executive director of the National Environmental Services Center at WVU, dons an Ak-kalpak, a traditional Kyrgyzstan hat worn by Kyrgyz men.



Water resources professionals from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan pose in front of the U.S. Capitol. Hosted by WVU's National Environmental Services Center, the visitors are part of an international project seeking answers to trans-boundary water issues.

At first, West Virginia would seem to have little in common with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. But, as with nearly everywhere in the world, water resources management is a growing concern for these former Soviet republics and they have reached out, through the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) program, to WVU's National Environmental Services Center (NESC) to help develop solutions.

From March 8 through 14, 2014, NESC hosted 11 visitors from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan for a series of meetings and field trips in Washington, D.C. Participants included Central Asian government officials, non-government organizations, water managers, and citizen groups who are working to address trans-boundary water challenges. The visitors were interested in learning about U.S. experiences with interstate and international water issues, as well as irrigation practices and sustainable farming techniques, water allocation, and integrated water resources management.

"Having this opportunity to share perspectives on the importance of water with our Central Asian partners, confirmed our common dependence on this essential resource," said Dr. Gerald Iwan, Ph.D., NESC's executive director. "Problems related to water transcend political and geographical boundaries and are shared by the global community."

These participants met with U.S. interstate water commission administrators at a conference of the Association of Clean Water Administrators in Washington D.C., as well as representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Geologic Survey, and the Environmental Law Institute in the D.C.-area. In addition to conference sessions related to integrated water resources management, watershed management, sustainable agricultural practices, data utilization, concerns for competing resources, and climate change impacts, NESC and the international guests participated in field trips to the Anacostia River Watershed and Polyface Farms in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

These March 2014 activities are part of a contract NESC negotiated with the WVURC and CAREC through USAID. The U.S. study tour complements training sessions NESC will be providing in these Central Asian countries in 2014 and 2015.