



Notes from the Field

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Notes from Dennis Decoteau New IGDP Ecology Faculty Member

When Dennis Decoteau decided to step down as Head of the Horticulture Department in the College of Agricultural Sciences in 2004, he wanted to be more involved in teaching and research in the air quality and terrestrial ecosystems field. After over eight years as a departmental administrator at Clemson University and at Penn State (since 1997), this redirection was in many ways a return to his roots and a natural evolution.

Dr. Decoteau received his B.S. degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Maine at Fort Kent (1980) and his M.S. and Ph.D degrees in Plant Science/Physiology from the University of Massachusetts. As a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts in the early 1980s, he conducted research on the potential use of stress ethylene production from plants as indicators of ozone (and later other biocides) injury. As a postdoctoral scholar at Purdue University, Dr. Decoteau was the primary researcher involved in developing a bioindicator program for air pollutants to use in melon fields of southwestern Indiana and implementing a research program to determine the role of ozone and sulfur dioxide on melon decline in that region. When he was hired by Clemson to conduct vegetable crop research, his research and interest continued in the environmental field and he conducted some groundbreaking work on light regulated growth (photomorphogenesis) of plants.

In his new role as Professor of Horticulture and Plant Ecosystem Health, Dr. Decoteau is working with Dr. Don Davis in the Department of Plant Pathology in directing research programs on plant and ecosystem health and air quality. Ongoing major areas include: Forest health monitoring program in rural PA sponsored by the USDA Forest Service, air quality monitoring in rural Pennsylvania sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection – Bureau of Air Quality, and sensitivity of Chambourcin grape to ozone. In addition, he teaches Hort 315 – Environmental Effects on Hort Crop Growth (which he has taught annually since 1998), ERM 430 – Air Pollution Impacts to Terrestrial Ecosystems, Hort 490 – Senior Seminar, and Hort 524 – Experimental Procedures in Plant Research. Dr. Decoteau is also responsible for the outreach efforts



Dr. Decoteau (far left) with Pennsylvania Department of Environment Protection Secretary Kathleen McGinty (second from the right) during a tour of the Air Quality Learning and Demonstration Center at the Arboretum at Penn State last fall. Also pictured are Dick Stevenson (second from left) and Jim Savage (far right) of Penn State

of the newly developed Air Quality Learning Center in the Penn State Arboretum.

During his career, Dr. Decoteau has won numerous teaching and research awards, including the Outstanding Teacher Award in Horticulture from Clemson University, the American Society for Horticultural Sciences Education Publication Award in recognition of the most outstanding paper on horticultural education published by the Society, the L. M. Ware Distinguished Research Award from the Southern Region American Society for Horticultural Science, and the IV Congreso Internacional De Neuvas Tecnologias Agricolas Award. He has written extensively in the scientific press and for the general public and published in 2000 the textbook *Vegetable Crops* for Prentice Hall, Inc. Dr. Decoteau's second textbook *Principles of Plant Science: Environmental Factors and Technologies in Growing Plants* was published by Prentice Hall in 2005.

Schedule of Events:

March 3 Zola's Social 5:30

March 18-20 NEEC

March 31 Ecology Career Forum
RSVP gmm193@psu.edu

Pizza at Colloquium

Based on feedback at the previous EGSO meeting, a new approach to getting feedback on student talks will begin on March 3. The EGSO will host a post-colloquium pizza lunch discussion with the colloquium speaker. It offers:

*** the opportunity to give feedback and informally discuss the speaker's research

*** a forum for more scientific interaction, possibly leading to future collaboration, with other Ecology students

The pizza will arrive at the conclusion of the talk, and lunch will take place in the same room, 10 Tyson. ALL Ecology students are welcome, not just those registered for the class.

Ecology Career Forum

Did you know that less than half of science graduate students end up in academia? The Ecology Program is sponsoring an informal evening with a panel of successful scientists whose careers have led an alternative route, including: John Young, Environmental Consultant, ASA Analysis and Communication; Andy Warner, Senior Advisor, Water Management, Nature Conservancy; David Pacchioli, Science Writer, Research Penn State; Carolyn Mahan, Assistant Professor of Biology Penn State Altoona. The Ecology Career Forum will take place March 31st from 3:30-5:30 pm in 118 ASI. Dinner from Stone Soup and Milheim Bakery will be included. Please RSVP to Glenna Malcolm gmm193@psu.edu by March 25th, first-come, first-serve.

Congratulations Nora!

On the acceptance of your publication:
"Grass-Selective Herbicides Improve Diversity of Site Infested with Japanese Stiltgrass (Pennsylvania)" appears on March 2005 issue of Ecological Restoration (vol. 23, issue 1)



Japanese stiltgrass, a Pennsylvania invasive



NEEC Update

We had an overwhelming response to our call for abstracts for the 2005 Northeast Ecology and Evolution Conference. By the close of our early registration period we had 43% more participants than pre-registered for the 2003 conference at the University of Connecticut. Of the 237 undergrads, graduate students, and post-docs from 55 institutions who have registered, 177 will present a poster or a talk. It promises to be a world-class conference with excellent learning and networking opportunities for its participants.

Volunteers Needed

Spring semester is here and the Northeast Ecology and Evolution Conference (NEEC) is quickly approaching. We are looking for volunteers to help as receptionists during the daytime on both Saturday and Sunday as a first point of contact. To volunteer please contact Andy Wilson amw328@psu.edu.

Always looking for good stories!
Please send next newsletter submissions to Jenny Edwards by March 25th.
jme145@psu.edu