



Center for Environmental  
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**the LINK...** connecting citizens,  
policy-makers, and  
businesses & industry in  
environmental contexts



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## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

1998-99 marks the fourth year of existence for the Center for Environmental Communication Studies. As you will find in the stories that follow, CECS researchers and students are examining a wide variety of issues and problems related to environmental communication, including risk communication, communication in environmental organizations, and public involvement in environmental decision-making. Once again this year, CECS efforts have resulted in a number of research publications and presentations, as well as over \$100,000 in research grants awarded by government and industry sponsors.

An increasing amount of CECS activity is devoted to local and regional environmental concerns. CECS faculty and staff are getting involved with a growing number of community organizations that focus on the environment, including the Hamilton County Environmental Action Commission, the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators, and the Ohio Environmental

Council. We are devoting a great deal of energy to local grassroots initiatives to improve community access to environmental information and decision-making tools. An example of such an initiative is the effort underway to establish a regional Environmental Resource Center (see p. 3). We are also following an emerging environmental controversy in the city of Marion, Ohio, located 150 miles north of Cincinnati (see p. 3). These activities not only contribute to the teaching and research capabilities of CECS faculty, staff, and students, but they also fulfill a community service dimension that is vital to the CECS mission.

CECS faculty and staff continue to conduct research related to the Department of Energy's environmental remediation activities at nuclear weapons production facilities in Ohio and elsewhere. Featured in this newsletter are the current organizational communication research efforts of Professor Gail Fairhurst (p.4). Fairhurst is examining issues related to workforce restructuring at environmental remediation sites. We are also pleased to have played a role in the formation of a Communication and Nuclear Weapons Research Group (p. 5). The group has established a listserv and intends to develop collaborative research efforts related to environmental and other dimensions of America's nuclear weapons complex .

CECS wishes to acknowledge the generosity of UC Communication Professor Emeritus Rudolph Verderber, whose gift to the department made it possible to bring J. Robert Cox, well-known environmental communication scholar and national leader of the Sierra Club, to our campus in April (see p. 2). We also want to welcome a new faculty member, John Delicath, to the University of Cincinnati and to CECS. Starting this Fall, John will add his interest in environmental justice issues to our team of scholars and teachers (see p. 2). In all, 1998-99 has been a busy and satisfying year. We are hopeful that next year, the fifth for CECS, will be even more exciting.



## CECS HIGHLIGHTS

### CECS Welcomes New Assistant Professor

In September 1999, the Department of Communication and CECS will welcome new faculty member John W. Delicath. As a new Assistant Professor in the Department, John will be teaching classes in environmental communication, among others, for undergraduates and graduate students.

John comes to the University of Cincinnati from Allegheny College (Meadville, PA) where he taught undergraduate courses in the rhetorics of environmental advocacy and environmental justice as Visiting Assistant Professor of Communication Arts. In addition to his teaching appointments at Allegheny and at the University of Pittsburgh (1996-97), John also served as Director of Debate at Carlow College (1997-1998) and worked with the Public Debate program at the University of Pittsburgh to execute public debates on environmental and social justice issues. He is co-founder and member of the Advisory Committee for National Public Debates on Environmental Justice/Brownfields, in partnership with the United Church of Christ. John was an active participant in the development of the Environmental Communication Commission with the National Communication Association, and has been conducting research in the field of environmental communication for eight years. His academic background includes argumentation, persuasion, and debate, with specializations in rhetorical theory, media studies, and critical social theory.

Currently, John is finishing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa, which focuses on environmental justice, public participation, and the relationship between scholarship and political advocacy. In addition, he is working on a grant application that would create a series of national public debates on environmental justice and brownfields issues.

#### PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS BY JOHN W. DELICATH

"The Rhetoric of Green Consumerism: A Social Ecological Critique." *Speaker and Gavel* 31, 2-26, 1994.

"In Search of Ecotopia: 'Radical Environmentalism' and the Possibilities of Utopian Rhetorics." In S. Muir and T. Veenendall (Eds.), *Earthtalk: Communication Empowerment for Environmental Action*. Westport: CN: Praeger. 1996.

"Re-presenting the 'Black-Macho': *Boyz N the Hood* and the Politics of Black Masculinity." *Howard Journal of Communication*. (under review).

"The Greening of Communication Studies: Reviewing the Terrain of Environmental Communication." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. (review essay; in progress).

### Sierra Club Leader Visits Department of Communication

On Monday, April 12th, Dr. J. Robert Cox, communication professor from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and former President of Sierra Club, became the first of a series of guest speakers for the Department of Communication's Verderber Spotlight on Scholarship Lecture Series at the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Cox gave two lectures during his stay in Cincinnati. This first lecture, entitled "The National Environmental Movement and the Challenge of 'Environmental Justice': Notes from the Field," focused on Dr. Cox's experiences with environmental justice communities. As a distinguished professor and former President of the Sierra Club, Dr. Cox worked with many of these communities in an effort to improve their situations.



The second lecture, "Spotlight on Scholarship: Major Influences in My Career and Work", gave a more personal look at Dr. Cox's background as a communication scholar. Sharing stories about his childhood, Dr. Cox explained how at a young, impressionable age, he was motivated by his grandfather's stories to partake in a career which would help bring justice and fairness to the world. As an undergraduate communication major and as a Ph.D. student in rhetoric, Dr. Cox honed his communication skills and opted for a career that would allow him to apply his extensive academic knowledge. Dr. Cox's insights helped audience members see one way that a person can combine a communication degree with their personal goals and desires and subsequently find a challenging and fulfilling career in the field of communication studies.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & COMMUNITY PROJECTS

### River Valley Schools: An Environmental Controversy Unfolds

In 1942, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers opened the Marion Engineering Depot (MED) northeast of Marion, Ohio. From 1942-1961, it was the largest military operation of its kind, serving as a location for the repair and maintenance of heavy machinery, transformers, and generators. Until its closure in 1962, operational wastes, including Trichloroethylene (TCE), Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), and benzene-containing fuels and oils, were dumped into pits on the east side of the MED. In 1963, River Valley Schools were constructed, with portions of the high school and middle school campuses atop or adjacent to the MED.

Aerial photographs indicate that as much as 75% of school grounds are located on the former waste disposal area.

Between 1963 and 1998, a total of 90 cases of cancer, including 25 cases of leukemia were documented

among River Valley graduates, current students, and others who live and work near the schools. In January, 1997, a group of local residents began to question the numbers. Later that year, the Ohio Department of Health initiated an investigation of the high incidences of cancer, and concluded that leukemia cases among River Valley graduates and students are nearly three times the expected number.



River Valley High School (Marion, OH)

Since the investigation, a series of soil and air tests have been conducted at the schools by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Each time toxins are documented, areas of the River Valley campus are roped off from public use. Meanwhile, students still attend classes in the school buildings.

A number of State environmental groups, non-profit community advocacy organizations, and individuals involved in the environmental justice arena, including Jan Schlichtmann (portrayed in *A Civil Action*) and Lois Gibbs (activist from Love Canal, NY), are asking U.S. EPA to take the case on. To date, actions have not been taken to remediate the site, nor to relocate the school children and employees who may be exposed to carcinogens daily.

CECS researcher, Rhonda Barnes-Kloth, has been following this controversy since January, 1999, and is working with Ohio Environmental Council to increase State and national awareness of this situation. In the coming months, CECS will continue monitor the events in Marion, in an attempt to provide community access to information that might help them gain additional support, and increase their chances for participating in the decisions being made by policymakers.

### CECS Participates in Environmental Resource Center

The Environmental Resource Center (ERC) is a public service organization whose goal is to provide environmental data, news, and information that is relevant to the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana tri-state region. The ERC will foster research and education on regional environmental issues, and will enhance collaboration among citizens, environmental organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions.

CECS researchers Dr. Stephen Depoe and Ms. Rhonda Barnes-Kloth serve on the ERC Board. Dr. Depoe serves as Chair of the Community Environmental Calendar Committee, and Ms. Barnes-Kloth Chairs the Education Committee.

Funding for ERC's operating costs will be raised through grants and contributions from private donors and

corporate and government sponsors.

Dr. Depoe recently received funding from the UC Faculty Development Council to conduct workshops describing how the ERC can be used by University faculty and their students. Over the next several months, CECS will continue to assist ERC with applications for additional funding.

### Youth Environmental Project Enters Year Three

As part of a four year grant program funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), CECS Graduate Assistant Amy Lombardo, is working with the Youth Environmental Project (YEP) in the Lower Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati. YEP is geared toward teenagers and young adults in Lower Price Hill, in an effort

to help them build leadership and advocacy skills that will encourage their neighbors to take an active role in improving the environmental health of their community.

YEP participants are currently preparing to become master puppeteers for their latest project, creating their own puppets, stage, and scenery for an "All About Lead" puppet show. The show discusses the hazard of lead poisoning for kids of all ages. YEP will be performing their puppet show this spring for various elementary schools in Lower Price Hill, in order to educate younger children about the dangers of lead.

Dr. M. Kathryn Brown, UC Department of Environmental Health, is the lead on this NIEHS grant. The project is administered by the Urban Appalachian Council, a community-based non-profit organization, in partnership with the LPH Community Council, and the Cincinnati Health Department.

## CECS FEATURED RESEARCHER: GAIL T. FAIRHURST

Dr. Gail Fairhurst, Professor of Communication and CECS researcher at the University of Cincinnati, is a nationally-recognized expert in leadership communication. Her current research interests include: leadership communication and organizational change; leadership communication during work force restructuring; the communication of corporate philosophy statements; and leader-member relationships. She frequently publishes in both communication and organizational science outlets, and she has consulted with a number of businesses and organizations, including: the U.S Air Force; Boeing; Procter & Gamble; General Electric; Kroger; and State Farm Insurance.

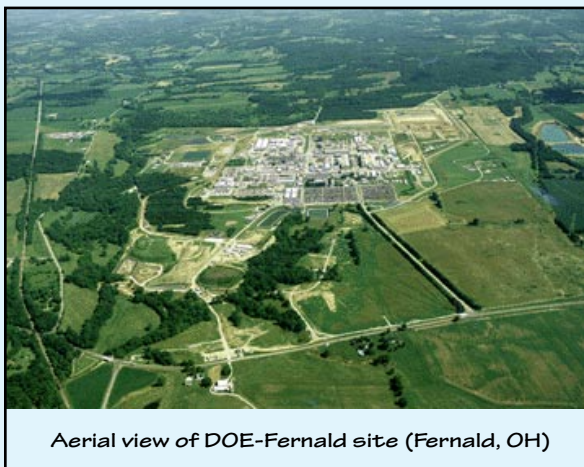
### Work Force Restructuring at Environmental Remediation Sites

Corporate downsizing and work force transition have become facts of life for most modern day corporations. Examples of this can be found among the Department of Energy's (DOE) environmental remediation contractors who have been charged with cleaning up hazardous materials. Issues and tensions arise at DOE remediation sites due to conflicting needs, such as the need to terminate a certain number of employees at regular intervals, and the need to retain some knowledgeable employees at the site for completing clean-up. Tensions also arise from the multiple interests that must be managed, including those of remediation workers, the site contractor, the local community, DOE, and the Office of the Inspector General.

Conducted by CECS researcher Dr. Gail Fairhurst, with Project Manager Rhonda Barnes-Kloth, and CECS Graduate Research Fellow Dan Cahill, the Work Force Restructuring study will examine the effects

of Fluor Daniel Fernald's (FDF; DOE-Fernald site remediation contractor) innovative managed attrition program on turnover outcomes over time and with different populations. The goal of managed attrition is to avoid involuntary separation of the work force through openness in sharing manpower planning information. (The DOE-Fernald site, located 17 miles north of Cincinnati, OH, refined uranium from 1953-1989 as part of the U.S. DOE nuclear weapons production complex.)

During the first phase of the study, completed in late 1998, a series of interviews examined leadership communication in the work force restructuring program at the DOE-Fernald site. The second phase will involve a survey of current site employees to uncover the key communication variables and outcomes associated with work force restructuring and its impact on survivors. The second phase of the Work Force Restructuring study is funded by a sponsored research award from FDF.



Aerial view of DOE-Fernald site (Fernald, OH)

### Fernald Living History Project Report

Over the past year, CECS has continued to pursue funding for the Fernald Living History Project (FLHP), an effort to preserve and record Fernald-area community histories. In addition, the FLHP Volunteer Advisory Group solicited community interest in the project during Summer 1998 at two local festivals.

Summertime activities also included the production of a promotional video for the FLHP by CECS with help from Fluor Daniel Fernald (FDF, site remediation contractor) Multi-

media Visual Services. CECS researchers interviewed six community members and workers for the video, which was shown at various public meetings to clarify the project concept and encourage additional community involvement. Additional support for the project has been solicited through the establishment of a project web site (<http://offo2.epa.state.oh.us/flhp.htm>), developed by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Federal Facilities Oversight.

Most recent developments related to the project include: a shift in meeting facilitation from CECS to a community member; and a DOE-funded effort to conduct 80-100

interviews with workers and community members by the end of fiscal year 1999, in order to document a Fernald site history. Full-length copies of the interviews will be available in the Public Environmental Information Center, the public repository for DOE and FDF documents.

During the coming year, CECS will pursue funding for interviews that preserve Fernald-area community histories through various grant applications. CECS researchers will also begin documenting their experiences with this community-university partnership through papers and presentations at various academic conferences.

## COMMUNICATION AND NUCLEAR ISSUES

### Inter-Site Discussions on Nuclear Waste

In June 1998, the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) convened two national workshops (Chicago and San Diego) entitled "Inter-Site Discussions on Nuclear Material and Waste." Each workshop brought together people impacted by the Department of Energy's (DOE) policy decisions regarding the management of nuclear materials and waste. CECS Graduate Research Fellow Jennifer Hamilton served as a facilitator for the workshop held in Chicago.

The workshops presented information on upcoming DOE decisions, proposed waste management alternatives, and discussed their implications. Individual DOE sites sent agency and citizen representatives to the workshop to share their unique concerns, and to provide a local context for the national discussions. Workshop participants engaged in small group discussions and used an interactive game to generate a list of crucial issues that DOE should consider in its decision making process.

The Inter-Site Discussions were the culmination of a two and a half year effort to create a national dialogue involving citizens living near DOE sites across the country. CECS conducted one of four pilot workshops held from June to November 1997 that provided guidance to the LWVEF on ways the larger effort might enable a national discussion of these issues across perspectives and sites.

### Pro-Active Public Affairs at DOE's Ohio Field Office

Dr. Jerry Jordan has been working with the Department of Energy since May 1998 to design effective assessment tools for pro-active public affairs programs. Officials at the DOE Ohio field office in Miamisburg, Ohio have developed public affairs programs that are designed to *prevent* public relations crises from occurring. These pro-active programs are quite different from traditional public relations activities which are usually *reactive* in nature. That is, many traditional public relations activities are designed to address public protests or respond to public concerns.

In recent years, the DOE field office in Miamisburg has tried to focus its efforts on establishing and maintaining trust and open lines of communication with the local community. Their public affairs efforts have been aimed at establishing trust and building relationships in the community rather than waiting for the community to voice their worries and concerns.

Dr. Jordan has been helping the field office develop measurement strategies to assess the effectiveness of their programs. Pro-active public affairs programs are difficult to assess because their goal is to *prevent* certain events from occurring. Traditional, reactive public relations efforts are relatively easy to assess. If

### CECS Joins Communication and Nuclear Weapons Research Group

"Communication and Ecology at (Former) Nuclear Weapons Sites: A Roundtable Discussion" was held at the 1999 Western States Communication Association Conference in Vancouver, BC. During this session, a variety of nuclear weapons complex issues were discussed by communication scholars from across the country, including academic projects currently underway that pertain to various U.S. nuclear weapons production and/or disposal sites. Participants also discussed ways to encourage collaboration and dialogue among academic researchers and others across the U.S. nuclear weapons complex.

The Communication and Nuclear Weapons Research Group was created in response to the roundtable discussion. The purpose of this electronic discussion group is to enhance dialogue among communication scholars and other interested parties who are involved in studying nuclear weapons policy, technology, and institutions, particularly the U.S. nuclear weapons production complex. To join the discussion, address an e-mail message to: [listserv@listserv.uc.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.uc.edu), and place the following command in the body of the message: SUBSCRIBE UC-CNWRG First MI Last.

Discussions concerning potential collaborative research projects will continue at the Summer 1999 Conference on Communication and the Environment in Flagstaff, AZ and at the 1999 National Communication Association Conference in Chicago, IL.

they are effective, a crisis is averted and positive public opinion is restored. But when pro-active public affairs programs are successful, it seems as if nothing happens in the community because less public concern is expressed.

Dr. Jordan recently compiled a resource book for the Miamisburg field office which outlined a number of measurement strategies and suggested how DOE might implement those strategies. "You have to do something besides a straight forward phone survey," Jordan says. "When their [DOE] programs are successful, people will not worry about DOE activities, they will trust that things are being handled OK."

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Great Lakes Fish Advisory Project Nears Completion

The Great Lakes Fish Advisory study has now entered its fourth and final year of operation. Project researchers Dr. Robert Griffin (Marquette University), Dr. Sharon Dunwoody (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and Dr. Kurt Neuwirth (CECS, University of Cincinnati) received funding from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to study peoples' understanding of government-issued advisories for fish caught in the Great Lakes.

Historically, a number of facilities have dumped manufacturing wastes directly into the Great Lakes. Water samples are found to contain harmful levels of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls), a toxic industrial byproduct. PCBs remain active in the Great Lakes almost indefinitely, and over a period of time becomes concentrated in the fatty tissue of fish. When people catch and eat those fish, PCBs are transferred to the bodies of the human consumers.

During each of the past three years, some 400 Cleveland and Milwaukee residents were interviewed by

the researchers in order to gauge their understanding of information about the risks of consuming fish caught in the Great Lakes. In the third year of the study, participants were given a specially designed brochure that contained information typically found in fish advisories.



Fishing on Lake Superior

The study is designed to clarify relationships among social trust in the institutions issuing fish advisories, risk judgments of individuals, emotional responses those individuals might have to information about hazards, and information processing styles. "All of the study elements are in place and we hope to demonstrate relationships between the kind of information processing most folks do, and what they think, feel, and how they behave when it comes to eating Great Lakes fish," said Neuwirth.

The three Great Lakes Fish Advisory researchers are currently in the process of tabulating and analyzing the data generated by the project. A final report to ATSDR will be issued in late Fall of this year.

### Effects of Domestic Violence on Home Environments

Dr. Teresa Sabourin is currently completing a two year grant from the University Research Council and the Cincinnati Coalition on Domestic Violence, to examine the affective behavioral change in abusive men as they undergo four weeks of training at the "Amend Program."

During the first year, this study involved open-ended interviews with a convenience sample of men at the Amend Program. Behavioral changes were measured in terms of whether these men "owned up" to the responsibility for their actions and changed their construction of reality. The interviews were coded as partial concessions, full concessions, or justifications. The study is currently in the data analysis stage.

By Summer 1999, a paper will be submitted to Communication Monographs for publication. The Amend Program will also receive a report with evaluations and recommendations to be able to restructure their program according to research findings.

### 'Drench' Effects of Media Portrayals of Volcanic Disaster

Drs. C. Mo Bahk and Kurt Neuwirth have been investigating 'drench' effects of media portrayals of volcanic disaster. Drench analysis is a relatively new approach to media effects research in the field of communication. In contrast to the 'cultivation' perspective which regards media effects as resulting from gradual, cumulative exposure to mediated representations of the real world, the drench analysis acknowledges that some media presentations and role portrayals may generate intense, lasting impacts on some individuals.

The results of this study particularly demonstrate the potential or drench analysis as a micro-level theoretical approach to the explanation of media effects that would also be compatible with the cultivation analysis as a macro-level approach. The drench analysis is expected to more clearly delineate the effects of dramatic media messages that may have been obscured previously by aggregate analytic

treatments. The study is currently under review for conference presentation and publication.

### CECS Joins Educators Group

CECS researcher Rhonda Barnes-Kloth, has joined the Greater Cincinnati Environmental Educators (GCEE), an organization of teachers and non-formal educators who believe in the importance of bringing environmental principles into Cincinnati-area schools and classrooms. On June 17, 1999, Ms. Barnes-Kloth, who represents the Environmental Resource Center, will assist with the GCEE-sponsored symposium "Modeling Environmental Education in the Classroom." The purpose of the symposium is to provide K-12 teachers with hands-on educational tools that will assist them with teaching about environmental issues. For more information on the symposium, please contact Sara Storjohann at the Civic Garden Center (513) 221-0981.

## CECS Participates in Environmental Studies Program

As part of CECS' ongoing efforts to promote a multi-disciplinary approach to environmental issues, Director Stephen Depoe currently serves as a faculty member for the Environmental Studies Program (ESP), an undergraduate major in the Department of Biology at UC. The program offers a Bachelor of Science degree (B.S.) in Environmental Studies and trains students to become environmental professionals with a broad, interdisciplinary understanding of environmental issues. The ESP includes faculty members from disciplines including: political science, communication, business, economics, biology, chemistry, and engineering.

Environmental Studies faculty team teach a three-quarter sequence that introduces freshmen to the diversity of the environmental field. During Spring 1999, Stephen Depoe teamed up with economics professor Haynes Goddard for the first course in the sequence. Dr. Depoe's portion of the course provides an overview of the environmental movement and incorporates guest speakers who will discuss a wide range of Cincinnati area environmental issues and controversies.

### CECS FACULTY & STAFF

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### Publications

**Depoe, S.P.** (1998). "Talking about the Earth: On the growing significance of environmental communication studies." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 1, 435-448.

Griffin, R.J., Dunwoody, S., & **Neuwirth, K.** (1999). "Proposed model of risk information seeking and processing to the development of preventive behaviors." *Environmental Research*, 80, s230-s245.

### Presentations

**Depoe, S.P., & Hamilton, J.** (1999). "Communication and ecology at (former) nuclear weapons sites: A roundtable discussion." Panel presentation at the Seventieth Annual Meeting of the Western States Communication Association, Vancouver, BC, February 1999.

**Depoe, S.P., Hamilton, J., & Jordan, J.M.** (1998). "Reflections on the National Dialogue Pilot Field Workshop on the Department of Energy's management of nuclear waste." Competitive Paper presented at the National Communication Association Convention, New York, NY, November 1998.

**Fairhurst, G.T., Cooren, F., & Cahill, D.** (1998). "Leadership issues and the velvet boot: A pilot study of work force restructuring at Fernald." Paper presented at the Sixth

Annual National Stakeholder's Workshop, U.S. Department of Energy, Alexandria, VA.

Griffin, R.J., Dunwoody, S., & **Neuwirth, K.** (1998). "Audience seeking and processing of information about risks to the Great Lakes ecosystem." Society for Risk Analysis Annual Convention, Atlanta, GA, December 1998.

### Upcoming Presentations in 1999

**Bahk, C.M. & Berger, C.R.** (1999). "Too Close for Comfort: Disaster Proximity and Severity, and Responses to Threatening News Stories." 49th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA, May 1999.

**Barnes-Kloth, R., Depoe, S.P., Hamilton, J.J., & Lombardo, A.J.** (1999). "Environmental justice, activism, and ethnography: Reports from the field." Panel presentation at the National Communication Association Convention, Chicago, IL, November, 1999.

**Barnes-Kloth, R., Depoe, S.P., Hamilton, J.J., & Lombardo, A.J.** (1999). "Memories of Fernald: Defining a "sense of place" through personal narrative." Presentation at the Conference on Communication and the Environment, Flagstaff, AZ, July, 1999.



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**The CECS mission is to enhance the understanding and quality of communication processes and practices among citizens, industry, and government participants in environmental policy formation and implementation.**

**CECS researchers pursue this mission through a variety of efforts, including basic and applied research projects and related community service initiatives.**