

PEI CURRENTS - Spring 2015



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ENVIRONMENTAL
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research, education and outreach



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Note from PEI's Director

I am delighted to return to the helm of PEI and I am looking forward to working with all involved to build upon PEI's past successes.

One of my first initiatives already underway has been to organize an external review of the highly successful [Grand Challenges Program](#), the brainchild of former PEI Director, [Stephen Pacala](#). Grand Challenges is a multidisciplinary program offering faculty, students, and researchers opportunities to tackle some of the world's most pressing environmental issues in the areas of climate and energy, sustainable development, and global health. With the program now in its 8th year, it is an opportune time to step back, assess, and determine how best to energize the program going forward.



I am looking forward to collaborating with [Kelly Caylor](#), the recently appointed director of the [Program of Environmental Studies](#), to shape and grow our undergraduate teaching program. Given the constantly changing nature of environmental issues facing the world today, it is critical that PEI evolves its programming to keep pace with emerging issues and the interests of our faculty and students.

In this newsletter you have the opportunity to read about several robust research initiatives involving faculty and students working together in the lab and in the field. A remarkable achievement is the continuation of the [Carbon Mitigation Initiative](#), which started with BP sponsorship in 2000

and has now been [renewed through 2020](#). On the faculty front, we are pleased to welcome two recent additions to PEI: assistant professor [Ian Bourg](#), and visiting senior biologist, [Joan Ruderman](#).

Thanks to all who support and contribute to PEI's initiatives.

François M. M. Morel

Albert G. Blanke, Jr., Professor of Geosciences

New Leadership at PEI

by Holly Welles, the Princeton Environmental Institute



[François M. M. Morel](#), the Albert G. Blanke, Jr. Professor of Geosciences has been named director of the Princeton Environmental Institute. Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, [Kelly K. Caylor](#), has been appointed director of the [Program in Environmental Studies \(ENV Program\)](#).

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Tiny Termites Can Hold Back Deserts

by Morgan Kelly, Office of Communications



Termites might not top the list of humanity's favorite insects, but new research supported by Grand Challenges suggests that their large dirt mounds are crucial to stopping the spread of deserts into semi-arid ecosystems and agricultural lands.

[read more >>](#)

Dirty Pool

by Morgan Kelly, Office of Communications

Researchers funded by the Carbon Mitigation Initiative report that an increase in human-made carbon dioxide in the atmosphere could initiate a chain reaction between plants and microorganisms that would unsettle one of the largest carbon reservoirs on the planet — soil.



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Carbon Mitigation Initiative Renewed to 2020

by Holly Welles, the Princeton Environmental Institute



The Carbon Mitigation Initiative received a further \$10.5 million over five years (2016-2020) to continue its mission of finding compelling and sustainable solutions to the carbon and climate change problem.

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Abandoned Wells

by John Sullivan, Office of Engineering Communications



After sampling abandoned oil and natural gas wells in northwestern Pennsylvania, Princeton University researchers found that many leaked substantial quantities of methane. The researchers believe the overall contribution of leaking wells in the U.S. could be significant.

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Summer of Learning

by Holly Welles, the Princeton Environmental Institute

On Friday, October 3rd, eighty-five (85) Princeton undergraduates participated in the 7th Annual Summer of Learning symposium to share insights and outcomes from their summer 2014 internships and service experiences.

PEI Welcomes New Faculty and Visitor

- [Ian Bourg](#)

- [Joan Ruderman](#)



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Research Center News

- [Carbon Mitigation Initiative](#)
- [Center for BioComplexity](#)
- [Climate Futures Initiative](#)
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- [Grand Challenges](#)
- [Southern Ocean Carbon and Climate Observations and Modeling](#)

Faculty Search

- [Currie C. and Thomas A. Barron Visiting Professor in the Environment and Humanities](#)

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