Dr. Scott Rupp

Director of the Scenarios Network for Alaska & Arctic Planning (SNAP), principal investigator (PI) for the Alaska Climate Science Center (AK CSC), and co-PI for the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy (ACCAP), Dr. Scott Rupp has led important developments in forest ecology and ecological modeling as a faculty member at UAF since 2001. In 2012, IARC was pleased to welcome Dr. Rupp, along with SNAP, into its increasingly diverse and robust scientific community.

IARC’s Publications team interviewed Scott Rupp recently to discuss his interests, background, and ongoing research.

**What would people be interested to know about your work?**

Like IARC’s mission, my own work with SNAP has been focused on reducing uncertainty—that is, identifying scientific concepts or discussions about which there may be some misunderstanding or ambiguity, and then working to either clarify or better communicate some specific scientific research that may underlie our impressions. Anyone whose life or livelihood is affected by changes to Alaska and the Arctic holds a stake in these scientific developments.

In particular, SNAP aims to build bridges between these numerous and sometimes disparate groups of stakeholders. These connections happen in many ways, but officials and policymakers at the local and state levels, public safety administrators (including fire management agencies), and local subsistence communities have all played major roles in the strategies and success criteria for SNAP.

**What do you think is important for people to understand about your work?**

I think it’s very important to think about science as a source of both collaboration and service. Our organization centers much of our work on the scientific power and importance of ecosystem modeling. We also maintain a constant awareness of these complex models’ potential for practical use, however, which is to more accurately and precisely define our surroundings and the changes they may undergo. Further, these efforts serve to clarify exactly how the scientific information we produce can best be used—through political processes, economic development, or simply the presentation of knowledge to citizens around Alaska.

To this end, we consider our scientific community’s relationship with the public essential to our success, which is defined by how well we’re able to communicate and use the information made available to us by our researchers. Technology helps—on SNAP’s website, for example, we’re able to offer a wide range of data charting our shifting climate to a very wide and public audience—but forming the kind of traditional, personal relationships that have always sustained Alaska remain essential to our project.

**How have your background and personal interests affected your scientific career?**

Throughout my education in forest ecology, I was interested in modeling, and my graduate work in ecosystem modeling—focused on the interactions between vegetation, climate, and disturbance—has driven much of my interest in boreal forest wildfire research here at SNAP. In turn, my experiences in Alaska, observing the impacts of fire upon our vegetation, communities, and the agencies and strategies that govern them, have led SNAP and myself further toward the goal of improving our scientific knowledge and communication.

The sense of interaction between a community and its ecosystem is strong for me personally as well. I consider myself fortunate to have enough land here to experiment with a farm of my own, including sled dogs, sustainable crops, dairy goats, and my own family of eager help.

**How can people find out more about your work?**

Rupp explains duff moisture content and its effect on fire behavior at the Nenana Ridge Research Burn site in June, 2009. (Photo: T. Paris)

A smoke column develops during an experimental burn outside of Fairbanks, Alaska. (Photo: D. Haggstrom)

The map tool on the SNAP website allows site visitors to explore climate projections under a variety of scenarios for Alaska and Western Canada.