

COLLOQUIUM BY CURTIS J. RICHARDSON

MESOPOTAMIAN MARSHES OF IRAQ: A CASE STUDY OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER
ISSUES AND INTERNAL WATER ALLOCATION PROBLEMS

TIME: 5:00-6:00 PM, WEDNESDAY, 28 SEP 2016

VENUE: AB 1079

Mesopotamian Marshes of Iraq: A Case Study of Transboundary Water Issues and Internal Water Allocation Problems

Speaker: Curtis J. Richardson, Professor of Resource Ecology, Director, Duke University Wetland
Center, Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University

ABSTRACT:

The marshes of Iraq have been reduced 97% due to Saddam Hussain's massive drainage program to destroy the Mesopotamian Marsh Arab culture following the Iran-Iraq and U.S. wars. More recently upstream water storage for agriculture and cities and massive water drainage programs to convert these areas mainly to agriculture lands or provide access for oil exploration has further destroyed the wetlands. Today < 10% of the natural Iraq marshes remain, although governmental efforts are underway with limited budgets to restore water flows, recreate their natural hydrologic conditions as well as create protected areas for the thousands of remaining endemic Marsh Dwellers. Iraq's government faces enormous social-economic and political difficulties regarding the future allocation of water for the marshes as the demand for water for agriculture and urban areas grows. I will compare and contrast the past and current ecological conditions in the marshes, outline the hydrologic issues facing these wetlands today as well as review some of the proposed solutions. Not surprisingly, regardless of a country's wealth or political system wetland ecosystems and their native flora and fauna face survival challenges due to human demands for water, land or resources coupled with anthropogenic pollution.

BIO:

Curtis J. Richardson is John O. Blackburn Distinguished Professor of Resource Ecology and founding Director of the Duke University Wetland Center in the Nicholas School of the Environment. Dr. Richardson earned his degrees from the State University of New York and the University of Tennessee.

His research interests in applied ecology focus on long-term ecosystem response to large-scale perturbations such as climate change, toxic materials, trace metals, flooding, or nutrient additions. Richardson oversees the main analytical lab in NSOE, which is open to students and faculty. He has been listed in *Who's Who in Science*[™] annually since 1989 and was elected President of the Society of Wetland Scientists in 1987-88. Dr. Richardson is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Society of Wetland Scientists, and the Soil Science Society of America.