



## Geo Notes



### Welcome to the Department of Geography at New Mexico State University!

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### *Message from the Department Head*

Greetings to our students, alumni, friends, and colleagues from the Department of Geography at NMSU. As we close out 2012, we are very happy to share this newsletter with you and hit some of the highlights to what has been a very successful year. As you will see from the items in this issue, we are working on some exciting new projects, and we also hosted some great events. The New Mexico Geographic Alliance that Dr. DeMers is directing is getting off to a great start, and we appreciate the efforts he is extending to help train K-12 teachers in New Mexico to teach geography in our schools. Dr. Wright shares some fascinating stories and images from his most recent "round the world" sabbatical research, and he also gave a talk on this during Geography Awareness Week. Dr. Dugas shares some comments on his continued efforts to train students to do fieldwork, also noting how our changing technologies are impacting how geographers do fieldwork. We hosted several events of interest this term, the highlight being the very successful Annual Meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers that took place in Las Cruces in October. Kudos to Dr. Buenemann and Dr. Czerniak for leading this wonderful event.

Not being a department to rest on our laurels, we have some exciting things in play for 2013. We recently signed a contract with GSAREH, a private sector GIS&T firm that is partnering with us on a GIS&T training program in the Persian Gulf, and we expect this program to take off in early 2013. We have been very successful in bringing new projects into the SpARC lab, and these include a project funded by HUD to advance sustainable community planning in Dona Ana County, a project to conduct monitoring of Selenium in two irrigation districts in the Four Corners region, and continued work with the El Paso MPO and the New Mexico Department of Health on various projects. Trust we will keep you advised on how these and other efforts unfold when we connect again in our Spring 2013 Newsletter. I close by sharing the very best wishes for a safe and enjoyable holiday season and a prosperous and happy New Year.

Best regards,

Christopher Brown, Department Head



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### *Mission Statement*

The mission of the NMSU Department of Geography is to (1) enable our graduate and undergraduate students to be responsible citizens, lifelong learners, and professional geographers with critical thinking and problem-solving skills that make them competitive in both graduate programs and the job market; (2) advance basic and applied geographic research on issues of relevance to the State of New Mexico and the American Southwest; and (3) to reach out to and serve the University, the State, local communities, and the discipline of geography.

### *Vision Statement*

The NMSU Department of Geography seeks to build a strong and effective learning community of graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and others to create, share, and apply knowledge and skills in the areas of geospatial science and technology, geographical field techniques, and human-environment system dynamics.

## Alumni Updates

### Quita Ortiz

#### Class of 2004 (Undergraduate) and 2007 (Graduate)

**What year did you graduate, grad or u/g, and from what program or sub-area?**

Class of 2004 (undergraduate degree in Geography, with a minor in GIS)

Class of 2007 (Masters in Applied Geography)

**If an MS student, what was your thesis and with whom did you work?**

My thesis topic was an exploration of land use change surrounding the *Alcalde Acequia* and the impact on groundwater/surface water interactions. I also looked at how these land use changes impact *acequia* culture, particularly how water is managed and allocated, and how it impacts the overall social fabric of the *acequia*

tradition. This involved a collaborative research effort between faculty in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences that was supported by a grant from the offices of the NMSU Vice President of Research. Christopher Brown was my thesis chair, Sam Fernald was my topic expert and outside member, and Jack Wright was my inside committee member who knows much about the Hispano Homeland where I worked.



**What did you study at NMSU?**

At the undergraduate level, I studied the general geography track in the Department, taking all the cultural and physical geography classes that were offered. I also earned a minor in GIS, learning how to use these tools to answer applied geographic questions. At this point in my career, I can finally answer the question people ask about whether I am a human or physical geographer. As it turns out, I am a human geographer with an interest in the natural environment and the interaction between the two. I'm pretty sure my realization of this was induced by my graduate school experience.

At the graduate level, I was fortunate to get connected with Sam Fernald through my work at the Water Resources Research Institute, and I was asked to do land use mapping in the *Alcalde Acequia* in support of Sam's *acequia* hydrology work there. This work eventually blossomed into my thesis topic, and I was able to build a thesis committee between Geography and Animal and Range Sciences and win a grant from the office of the NMSU Vice President of Research to support my work.

## Alumni Updates

### What did you do when you left NMSU?

Thinking about this makes me realize how fortunate I was to have stumbled upon *acequia* research. After I graduated from NMSU, I was keen to move back to northern New Mexico. My first job was with the North Central Council of Governments in Santa Fe. Prior to this I was in contact with Paula Garcia, the director of the New Mexico *Acequia* Association (NMAA), and I had expressed interest in working for NMAA. She was receptive to the idea, but she needed to secure funds for my position. Months later, Paula asked me to present at a land and water conference, and shortly thereafter, she asked me if I was still interested in working with the NMAA. I basically accepted her offer right then and there! I was so excited to work on a topic I had studied in grad school.

### What's next?

I don't really know. I very much enjoy my job at NMAA, and I have a strong cultural connection to the work I am doing and the region where I work. I really like the people I work with, they're like *familia*, the issues are important, and it's fulfilling to be part of a movement that honors community and land-based traditions. I work on various community projects, I handle most of our communications work, and I'm still connected to NMSU through a multi-disciplinary *acequia* research project. I get to spend some time in the field, and I appreciate the flexibility that NMAA offers. As long as our funding is there and the work continues to be interesting, I'll happily stay right where I am.

### What are your long-term plans?

Well, just to stay the course where I am, continue the interesting work I am doing, and enjoy living in northern New Mexico. I feel really grounded and connected to the land, and I am happy here doing what I am doing.

### How has your geography degree helped you?

Geography is such a broad topic that touches so many parts of our life. Geography is not a "one trick pony." It's such a diverse field, so I certainly didn't feel limited in the job market when I received my B.S., especially since I had gained a couple years of GIS experience at WRRRI while I was still an undergrad. But my experience as a graduate student is what REALLY gave me a great entrée into my career. The work in Alcalde was a great opportunity to learn about *acequias* from a more academic perspective, and this built on my cultural heritage of growing up in an agricultural community with *acequias*. The combination of the way geography looks at the world and the great opportunity that the Alcalde project and my thesis research gave me really helped me find my niche.



## Alumni Updates

### Michael Vessel – Class of 1997

#### What year did you graduate, grad or u/g, and from what program or sub-area?

I graduated in 1997 with a BS in Geography.

#### What did you study at NMSU?

I primarily focused on physical geography and applied geography, including geomorphology and related geology classes. As an under-graduate, it was incredibly valuable to study in a program that offered a Masters of Applied Geography. Although I was not in the graduate program, I was allowed to take masters level courses in GIS and Remote Sensing as an undergrad that were extremely beneficial. Specifically I took classes on advanced GIS modeling and design, advanced remote sensing, and a special topics class in GPS that had me doing field work.

#### What did you do when you left NMSU?

Immediately after graduating, (I am talking days, not months!), I took a position as a digital cartographer/image processing technician at Atlantic Technologies, a firm in Huntsville, AL that specialized in aerial survey, photogrammetric mapping, and the acquisition and processing of LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) imagery. I have worked for the same firm through various changes in ownership over the last 15 years until just recently changing employers. During my time with this suite of firms, I progressed from my initial technician position to a Department Manager and Project Manager over the years and have obtained professional certifications and licenses in Photogrammetry and GIS.

#### What are you doing these days? What's next?

Funny you should mention this. I have just recently accepted a Senior Project Manager position with DigitalGlobe in Longmont, CO, and my first day of work is December 17 of 2012. I am very excited about diversifying my geospatial domain knowledge by engaging in space-borne remote sensing technology with a progressive geospatial firm. My entire career has focused on the use of fixed wing aircraft to acquire high-resolution (sub foot) multi-spectral imagery on a client request basis. My new position will be supporting very large projects in which satellite platforms are acquired and deployed in a comprehensive effort to obtain global imagery, literally covering the planet, a very different type of image acquisition than what I had done previously. In my new position, I will be working with much coarser spatial imagery that has a much higher spectral resolution, and I will also be engaged in the analysis of this imagery to produce higher order spatial information projects for clients that include key federal agencies and commercial vendors.

## ***Alumni Updates***

### **What are your long-term plans?**

I am currently very focused on my long-term future with DigitalGlobe, and I am VERY excited about this career change on which I am embarking. That said.....I have also always been very interested in the idea of owning my own business. If the right opportunity becomes available, that may be something I would be willing to pursue further in the future.

### **How has your geography degree helped you?**

My geography degree has helped me immensely. One of the most important benefits to my degree from the NMSU Department of Geography is that it allowed me to obtain my first geospatial job out of college and positioned me for further growth in the field. The degree, in combination with progressive experience, has also allowed me to pursue and obtain valuable professional certifications and licenses, as noted above. In general, my time with the NMSU Geography Department instilled a deep interest in all things geospatial that has led to a rewarding career and continued development in a field that is rapidly changing in terms of technology and the application of geographic principles. I also believe that the highly applied and focused nature of my studies in the NMSU Department of Geography gave me a huge advantage in getting "that first job." From there, I have been fortunate to build on this excellent start with the career I have been fortunate to have.

As my time to leave the area approaches, I would like to share with you how special my recent reconnection back to the Department has been. In the last few years I have lived in the Las Cruces area, I have interacted with the Department in several areas. The first of these involved an invitation to give a talk to students in the Department in which I shared with them some insights into successful career development that included the need to differentiate themselves from the sea of other applicants, the value of the applied approach to geography that the Department advances, and the need to hone students' technical skills. After meeting Michaela Buenemann, I was invited to serve on the Board of Directors for the Rio Grande Chapter of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS). Over the last few years, I have greatly enjoyed this connection and also opportunities to interact with the Student Chapter of the ASPRS that is resident at NMSU.

## ***Research and Teaching News***

### **New Mexico Geographic Alliance Moves to NMSU**

**By Dr. Michael DeMers**

As of February 2012 New Mexico State University has housed the New Mexico Geographic Alliance (NMGA). This organization, funded by the National Geographic Society's National Geographic Education Foundation, is tasked with improving K-12 geography education throughout the state of New Mexico. New Mexico's entry into the national Alliance network, composed of some 53 states and regional Alliances, began in 1992, at which time the Alliance was housed in the University of New Mexico.

Dr. Michael DeMers (Professor of Geography) is the new Alliance coordinator and will be responsible for the overall management of the Alliance. Mr. Randy Carr (SPARC Lab) will be responsible for developing and supervising curricular content and delivery, while Dr. Julia Parra (Assistant Professor in Curriculum and Instruction) will supervise online curricular activities and social media. The Alliance is just getting started, but we have been granted space to operate in Regents Row rooms 110, 112, and 114.

In its first nine months, the Alliance has focused on determining the current state of operations as it moved from UNM to NMSU. We have held meetings with our regional coordinator, Dr. Emily Schell from San Diego State University, and former coordinators from UNM. The bad news is that very little remains of the first twenty years of the experience of the Alliance. While this proved a bit of a setback, it allows the newly rejuvenated Alliance to direct its own future without the need to conform to any pre-existing model.

Our intended focus as we move forward is to use the Internet and Web-based resources to both begin re-building an organizational structure and to provide a resource for K-12 geography educators. Hopefully by the time you read this, you will have access to the new Alliance website at <http://nmgeoed.org>. This site will provide opportunities to interact with us on our quest to improve the state of New Mexico geography education, to enjoy information about New Mexico, and to become a formal member of the Alliance. We will be going through a formal strategic planning process soon, and this will allow us to set clear goals and determine appropriate ways to achieve them.

In our first few months at NMSU, the Alliance has been quite active. In late February, only a couple of weeks after we received our official status, Dr. Parra and Dr. DeMers attended the required Alliance Coordinator Meeting held at the National Geographic Headquarters in DC. These meetings provided us with much needed information, and allowed for idea generation and sharing among the other coordinators. On February 28, 2012, we visited with our Congressional delegation to ask for their support for the TGIF (Teaching Geography is Fundamental) legislation that will provide \$6,000,000 to assist the National Alliance efforts to improve geography education nation-wide. All of our congressmen and both of our senators agreed to support the bill, and Senator Bingaman co-sponsored the Senate version of this legislation.

## *Research and Teaching News*

On October 6, 2012, Dr. Parra, Dr. DeMers, and Mr. Carr presented a paper titled “Designing for Engaged Learning in GIS Courses Through Online, Hybrid and Collaborative Models,” at the annual meeting of the National Council for Geographic Education in San Marcos, TX. They are currently working on a manuscript for publication in the Journal of Geography based on that presentation.

The Alliance has just begun the outreach process, including this newsletter item. On Dec. 7, 2012 Randy Carr and Dr. DeMers visited the New Mexico Geographic Information Council Board, at their invitation. The meeting was designed to determine possible collaborative activities between the two organizations. Three areas of immediate collaboration include the possible selection of an NMGA steering committee member from NMGIC, assistance with our strategic planning process, and producing a quarterly article in the NMGIC newsletter, *Map Legend*. The Board was very helpful and showed a commitment to the mission of the Alliance. With interactions like this, the future of the Alliance looks very promising.



Dr. DeMers (6th from right) and Mr. Randy Carr (3rd from right) with members of the NMGIC Board of Directors.

## ***Travels with Geographers***

### *Exploring the World*

*By Dr. Jack Wright*



Exploring the world, in the field, remains a vital part of being an applied geographer. Dr. Jack Wright spent his Spring 2012 sabbatical doing exactly that. Thanks to Departmental support, he travelled around the world doing field work in China, Nepal, Turkey, Greece, Italy, England, Ireland, Sweden, and Iceland. To Dr. Wright, first-hand knowledge is essential for teaching his World Regional Geography and Cultural Geography classes. “It’s the only way to do it really – to see the actual world for yourself and pass that knowledge on to students. No textbook can do that, and the students really respond to my personal experiences.”

During his sabbatical, Wright studied how rapid urbanization is transforming China. “They are building enough urban infrastructure to serve one million

people every two weeks,” Wright said. “That pace of development has never happened before in the history of the world, and it remains to be seen whether the process is sustainable economically and environmentally.” In Nepal, he studied the Hindu and Buddhist spiritual landscapes of the Kathmandu Valley and did a two week trek into Upper Mustang, an ethnically Tibetan region of the Himalayas free from Chinese control. Dr. Wright also analyzed how historic cities like Istanbul and Rome function as tourist destinations. “Historic preservation is essential for maintaining urban World Heritage Sites, but the governments of Turkey and Italy have uneven records in doing that.”

Dr. Wright sums up his research trip this way: “Every cultural landscape is an archive of the geographic thoughts of the people who live there. By studying the impress of cultural on the land, we improve our effectiveness in solving pressing social, geopolitical, and environmental problems. And of course, travelling is one of the best parts of being a geographer!”



## *Travels with Geographers*

*Exploring the World*

*By Dr. Jack Wright*

### *Nepal*



Photos by Dr. Jack Wright

## Pubs and Papers

### Christopher Brown

- Brown, C. P. and L. Ojeda-Revah. 2012. "Environmental Services on the U.S.-Mexico Border." In Erik Lee and Paul Ganster (Ed.), *The US-Mexico Border Environment: Progress and Challenges for Sustainability* (vol. 16, pp. 145-186). San Diego, CA: San Diego State University Press.
- Brown, C. P. 2012. "Comparative Examination of Water Policy in the US-Canada Borderlands: The Cases of Cascadia and the Red River Basin." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Borderlands Studies, Houston, Texas. April 14, 2012.
- Brown, C. P. and R. Carr, R. 2012. "BGIS 2/BINS 2 Presentation at the 2012 JWC Annual Meeting." Paper presented at the Biannual Meeting of the Joint Working Committee on Binational Transportation Planning, US Federal Highways Administration, Albuquerque, NM. September 21, 2012.
- Brown, C. P. 2012. "Watershed Management – Activities and ideas from the Paso del Norte." Paper presented at the IBWC/CILA Binational Summit on Water Resource Management on the US-Mexico Border, El Paso, Texas/Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. October 25, 2012.

### Michaela Buenemann

- Diallo, D., Sall, A. A., Buenemann, M., Faye, O., Chen, R., Diagne, C., Ba, Y., Dia, I., Watts, D., Weaver, S. C., Hanley, K. A., Diallo, M. 2012. "Landscape ecology of sylvatic dengue and chikungunya virus and their mosquito vectors in southeastern Senegal." To appear in *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases/Public Library of Science*.
- Buenemann, M. 2012. "Why 'where' matters: understanding and profiting from GPS, GIS, and Remote Sensing." R. Ryerson and S. Aronoff. *Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing*.
- Buenemann, M. 2012. "Intensities and patterns of land transformations: the case of the northern Chihuahuan Desert." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers. Las Cruces, NM. October 26, 2012.
- Buenemann, M. 2012. "Effects of spatial resolution on rates and patterns of land change." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers. New York, NY. February 28, 2012.

### Carol Campbell

- Mohamed, A. H., Holechek, J., Bailey, D. W., Campbell, C., Cibils, A. F., DeMers, M. N. 2012. "Detecting Chihuahuan Desert rangeland vegetation change with high spatial resolution satellite imagery." *Rangeland Ecology and Management*.
- Mohamed, A. H., Holechek, J., Bailey, D. W., Campbell, C., DeMers, M. N. 2012. "Mesquite encroachment impact on southern New Mexico rangelands: A remote sensing and GIS approach." *Journal of Applied Remote Sensing*.
- Campbell, C. 2012. "The effects of riparian Landscape differences on the avian community of the Gila Lower Box, NM." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Division, Association of American Geographers, Las Cruces, NM.

## ***Pubs and Papers***

### **Michael DeMers**

- Albert, D., Cerney, D., DeMers, M. N. 2012. "Rethinking Applied Geography - An Open Forum." Paper presented at the Applied Geography Conference, San Marcos, Texas. October 10, 2012.
- DeMers, M. N. 2012. "A geodesign project to augment a traditional GIS course." Paper presented at the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Las Cruces, New Mexico. October 25, 2012.
- DeMers, M. N. 2102. "Preliminary comparative analysis of GIS workforce education: Comparing practitioners with educators." Paper presented at the Applied Geography Conference. San Marcos, Texas, October 12, 2012.
- Mohamed, A. H., Holechek, J., Bailey, D. W., Campbell, C., Cibils, A. F., DeMers, M. N. 2012. "Detecting Chihuahuan Desert rangeland vegetation change with high spatial resolution satellite imagery." *Rangeland Ecology and Management*.
- Mohamed, A. H., Holechek, J., Bailey, D. W., Campbell, C., DeMers, M. N. 2012. "Mesquite encroachment impact on southern New Mexico rangelands: A remote sensing and GIS approach." *Journal of Applied Remote Sensing*.
- Parra, J. L, M.N. DeMers, M. N., and R. Carr, 2012. "Designing for Engaged Learning in GIS Courses Through Online, Hybrid, and Collaborative Models." Paper presented at the National Conference on Geographic Education, National Council of Geographic Education, San Marcos, Texas. October 6, 2012.

### **Daniel Dugas**

- Dugas, D. P. 2012. "The remarkable, hypotheses, and critical thinking." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Division, American Association of Geographers. Las Cruces, NM. October 25, 2012.

### **Jack Wright**

- Wright, J. B. (in press). "Landscape Fragmentation In three Southwestern U.S. Urban regions." *To appear in Landscape Ecology*.
- Wright, J. B. 2012. "Comparing Strategic and Opportunistic Approaches to Land Conservation: The case of the New Mexico Land Conservancy." Paper presented at the Annual Conference, Southwest Division, Association of American Geographers, Las Cruces, NM.

## Field Notes

### Field Labs with Students

by Dr. Daniel Dugas

Some of you may remember your lab experiences with me in Map Use and Analysis or Geomorphology. Whether it was hot, cold, windy, or just right, it was good to get out of the classroom, wasn't it? I continue to take students into the field as often as possible. Do you recall the thrill of making your first hand-drawn map when we worked in the park? It was a simple exercise, but it was also challenging. I hope you still remember what map scale is all about and your azimuthal directions. Do any of you use a compass for your jobs or recreation? I'm sure none of you will ever get lost again, right? Remember, you don't get lost, you are only temporarily "geographically embarrassed."



How about searching in the desert for little orange flags? We still do that exercise, although I've had to move the exercise location a few times throughout the years. It's a great skill to be able to read a map and navigate to a specific location. We are, of course, using GPS instruments as well as compasses these days. A GPS and a good map with a UTM grid can really take you places.

We are still looking at geomorphic surfaces, landslides, and arroyos on Geomorphology lab trips. What a great way to develop an appreciation for the desert landscape around Las Cruces, even during a hot and dusty van ride. I still like to hike up the side of A-Mountain to see the landslide, but it does seem to be getting harder and harder each



year to stay ahead of the students. They must be getting faster; I certainly couldn't be slowing down! Some of the hikes have even gotten a bit longer, and we have discovered more magnificent cobble levees up against the Organ Mountains. I also continue to be amazed by the growth of Las Cruces along the East Mesa arroyos. Each new field trip seems to show more and more of that.

Well, that's it from the frontier of navigation and field excursions. I would really like to hear from you telling me about your own field experiences. Drop me an email sometime @ [ddugas@nmsu.edu](mailto:ddugas@nmsu.edu)!

## *In Memoriam*

### Darrell Danner

We share the sad news that Darrell Danner, our very first graduate from our masters program, passed away suddenly in early November of 2012. Born in Carthage, MO, to Virginia and Harold Danner, Darrell was the younger of their two sons. Darrell graduated from Carthage High School, then went on to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees from New Mexico State University before completing his Ph.D. at the University of Kansas. Upon graduating with his Ph.D., he taught at the Universities of Kansas and Missouri. After his teaching years at Kansas and Missouri, Darrell returned to the region and served as the Planning Director for The City of Las Cruces, before starting his own planning and GIS consultancy firm, GeoStat, Inc.

In sharing this sad news with some of our former students, we learned that while directing the work of his private firm, Geostat Inc., Darrell and his wife, Aditi Sarkar, conducted analysis for the 2000 Dona Ana County ETZ Comprehensive Plan Atlas. Dona Ana County (DAC) staff familiar with Darrell and Aditi's work noted that the work that they did for the county on this important document was excellent. Darrell was a very engaging and productive consultant that produced high quality work for the County. Members of senior DAC leadership respected him greatly and were very appreciative of his efforts.

Darrell will be remembered for his generosity and his love for his friends and family. We extend our sympathies and warm thoughts to Darrell's sons, Christopher and Timothy, his grandchildren, Matt and Jessica, and his wife, Aditi Sarkar. May he rest in peace.



## ***Field Notes***

### 2012 Camping Trip of the Rio Grande Chapter of ASPRS

The Rio Grande Chapter of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) holds two general meetings each year. The first general meeting is typically held in the form of an all-day symposium at NMSU and the second in the form of a camping outing in a selected location in New Mexico. This year's camping trip went to Water Canyon Campground near Magdalena, NM, in the Cibola National Forest. Several students from the NMSU Geography Department participated and made connections with geospatial professionals from across the state.



## Colloquium on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

Dr. Ahmed Elaksher, an Assistant Professor from the Surveying Engineering Program at NMSU, gave a talk on “Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Remote Sensing” to the NMSU Student Chapter of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS; 11/14/2012). The talk was attended by more than 25 students from diverse backgrounds (geography, engineering, wildlife science, etc.).

Meeting participants.



From left to right: Rebecca Richman (Vice President, NMSU Student Chapter of ASPRS), Nicholas Damon (Outgoing President, NMSU Student Chapter of ASPRS), Dr. Ahmed Elaksher (Speaker), Charlie Jackson (Incoming President, NMSU Student Chapter of ASPRS).

## *Student Awards*

### **Map Contest**

The winners of this semesters GEOG 381/571 Cartography & GIS Quantitative Thematic Map Contest are: Mustafa Alomran (1<sup>st</sup> place), Dennis Smith (2<sup>nd</sup> place), and Charlie Jackson (3<sup>rd</sup> place). The winners were selected by students in the class.



Thematic Map Competition Selection Committee.



The Competition Winners: Mustafa Alomran (1st Place, left); Dennis Smith (2nd Place, middle); Charlie Jackson (3rd Place, right).

## *Southwest Association for American Geographers*

### NMSU Geography Department Hosts Regional Geography Conference

by Dr. Michaela Buenemann

The NMSU Department of Geography hosted a very successful Annual Meeting of the Southwest Division of the Association of American Geographers (SWAAG), 25-27 October 2012, at the Ramada Palms Hotel and Conference Center in Las Cruces and the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park in Mesilla. More than 165 individuals from over 30 locations in 11 states participated. The program included more than 90 paper and poster presentations in 18 different sessions on topics ranging from Indigenous Geographies, Biogeography, and Environmental Change to Remote Sensing and GIS Applications. More than 1/3 of the presenters were students. Four students from the NMSU Department



of Geography won places in the student competitions: Amy Slaughter, Rebecca Richman, Charlie Jackson, and Steve Walker. In addition to the regular presentations, there were keynote addresses by two nationally and internationally recognized geographers: Billie Lee Turner II, Member of the National Academy of Sciences and Gilbert F. White Professor of Environment and Society at Arizona State University; and Eric Sheppard, President of the Association of American Geographers and Humboldt Professor of Geography at the University of California. The Department also organized and led two exciting field trips: Dr. Daniel Dugas took some 25 meeting participants on a journey through White Sands National Monument, and Dr. Jack Wright introduced an additional 15 meeting participants to the curiosities of Las Cruces and Mesilla. The conference was organized primarily by Dr. Michaela Buenemann and Dr. Robert Czerniak. The next SWAAG meeting will be held in Nacogdoches, TX. We hope you will join us there.

For more information about the 2012 SWAAG meeting, go to <http://geography.nmsu.edu/swaag2012/>

For more pictures from the 2012 SWAAG meeting, go to <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.404114306321597.94249.109764555756575&type=3>



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## WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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NMSU DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
LAUNCHES ITS OWN FACEBOOK PAGE!



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