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Science Professor Earns National Academy of Science Nomination

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(St. Petersburg, Fla.) March 31, 2008 - Dr. James Gore, Environmental Sciences professor and chair of the USFSP graduate program in Environmental Science, Policy and Geography, received a nomination to serve on a National Academy of Science committee. If selected, Dr. Gore will help examine the environmental impact of coalbed methane production in the Northern Great Plains, an industry that has received increased attention from companies looking to harvest natural gas available in coalbeds.

Coalbed methane production involves the extraction of billions of gallons of groundwater to access methane. Water brought to the surface gets released to existing waterways, a process that creates flood conditions which destroy habitat for plants and animals.

"Certainly there is going to be some damage," Dr. Gore said. "The question is how long it will take to recover. This panel will do risk assessment and look at whether the environmental risk is worth the short-term gain of acquiring a new source of natural gas."

Dr. Gore's nomination stems from his primary area of expertise – the evaluation of the impacts of altered flows on resident river life. He has done research on the regulated flows and restoration of streams in both the Powder River and Tongue River basins. The National Academy of Science study will look at the ecosystems of the Powder River basins in Wyoming and Montana and in the San Juan River basin in Colorado.

"The fact that the panel exists means they've recognized this as a significant problem," Dr. Gore said. "This is essentially a heads up that this is going to be identified as a critical environmental problem in the United States."

-USF St. Petersburg-

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