



From the Director's Office

*By Ross Simons
SERC Director*

Spring is always an active time at SERC, as our staff moves out of our offices and labs and back into the field around our home campus. At the same time, school groups resume their active participation in our field-oriented programs, and we look forward to the annual

About SERC

The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) is dedicated to increasing knowledge of the biological and physical processes that sustain life on earth through interdisciplinary research and innovative education programs.

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migration of some of the Nation's most talented college students to our facilities for our summer internship program.

This year, this annual rite of passage follows a very intensive winter season, spent coping with some of the worst storms in several decades, forcing a very unusual one-day closure of SERC as our facilities staff heroically worked around the clock to clear snow-choked access roads. The winter also saw an intensive period of grant and contract applications, which were met with high receptivity by funding agencies. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you will read a report on a very high-profile/high-impact meeting of national researchers on the effects of West Nile virus on animals. The results of this meeting were widely disseminated in national publications.

The work of the Smithsonian's external Science Commission was completed and released in early January. This seminal study of the Smithsonian's science activities underscored the importance of SERC as a national and international science center and recommended a number of significant actions to strengthen our activities. It is expected that the work of this commission will set the framework for advances in science and science education for the next decade.

Construction has begun on the first of our new dormitories, with completion expected in the fall of 2003. Winter weather

prevented an earlier start, but already we are engaged in the necessary fundraising for a second companion dorm and visitor housing to meet the demands of the scientific community for access to our talented staff and our sophisticated laboratories.

We have an exciting array of programs for the public this spring and you can read more about them in this newsletter and on our website at www.serc.si.edu. One notable event, which grows in attendance every year, is our Open House scheduled for May 10. I encourage you and your families and friends to come to our Edgewater campus to take part in a full day of interesting activities. The Open House event provides a wonderful opportunity to see our endeavors firsthand and our staff will be available to explain in detail our research and education programs.

Finally, it is with deep sadness that I report the death of a longtime member of our community. George Rasberry, senior technician in our Forest Canopy Ecology Lab died on January 14, 2003 after a long illness. At a memorial service, George was remembered for his dedication to SERC's goals and for his deep humanity to all who came in touch with him. His loss is profoundly felt by all of us, but the example he set will be a beacon for us to follow in the years ahead.

Open House for Nature

Saturday May 10, 2003
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Visit SERC on May 10 and learn all about SERC's scientific research in the Chesapeake Bay region and at sites around the world.



It's All in the Watershed

This year's theme is **watersheds** and SERC staff has prepared a great number of **hands-on activities** and **science demonstrations** to show you how we study all aspects of a watershed.

Lots of Activities

The Open House is a great way to look behind the scenes at SERC and learn first-hand from our researchers and educators. Come take a **boat ride** on the Bay, **canoe** through the wetlands, and walk our **nature trails**. Visit the **science labs and field sites** and meet some of our researchers, or **catch crabs and fish** down at our dock. Take the kids on a **hayride**, and enjoy **live music** outside. *Pack a lunch or buy a lunch at SERC. Lunches are available for a small fee.*



New this year: your chance to

Win A Day on the Bay



Wouldn't you like to spend a day on the Bay with nine friends and family members? Get a behind-the-scenes tour at SERC, then board our research vessel and navigate the waters of the Bay to visit Thomas Point Lighthouse, see other Bay landmarks, and learn about Bay ecology and ongoing environmental research. **Lunch is included!**

Enter the raffle at the Open House (\$5 per ticket, \$20 for five) and win this fabulous trip for you and your friends!

directions & parking
Parking will be available only at Central Middle School, 221 Central Avenue East (intersection of Rt 214 with Mayo Road, one-quarter mile east of Solomons Island Road, Rt 2), in Edgewater, MD. Starting at 9am, buses will shuttle visitors to SERC.

More Information
More information available at www.serc.si.edu or by contacting Mark Haddon at 443-482-2218.