David G. Tarboton Named Utah Water Research Lab Director

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Utah State University News Release — LOGAN, UTAH, May 21, 2019 — One of the state’s largest research laboratories is getting a new director. David Tarboton, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Utah State University, will lead the Utah Water Research Laboratory beginning July 1.

Tarboton was selected May 20 following a nationwide search to replace outgoing director Mac McKee who retires next month after nearly 20 years of service to the university.

The Utah Water Research Laboratory is one of the country’s leading institutions for water resources engineering and environmental quality research. It employs approximately 200 faculty, staff and students and is one of the oldest and largest university-based water research facilities in the U.S. The lab comprises 113,000 square feet of research and office space and is home to two world-class hydraulics modeling facilities and an environmental quality lab.

Tarboton joined USU in 1990 and has worked as a visiting professor and scholar at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and at the National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research in Christchurch, New Zealand. He holds a master’s and Ph.D. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and undergraduate degrees from University of Natal and University of South Africa. Tarboton is a veteran water resources engineer and a renowned hydrologist. He has authored more than 80 research manuscripts, received over a dozen accolades for research and is a Fellow of the American Geophysical Union. He has also mentored 29 graduate students who now work in various fields of water resources and environmental engineering.

His most recent work focuses on hydrologic information systems — an emerging discipline focused on the collection and management of hydrological data. He and his colleagues are revolutionizing the way data are stored and shared among hydrologists and earth scientists around the globe.

In 2017, Tarboton was selected to lead a $4 million National Science Foundation-funded collaborative effort aimed at improving HydroShare — an online database system that simplifies the storage and sharing of hydrological data and models.

Tarboton says he’s thrilled to take on the new leadership role.

“I’m excited to take the reins of the Utah Water Research Laboratory,” he said. “The lab has a strong tradition of water and environmental research that is critical to the state of Utah, the nation and the world. I plan to continue this contribution of the lab as a center of excellence for the generation of knowledge needed to solve water problems and to develop new opportunities that take advantage of the interdisciplinary team-based expertise at the lab.”

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