USU Team Awarded $1.1M for Critical Zone Research | College of Engineering

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News Release — Sept. 3, 2020 — Utah State University researchers will join the National Science Foundation's Critical Zone Collaborative Network Coordinating Hub to improve collaboration among engineers and scientists studying the Earth's Critical Zone.

USU professors Jeff Horsburgh and David Tarboton will lead USU's involvement in NSF-funded research aimed at improving the data and communication tools used by engineers and scientists who study the Earth's Critical Zone.

The Critical Zone, loosely defined as the region of the Earth between the tree tops and the bottom of groundwater, supports all terrestrial life and regulates many of our planet's characteristics.

Professors of civil and environmental engineering Jeff Horsburgh and David Tarboton are the USU leads of a collaborative team led by the Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science, known as CUAHSI. The group is working to develop a network coordinating hub that supports communication, data services and education and outreach activities for researchers working in Critical Zone science and engineering research within the National Science Foundation's newly-funded Critical Zone Collaborative Network. USU will receive up to $1.1 million over five years in NSF funding for their part in the collaborative research.

"The new network of Thematic Cluster Projects represents a large investment in important research aimed at better understanding Earth's Critical Zone," said Horsburgh. "We're excited to help establish the hub that will coordinate research within the network and ensure that the data produced will be broadly shared."

The USU team will work closely with colleagues from CUAHSI, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University, Penn State University, the Renaissance Computing Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the United States Geological Survey's John Wesley Powell Synthesis Center to build the cyberinfrastructure needed to ensure that data created by the network are standardized, archived and accessible for broad reuse.

"Increasingly, scientific advances require large team efforts that combine information from multiple sources," added Tarboton. "It's gratifying to have our expertise in hydrologic information systems and data management recognized and included in this coordinated national effort. We are pleased to be part of this project."

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