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Dr. Stefan Kienzle honoured with award at Canadian Water Summit

Dr. Stefan Kienzle's passion for and commitment to water sustainability research has never been motivated by external validation, which makes his Water's Next Award from the 2018 Canadian Water Summit all the more gratifying.

Kienzle's research was recognized with the People – Academia award at the recent gathering of the country's most influential water leaders, garnering selection over colleagues from McMaster University, the University of British Columbia and University of Alberta.



"This is a proud moment. As a researcher, I always hope that my work is meaningful to others. I work on projects in good faith and truly believe in doing good, relevant work and to get an award such as this is a great confirmation," says Kienzle, a hydrologist in the Department of Geography.

The award website refers to Kienzle as a researcher who is, "improving decision-making about water and land management at the watershed and provincial scales, to ensure water security, and resilience in adaptation to climate change." His work on developing a climate index atlas for the province of Alberta (albertaclimaterecords.com) was predominantly cited by the awards committee. The project is widely used today.

"It was recognized as something that is very relevant and very useful and is being used in high schools, by people in government, consultants, policy experts and more," says Kienzle. "In this case I've hit something people care about and are interested in."

The interactive database provides easy access to climate records from 1950 to 2010 for the province of Alberta. It clearly shows trends over the years and reflects how Alberta's

climate has been warming, especially in winter, thereby creating longer growing seasons and more extreme weather.

Kienzle explains the climate information is useful to a variety of people, even if you're just an avid gardener, like himself.

"As a gardener, I was interested in when the last day of frost occurred and whether it had changed substantially over the years and, in Lethbridge, it actually has not, but in central Alberta it is now one to two weeks earlier than in the 1950s," he says. "The first day of frost in the fall has also not changed in southern Alberta, but in central Alberta it occurs one to two weeks later."

He also says the data reveal the existence of more cold spells in the province, a situation where for five consecutive days, the weather is five degrees colder than the baseline average.

"When you step back and think about that, it actually confirms what we know about climate change, that the extremes and the variability are higher," he says. "So, we have many more heat waves and many more cold spells."

This is Kienzle's first professional award and it has motivated him to continue to press on with his research. He's currently working on expanding the climate database to the rest of the country and then internationally. He's also involved in modelling rainfall runoff for all the headwaters in the Oldman River basin, looking at the inflows into the Oldman River Dam and St. Mary's Dam and how they have changed in respect to climate change from 1941 to 2017.

"The work will provide some interesting answers, which are important for water managers and irrigators in southern Alberta, giving them an idea of how often the reservoirs will be full and how often they will be dry."

That he was recognized with an award chosen by a committee outside the realm of academia, he says, is particularly gratifying.

"I am inspired to continue and expand my work, because professionals, the public and, in particular, decision-makers require the best fact-based answers to these complex questions," he says. "I am passionate about carrying out research that benefits farmers, irrigators, ranchers, foresters, water managers and the public at large."

To view online: <http://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/kienzle-honoured-waters-next-award-canadian-water-summit>

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