

Norman C. Hester

Director and State Geologist, Indiana Geological Survey, 1986 - 1998

Norman Curtis Hester, 76, of Bloomington, lost his battle with leukemia on December 7, 2009.

Norm was born, May 21, 1933, in Jeffersontown, Kentucky. He was a U.S. Navy veteran, having served during the Korean War.

He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Louisville, and a Master's Degree and Doctorate in Geology from the University of Cincinnati.

Norm's career took him many places. Prior to becoming director and State Geologist at the Indiana Geological Survey (IGS), he was a professor of Geology at Eastern Kentucky University, a research scientist at the Illinois State Geological Survey, and Assistant State Geologist at the Kentucky Geological Survey.

Two initiatives for which Norm will be remembered are being instrumental in founding the CUSEC-State Geologists and in founding the Central Great Lakes Geologic Mapping Coalition, which now has recently been refashioned as the Great Lakes Geologic Mapping Coalition.

CUSEC-SG was initiated by Norm in response to the frustration he experienced in countering the prediction of Dr. Iben Browning, a biologist, who gained national notoriety in predicting an earthquake on the New Madrid Fault on December 2nd and 3rd in 1990. While no seismic activity was recorded, Browning captured a disproportionate amount of news media attention. Browning's prediction caused such a panic that businesses and schools closed in a four-state area. In response, Norm gathered the state geological surveys of the Midwest and founded CUSEC-SG as a subsidiary of the Central United States Earthquake Consortium in 1992. Today CUSEC-SG is a federation of eight member State Geological Surveys working collectively to raise earthquake awareness, response planning, and earthquake research in the Midwest.

In 1997, together with the state geologists from Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan, Norm founded the Central Great Lakes Geologic Mapping Coalition to advance geologic mapping of the unconsolidated Quaternary sediments deposited in this four-state area during the Ice Age. He recognized that this productive land, responsible for its remarkable agricultural productivity, was also very vulnerable to contamination because of its heavy industrialization and high population density. Of particular interest to him was the aspect of mapping in the third, or vertical, dimension, so that mineral and water resources could be sustainably developed. With grants assistance from the U.S. Geological Survey, the Coalition, recently joined by the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and New York, continues to pursue the vision that Norm had 13 years ago.



Following his tenure as the 13th state geologist at the Indiana Geological Survey, Norm was a Professor Emeritus in the Indiana University Department of Geological Sciences. He completed his professional career with the Central United States Earthquake Consortium.

Throughout his career, he had a passion for geology that never wavered. Professionally, Norm was happiest when he could be out in the field, working on geologic problems with his fellow geologists. As State Geologist, he spearheaded and worked through a complicated process that took the IGS from under the banner of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to being a prominent research institute within Indiana University. He supported the integration of computers and new technology as other tools for geologic research and dissemination. His devotion to the science was always evident.

Norm served as AASG Vice President for two years, 1993-1995. He was elected to AASG Honorary Membership in 1998.

Norm received many awards throughout his career, and two were quite special to him: The Sagamore of the Wabash and The Distinguished Hoosier Award. These awards are two of the highest awards given by the state of Indiana to its citizens.

His friendship, enthusiasm, and generous nature will be greatly missed by the staff of the IGS and his colleagues within the geologic profession.