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Montana

UNIVERSITY RELATIONS • MISSOULA, MT 59812 • 406.243.2522 • FAX: 406.243.4520

NEWS RELEASE

Eight Montanans will travel to China next week for a public diplomacy mission on global environmental issues under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of State and organized by the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center of The University of Montana.

The Mansfield Center has been awarded a \$440,000 grant by the U.S. Department of State to implement a two-way exchange program with China on global environmental issues. The program focuses on young professionals who work in the field of the environment and want to establish international partnerships and new ways of looking at shared concerns.

The Montana contingent will be accompanied by two Alabamans who work on various aspects of coal mining and methane recovery. Program participants are:

§ Jonathan Andrew David, natural resource specialist – minerals, Bureau of Land Management, Miles City.

§ Matthew Stanton Frank, associate editor, Missoula Independent, Missoula.

§ Ross Patrick Keogh, planner and analyst, Sagebrush Energy, Missoula.

§ Melissa Deanne Mitchem, environmental specialist, Industrial Energy and Minerals Coal Program, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Helena.

§ Rosemary Jan Moore, field organizer, Northern Plains Resource Council, Billings.

§ Monica Lynn Pokorny, wildlife habitat restoration ecologist, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Polson.

§ Brianna Carolie Randall, water policy director, Clark Fork Coalition, Missoula.

§ Joaquin Small Rodriguez, environmental youth organizer, Native Action, Lame Deer.

§ Nicolle Monique Manke, mining engineer, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Office of Mine Safety and Health Research, Dora, Ala., and Bethel Park, Pa.

§ Seth Autrey Newton, oil and gas attorney, Rosen Harwood P.A., Tuscaloosa, Ala.

The group of 10 Americans will travel to Beijing and Guizhou, China, for three weeks, June 7-26. They'll also engage with 20 Chinese counterparts traveling to Montana in September.

In describing why she looks forward to representing Montana, Mitchem said, "I've learned to appreciate our wealth of natural resources and understand the responsibilities that come along with having them. For the past

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five years, I've dedicated my career to reclaiming lands impacted by resource extraction, developing and teaching responsible practices, and enforcing those practices through regulation. I love what I do and am proud to be a steward of Montana.”

Moore adds, “Working with and learning from other young professionals who are working toward positive change will be greatly beneficial for us as we begin our careers. I am interested in developing lasting professional relationships with Chinese counterparts where we can continue to exchange our understanding and development of environmental issues long after the program has come to a close.”

The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the U.S. Department of State provides grants to U.S. nonprofit organizations to conduct two-way exchange programs that provide substantive professional development and support to emerging leaders from the U.S. and foreign countries. The purpose of each exchange program is to engage with foreign leaders in critical professions, to demonstrate respect for foreign cultures and to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries.

The Mansfield Center promotes better understanding of Asia, U.S. relations with Asia, and ethics and public affairs in the spirit of U.S. Sen. Mike Mansfield and his wife, Maureen.

“This U.S.-China exchange project is an integral part of the Mansfield Center’s efforts to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and Asia,” said center Director Terry Weidner. “The program offers Americans the opportunity to share their expertise and experience with their foreign counterparts and to learn about Chinese problems and perspectives.”

The exchange will be divided into two phases. The first phase consists of a visit by 10 Americans to Beijing and Guizhou, a province in southwest China, to look at environmental issues. Participants will be accompanied by Suhan Chen, Mansfield Center Confucius Institute co-director.

An orientation about national environmental concerns, supplemented by cultural enhancements such as visits to the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, will launch the program in Beijing. The group then will fly to Guiyang, the capital of the province of Guizhou, where they will participate in a series of workshops and discussions on provincial issues before separating into teams for travel to relevant environmental sites throughout the province. The second phase of the program starts with the visit of 20 Chinese to the U.S. this fall. Though based in Missoula, the Chinese group also will travel to Glacier National Park and Helena. The group will further develop their understanding of U.S. environmental issues with visits to Alabama and Washington, D.C.

“China’s environmental problems may require far-reaching reforms that can only be carried out by a new generation of leaders,” Weidner said. “Both the American and Chinese participants will have a real opportunity to make a difference.”