

The Tisza River Basin as a classroom

In 2013, the ICDPR will provide an internship opportunity as part of a unique programme training the scientists, managers and leaders who will tackle tomorrow's environmental challenges at the river basin level.

Today's water management challenges cross traditional boundaries between science and policy. To meet these needs, river managers need interdisciplinary training that integrates scientific research with resource management and policy-making to become agents for change tomorrow.



Credit: Amanda Marshall

The US National Science Foundation's Integrative Graduate Education Research and Training (IGERT) Fellowship programme aims to train a diverse team of PhD students using team-based collaboration to integrate science, management and policy at the river basin level. Each IGERT team is assigned a river basin, spending two years developing management plans for that basin. Previous teams analysed the Cache and Kaskaskia Rivers in Illinois and the Mississippi River; this year's team will analyse the Tisza River Basin.

Putting students in direct contact with water managers. During the second year of study, the IGERT programme places students in internships with government agencies and organisations active within the target basin. The ICDPR has been chosen as one internship opportunity, and will provide data and on-the-ground experience for student Shanna N. McClain beginning in January 2013. For the IGERT project, McClain will be researching the potential impacts of floodplain reconnection in the Tisza.

For McClain, the match is ideal: "I feel quite fortunate to have been afforded the opportunity to work with the ICDPR, as my areas of interest specifically relate to international governance of trans-boundary river basins and researching the policies and mechanisms that guide the management of these areas."

Bringing experience to the Tisza. McClain's previous studies have focused on international policy related to river basin management, integrated water resource management, flood mitigation as well as the establishment of flow regimes. She also completed a comparative analysis of environmental flows policy in Africa's Orange-Senqu River Basin and the Murray-Darling River Basin in Australia.

Shanna N. McClain (far right) and the team of IGERT Fellows explored the Cache River Basin in June 2012, as part of the first Project Area of the IGERT Fellowship.

Since December 2011 she has worked as a consultant for the UN Environment Programme and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Environmental Emergencies Section, where she has worked on mainstreaming environmental preparedness and prevention activities as part of a broader framework of humanitarian response.

McClain is looking forward to joining the work in the Tisza Basin. "The Tisza provides a unique landscape", says McClain, "with remarkable issues that can present larger implications for floodplain management/reconnection, preparedness for environmental emergencies, adaptation to climate change, and multilevel governance in water resources."

Kirstie Shepherd is a freelance journalist living in Vienna and has called the Danube River Basin home since 2000.

IGERT FELLOWSHIPS IN WATERSHED SCIENCE AND POLICY

The Integrative Graduate Education Research and Training (IGERT) fellowships are awarded by Southern Illinois University Carbondale in the United States.

IGERT fellowships provide:

- multi-disciplinary, team-based training in watershed science and policy
- graduation education that crosses traditional boundaries between science and policy
- real world preparation for team-based critical thinking and problem-solving challenges
- the application of scientific knowledge within a policy and management context