

JEFFREY R. WHITE

Professor Jeffrey R. White retires from Indiana University after 37 years as a faculty member in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (now the Paul H. O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs) with considerable service in academic administration. Jeff grew up in Wyckoff, New Jersey, playing in the backyard with his three siblings and the neighborhood kids. During his first semester at Gettysburg College, he played on the tennis team, but soon discovered that majoring in biology required his full attention. During his doctoral studies in civil engineering at Syracuse University, Jeff developed his love for college basketball as well as for the great outdoors, where he conducted research on acid rain under the direction of Dr. Charlie Driscoll.

Acid rain was one of the most pressing environmental concerns of the 1980s, and scientists pointed to coal combustion as the culprit. However, in ways that are strikingly familiar today, the fossil fuel industry argued that coal combustion was not responsible and that scientists were making much ado about nothing. Jeff's doctoral research was aimed at understanding the causes and consequences of acid deposition on freshwater ecosystems. His early publications addressed the effect of acidification on elemental cycling in lakes in the Adirondack Mountains of New York, clearly showing that acidification caused fundamental and damaging changes. Jeff's contributions in paleolimnology supported the conclusion that acidification of these lakes was a recent phenomenon attributable to sulfur emissions from coal-burning power plants. These studies led to the regulation of sulfur emissions in the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, which constituted a notable environmental success story, since many acidified lakes have shown significant recovery during the past 30 years.

Jeff joined IU as an assistant professor in 1983. He and his wife, Legene, arrived in Bloomington expecting to stay for only a couple of years. Instead, we all gained a valuable colleague when they decided to remain Hoosiers and raise their children and a succession of loyal golden retrievers here in Bloomington. A favorite family memory recalls that when son Keegan and daughter Caitlin were watching *Sesame Street* during breakfast



Jeff would have a hard time leaving for campus due to a clever skit by Bert and Ernie or the Swedish Chef.

During the 1990s, Jeff turned his attention to carbon cycling and methane production in peatlands. Using research sites in Michigan, he and his colleagues demonstrated in a series of papers that vegetation such as shrubs and other wetland plants facilitated the emission of methane from peat. This work also described the primary biogeochemical pathway by which methane was formed in peat and the seasonality of methane emissions. These initial studies would lead to investigations into the role that microbial communities play in methane emissions in Alaska and Greenland. The work in Greenland brought Jeff back to his limnological roots, with several publications describing the unique biogeochemistry of remote lakes in western Greenland. As was the case with acid rain 35 years ago, climate change and the accelerated melting of Greenland's ice sheets generated both scientific and public interest in Jeff's work. The importance of his research was evidenced in 2018 when Jeff was selected as the IU Distinguished Faculty Research Lecturer.

Though he taught at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, generations of SPEA graduate students inevitably associate two courses with Jeff: Limnology and Aquatic Chemistry. Jeff would teach Limnology through 2007 and many SPEA alumni can trace their careers in water resources to this course. Perhaps even

more than Limnology, it was his take-home exams in Aquatic Chemistry that made the most lasting impression on students. Rigor, fairness, and patience defined Jeff's approach to the classroom, and in recognition of his quality teaching he received several school and university teaching awards, including (twice) the IU Trustees' Teaching Award.

Beyond the laboratory and classroom, Jeff served IU and the city of Bloomington in various roles. He served on the City of Bloomington Utilities Service Board from 1990–2004, including a two-year stint as the board's president. He also provided expert advice to state and federal agencies on topics of watershed assessment and management. From 2001–05, Jeff served as associate dean for SPEA and helped to grow the number of the environmental science faculty in SPEA and across campus. In 2006, Jeff moved to the position of associate vice provost for research, and he served the campus in this role through 2009. During this time, Jeff served on the design and planning committees for Multidisciplinary Science Building I (now Simon Hall), MSB-II, and the Field Lab at Griffy Woods, the first LEED-certified building on the campus. Jeff's final round of administrative service exemplified his commitment to enhancing environmental programs at IU Bloomington. In 2012 he became the founding director of the Integrated Program in the Environment, a campuswide program aimed at coordinating and growing the academic and research activities throughout all of IU Bloomington's environmental and sustainability efforts.

While the constant pounding required Jeff to give up tennis long ago, he discovered cycling along the back roads of Indiana and commuted to campus by bike on all but the worst weather days. Retirement will certainly allow him more time for cycling with Legene and others, in addition to singing, hiking, camping, and traveling with their kids and their new granddaughter. We thank Jeff for his collegiality, his contributions to research, his passion for teaching, and his commitment to Indiana University. We wish him the best during a well-deserved retirement.

*Todd Royer
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