

**J W Powell Institute for Analysis and Synthesis**  
**Leadership 201 Action Learning Team (ALT) Recommendations**  
201 ALT members: Jill Nishimura, Noel Hurley, William Richardson and Susan Stitt  
**June 19, 2009**

*Action Learning Team Vision (2025 perspective): “As we imagined over 25 years ago, the Powell Center certainly is a place to promote Integrated Science where the whole is bigger than the parts, where the scientists work together rather than separately, and the products are better because of it. The center fulfills our vision statement, “The USGS is a world leader in the natural sciences through our scientific excellence and responsiveness to society’s needs. “*

**Recommendations to make the JW Powell Center successful:**

- Sanctioned and supported by the top levels of the USGS.
- Long-term funding must be provided by the bureau,
  - not stripped from operational budgets
  - included adequate funding for logistics & salaries,
  - and good IT and statistical support
- Guarantee a long-term commitment (must persist through the lean times when the easy thing to do can sometimes be to let something die if it is not immediately successful).
- Needs to be thoughtfully set-up to allow scientists to come together with the right frame of mind. Must create a collegial, not competitive environment.
- All authors on each publication should be considered senior or lead authors (attractive to many RGE scientists.)
- The USGS should review findings, learnings, and recommendations from previous integrated science efforts:
  - 1998 Integrated Science Workshop with the Ecological Society of America and the Geological Society of America
  - FISC and Alaska Science Center
  - Science thrusts projects
  - Venture capital program
  - Coastal Habitats in Puget Sound
  - Ridge to Reef (bottom-up integrated science success story)
- Scientist-driven, not top-down driven.
- Money should chase the science – the science should not chase the money.
- Use the creative tools applied in Leadership 201 to promote and accelerate innovation and creativity at the JW Powell Center.

**Additional thoughts:**

- The Center should be a catalyst for the entire USGS to generate more integrated, higher -level science.
- Original intention of the JW Powell Center is to promote interdisciplinary science. Could have the potential to promote an unintended consequence – elimination of separate science disciplines.
- Could include participation by academia, private industry, and international scientists .



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## New Early Detection System Prevents Deadly Recurrence of Rocky Mountain Oyster Flu

Rocky Mountain Oyster Flu (RMOF) outbreaks have been prevented by a new, innovative early warning system developed by the U.S. Geological Survey. The disease, triggered by increases in river flows off the mountainous regions of the world, has symptoms that include development of dark blue noses, insatiable cravings for Rocky Mountain Oysters, chitlins, and other non-standard delicacies, and usually results in death from asphyxiating laughter.

Working together, USGS scientists Paul Slota and Stephen Blanchard discovered that increased river flows are linked with a population increase of the virus. Biologist Paul Slota and his team first isolated the virus at the Denver Federal Center, and working with the World Health Organization realized that the virus is now found globally. Hydrologist Stephen Blanchard oversaw the hydrological modeling that found patterns in the increased stream flows.

According to USGS remote sensing expert Tom Sohre, “new technology was used with existing water information collected in the past 100 years in association with data from the Landsat satellites 5 through 22, and made it possible to detect the waste material extruded by the RMOF Virus. The signals that result from the satellite are fed into an early warning system and distributed to drinking water facilities and parks to eliminate human exposure and further outbreak.”

Advances in technology have surpassed all expectations of what new information may be found in historical data sets. Biologists had studied the outbreak for years and were never able to resolve the source and cause until they brought in the geologists, geographers, and hydrologists into the JW Powell Center to work together. The connection between water, wildlife, and humans is part of the USGS’ human health-related activities.

USGS’ ability to study large, inter-related problems of societal relevance has made USGS a world leader in solving national and global issues of disease emergence and climate change.

### Websites for additional information:

USGS J.W. Powell Center for Analysis and Synthesis  
[http://www.jwpowell.usgs.gov/science\\_strategies/human\\_health/RMOF\\_virus/](http://www.jwpowell.usgs.gov/science_strategies/human_health/RMOF_virus/)

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Setting: 2025 USGS retiree's reunion

Before retirees file in

Dianne Jeffries: Welcome to NBC Nightly News. Tonight we have another internationally important story from the USGS, the premier Earth Science Agency in the world....

Barbara Wainman ENTHUSIASTICALLY reads press release

Retirees file in and exchange small talk/insults. Noel with cane; Jill in wheel chair; Bill and Susan enter feebly.

Noel: Sure am glad they finally got some good gin at this reunion. Remember that rot-gut stuff Steve Blanchard used to bring? Geez, It would stagger a moose!

Retirees sit around table (both ends and two facing audience) and begin discussing the press release

Susan: Did you hear about the latest release from the Powell Center? I sure am proud that we had a small part in getting it started.

Jill: Especially after support for it vacillated for the first couple of years.

Noel: It's just amazing the things that have been accomplished at the Powell Center.

Bill: Even before stopping Rocky Mountain Oyster Flu in its tracks, several smaller, but important issues were addressed by using EXISTING data– they found the key to eliminating hypoxia in the Gulf, brought new insight into the dilemma of invasive species, and that pelican migration work. Who would have thought that pelican migrations would be so important!?!

Jill: The Powell Center might have had a slow start but several important actions were required for it to be successful. It was:

- Sanctioned and supported by the top levels of the USGS
  
- Susan: They ensured long-term funding by the bureau,
  - not stripped from operational budgets
  - including adequate funding for logistics & salaries,
  - and good IT and statistical support
  
- Noel: There was an initial guarantee of a long-term commitment; and it persisted even through the lean times when the easy thing would have been to let it die.
  
- Bill: Scientists came together with the right frame of mind (collegial, not competitive)
- All authors on each publication were considered senior or lead authors (This was attractive to many RGE scientists.)
  
- Noel: Yeah, and don't forget the Status that was gained by working with the Center

Susan: Another reason it succeeded was before the center opened the Bureau reviewed the findings from the 1998 Integrated Science Workshop with the Ecological Society of America and the Geological Society of America and followed those suggestions.

Bill: The Bureau also reviewed what worked and didn't work from previous attempts at integrated science, like FISC, Alaska SC, NCEAS, the science thrusts projects, venture capital, and Coastal Habitats in Puget Sound.

Jill: Don't forget Ridge to Reef! It is an excellent example of a bottom-up integrated science success story.

Noel: Jill isn't Ridge to Reef the investigation where you earned the Superior Service Award and a \$10,000 bonus?

**Jill:** How nice of you to remember.

**Bill:** The Bureau really increased the chance for success by reviewing those projects and initiatives and implementing what they found worked. The lessons-learned made this Powell Center endeavor successful:

- Like it cannot be a forced marriage; not top-down driven but rather scientist-driven and
- The science didn't chase the money; the money chased the science
  
- **Susan:** The Center was a catalyst for the entire USGS to generate more integrated, higher - level science.
- You know the original intention was to promote interdisciplinary science; but one unintended consequence was that the success of this center led to the elimination of separate science disciplines.
  
- **Jill:** The success of the Center also caused a tripling of USGS funding and
- Line item funding provided for this center within the first 5 years because of its success in generating integrated, large-scale science
  
- **Noel:** What really amazes me is that it started out with just USGS participation but now academia, private industry, international scientists are paying more than \$1,000 per day to spend time at the center.

**Bill:** To think the ball really got rolling from our Action Team presentation at leadership 201.

**Susan:** Our instructors were great!

**Noel:** Top Notch all the way!

**Jill:** Some of the things we learned in 201 helped us address this Powell question and we used them throughout our careers. For example BrainWriting for the I's

**Bill:** Yeah, and Mind-mapping (that interesting way to organize things) is still being used at the Powell Center

**Susan:** I still use Storytelling to this day.

**Bill:** Sure was glad that somebody like Sec of Interior Matt Larsen and Jim Devine, Head of the National Academies of Science, took it on and ran with it. Fathers of the Powell Center. I heard there is a Congressional motion right now to change the name to the Devine Larsen Center.

**Jill:** Remember in that action team meeting when Bill said the USGS would no longer be a world leader if we settled for the status quo?

**Susan:** And "If you are not growing, you're falling behind."

**Bill:** As we imagined over 25 years ago, the Powell Center certainly is a place to promote Integrated Science where the whole is bigger than the parts, where the scientists work together rather than separately, and the products are better because of it. The center fulfills our vision statement, "The USGS is a world leader in the natural sciences through our scientific excellence and responsiveness to society's needs.

**Noel:** We all can be proud of the small part we had in the beginning of the Devine Larsen Center. Is there any more gin at the bar?