New center blends science and policy

Collaboration is not always part of the equation when opposing viewpoints clash over contentious Western issues such as controlled burns or grazing on public lands.

But a new institute housed at Boise State plans to change that by providing a means to bring stakeholders together to work out solutions to difficult environmental, natural resource or land management questions.

"It's really a marriage of science, technology and public values," says Boise State political scientist John Freemuth, who developed the policy component of the **Environmental Science and Public** Policy Research Institute (ESPRI).

Through the interdisciplinary and collaborative center, university scientists and public policy experts will team with state and federal agencies, private industry and nongovernmental organizations to tackle environmental issues.

Initial funding of \$250,000 for ESPRI is provided through the Boise National Forest.

A common problem with other collaborative models lies with the role of science, says Freemuth. Many discussions stall over interpretations of information. At other times, the public's need for scientific information is at odds with available scientific data. Through ESPRI, stakeholders will develop a common scientific understanding of specific issues.

ESPRI hopes to promote the development of "civic science" science in service to the needs of the community, says Freemuth.

"In most natural resource discussions, stakeholders disagree over scientific evidence. But at some point they have to evaluate those differences and then make difficult policy decisions," says Freemuth.

"ESPRI can play an important role in getting stakeholders to that point."

JOHN FREEMUTH Professor Year

NAMED BEST IN STATE

BY KATHLEEN MORTENSEN

acing back and forth in the front of a small lecture hall, arms waving and fingers stabbing the air emphatically, John Freemuth explains federal bureaucracy and the U.S. court system. Grabbing a yardstick, he uses it as a pointer as he reiterates the notes he's already scribbled on the blackboard.

It may be PoliSci 101, but there's nothing routine or introductory about the way he teaches basic principles of government.

"I tried taking this class before from a different teacher," says sophomore Laura Hager, "but I like Dr. Freemuth. He's very personable and

understanding." She also says his animated gestures and use of different voices in his lectures makes class more interesting. "He does a great Richard Nixon impres-

Freemuth's teaching skills and passion for the subject matter led to his selection as the 2001 Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement

A nationally recognized expert on public lands policy, Freemuth has taught at Boise State since 1986. He was selected from a pool of seven nominees from Idaho.

This is the eighth time in 12 years a Boise State professor has won the prestigious award. Past winners include Russell Centanni, biology, 2000; Pam Gehrke, nursing, 1999; Stephanie Witt, political science, 1998; Greg Raymond, political science, 1994; and Tom Trusky, English, 1990, '91 and '93.

Freemuth was praised by students, colleagues and community leaders for his involvement in environmental issues and public policy. He is often called on to offer expert opinion to the media and is the chair of the National Science Advisory Board to the Bureau of Land Management.

"Professors are often rewarded by the university for their academic research and the number of works that are published," wrote student Sadie Babits, an NPR News 91 journalist. "But rarely are professors recognized for making a difference in their field of study."

And former Gov. Cecil Andrus, chair of the Andrus Center for Public Policy, praised Freemuth for his rapport with students: "In observing the interaction between John and his students, it is clear that mutual respect and affection are two of the reasons why he is one of the most popular professors on the campus."

Freemuth was also named a 2001 Boise State Foundation Scholar for service, having given more than 100 presentations to community and professional groups throughout the United States. In addition to teaching, he is a senior fellow for the Andrus Center, housed at Boise State.

