



AAWRE Pay Tribute to Honorary Diplomat, Dr. Gilbert F. White



At the age of 94, AAWRE Honorary Diplomat, Gilbert F. White, Ph.D., P.E., Hon.D.WRE, who was an Emeritus Professor of Geography at the University of Colorado and founder of the University's Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center, passed away on October 5, 2006. Widely regarded as the "father of floodplain management" in the field of engineering and science, Dr. White leaves an immeasurable mark of contributions in the field of water resources engineering, environmental conservation research, and scientific advancement and study. Dr. White's achievements and accomplishments throughout his vast career are incomparable and will be used as the benchmark for excellence.

Throughout the duration of his brilliant career, Dr. White championed comprehensive management of floodplains and the adoption of a broad range of adjustments and methodologies to floods. Notably, in the early 1970s, Mr. White established the Natural Hazards Research and Applications Information Center at the University of Colorado and in 1994, he created the Boulder Creek Flood Notebook, an on-line plan for studying the next great flood to strike Boulder, Colorado.

Gilbert White was born on November 26, 1911 in Illinois and earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Chicago. Years later, Dr. White earned his doctoral degree from the University of Chicago also, and his doctoral dissertation, "*Human Adjustment to Floods*" would be considered one of the most significant papers on floodplain issues.

One of the first notable positions that Mr. White held was serving as the secretary to the Mississippi Valley Committee, National Resources Committee, and National Resources Planning Board from 1934 to 1940 in the New Deal administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Later, from 1940 to 1942 he worked in the Bureau of the Budget, Executive Office of the President.

During the course of his career, Dr. White made major contributions to the study of water systems in developing countries, the management and preservation of arid lands, global environmental change, and international cooperation regarding water resources issues in such areas as the Mekong Delta and the Middle East. Additional areas and work focused on nuclear winter, geography education, the management of nuclear waste, and the mitigation of wide range of natural hazards.

Professor White also served on Boards and committees of various organizations such as serving as Chair of the Bureau of the Budget Task Force on Federal Flood Policy from 1965-1966, Chair of Committee on Water, National Research Council from 1964-1968, and also served as Chair of Committee on Sustainable Water Supplies for the Middle East, National Research Council from 1996-1999.

Dr. White received numerous honors and awards throughout his career. He received the Association of American Geographers Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 and Water Resource Specialty Group Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005. He also received the American Water Resources Association's Eben Award in 1972 and Caulifield Award in 1989.

Other remarkable accomplishments are the United Nations Sasakawa International Environment Prize in 1985, United Nations Environment Programme Global 500 Roll of Honour, Laureate in 1985, Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement in 1987, Renewable Natural Resources Foundation, Sustained Achievement Award in 1992, American Rivers, Lifetime Achievement Award in 1994, Universities Council on Water Resources Hall Medal in 1995, National Science Foundation's National Medal of Science in 2000, International Water Resources Association's Millennium Award in 2000, City Council of Boulder's Commendation in 2001, and AAWRE's Honorary Diplomate status in 2005.

Dr. White earned eight honorary degrees from eight colleges & universities and seven awards/institutions were established in honor of Professor White. The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) created The Goddard-White Award as the association's highest honor, ASFPM started the Gilbert F. White National Flood Policy Forum and also the ASFPM Flood Hazard Fellowship.

Additional honors include the Resources for the Future (RFF) establishing the RFF Gilbert F. White Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, the Association of American Geographers Hazards Specialty Group creating the Gilbert White Award and the University of Colorado establishing Gilbert F. White Doctoral Fellowship. In 2001, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers established the Arthur Maass – Gilbert F. White Reference Room at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Institute for Water Resources. The Reference Room houses donated Dr. White's library collection and research papers, considered one of the largest in the world on water resources planning.

Dr. White was married to his first wife, Anne for five decades before she passed away in 1989, with whom he had three children. At age 91, he remarried to his longtime friend, Claire, and remained active in his community in Boulder, Colorado, and also in international affairs.