

Remote sensing used to track humanity

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A U.S. geography professor is using satellite imagery to determine how land use and land cover changes affect human health and food security.

Doug Goodin of Kansas State University employs remote sensing -- the use of sensors on satellites and spacecraft to observe the Earth -- and other data to monitor and forecast the spread of infectious disease.

According to Goodin there is a confluence of change taking place across the globe. The world's population is increasing, the global climate is changing and global ecology is being altered. All are believed related to the emergence of new diseases or re-emergence of old diseases, he said.

Goodin has used the technology to study the re-emergence of mouse-spread hantavirus in the South American country of Paraguay.

"We've been able to understand how human beings have changed the landscape the mice live in," Goodin said. " It brings (the mice) more in contact with each other, so the disease spreads horizontally in the rodent population, and more in contact with people, so there is a greater chance humans can contract this disease."

Goodin discussed the subject during a recent conference in Washington sponsored by the National Academies of Science.

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