

Scientist selected to help guide next USGS, NASA Landsat Mission

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This image shows Justin Huntington, Desert Research Institute. Credit: Desert Research Institute

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has named Justin Huntington, Desert Research Institute assistant research professor, to the National Science Team supporting the new Landsat Data Continuity Mission Satellite, scheduled to launch in February from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

The expert team of scientists and engineers, selected after a competitive nationwide process, will serve a five-year term, from 2012-2017, and

provide technical and scientific input to USGS and NASA on issues critical to the success of the Landsat program.

Huntington and fellow DRI staff remote sensing and GIS scientists Charles Morton, Tim Minor and Matt Bromley, have been awarded \$300,000 over the five-year period to focus on developing and enhancing Landsat derived [evapotranspiration](#) and surface energy products alongside Dr. Richard Allen from the University of Idaho and Dr. Ayse Kilic from the University of Nebraska.

"It's an honor to be part of this team," said Huntington, who specializes in [water](#) resource modeling and is currently leading the development of Nevada's first agricultural weather network, "Everyone involved from Nevada, Idaho and Nebraska have helped position us (Nevada) as the perfect center piece for state of the art research and applications in evapotranspiration and land surface energy balance modeling."

The Landsat Data Continuity Mission (LDCM), which will become Landsat 8 following its launch next month, is designed to extend Landsat's comprehensive global record for at least five years.

"Landsat is a versatile tool that is used by farmers, scientists, and [city planners](#)," said Matt Larsen, USGS Associate Director for Climate and Land Use Change. "In fact, it's used by a broad range of specialists to assess some of the world's most critical issues - the food, water, forests, and other natural resources needed for a growing world population. This team will help the Landsat program reach its highest potential."

Huntington notes that his team's research - "will produce water consumption rates of plants at the field scale needed to refine Nevada's basin water budgets and to provide hard to come by information for water use and resources assessments."

Since 1972, the United States has acquired and maintained a unique, continuous record of the global land surface. This impartial record has become indispensable for detecting and monitoring natural and human-induced changes to the Earth's landscape. In Nevada, for example, there is a visual data archive documenting the history of water use going back almost 30 years, as well as ongoing collection of current water uses from agriculture and native vegetation.

As recognized national and international leaders in land remote sensing, Landsat Science Team members like Huntington will evaluate operational and data management strategies to meet the requirements of all Landsat users, including the needs of policy makers at all levels of government. They will play a key role in ensuring that the LDCM is successfully integrated with past, present, and future remotely sensed data for the purpose of observing national and global environmental systems.

"The team will form a science vanguard in advancing the analysis and application of Landsat data for science and resource management," said Jim Irons, LDCM Project Scientist for NASA. "Their guidance will be invaluable as we plan for the long term future of the Landsat program."

Provided by Desert Research Institute

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