



WILKINS BECOMES DIRECTOR OF WATER INSTITUTE

Editor's Note: Dr. Bill Harris, acting director of the Texas Water Resources Institute since 2009 and previously the institute's associate director for eight years, announced his retirement, effective Aug. 31, 2011. Dr. Neal Wilkins, director of the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, assumed leadership over both institutes as of June 1, 2011.

Dr. Neal Wilkins, director of the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, is also now director of the Texas Water Resources Institute. Photo by Danielle Kalisek, Texas Water Resources Institute.

Changes are under way for the Texas Water Resources Institute (TWRI) and the Texas A&M Institute of Renewable Natural Resources (IRNR), both part of Texas AgriLife Research and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service—changes that will make the achievements of each even better, according to the new director of the two institutes.

IRNR's Director Dr. Neal Wilkins became director for TWRI as of June 1. Wilkins said he looks forward to leading the two institutes and believes together the two institutes will continue to increase the successes that they had separately.

"Both institutes have historically been successful in carrying out their respective mandates to enhance water and natural resources in the state," Wilkins said. "I expect that the core functions and missions of both institutes will continue much as they have been and be enhanced following this action."

Wilkins sees the next few months as a transition time as the institutes' personnel develop closer working relationships.

"We look forward to continuing service to our stakeholder clientele in collaboration with university faculties and agencies across the state and beyond," Wilkins said.

Before becoming director of the IRNR in 2006, Wilkins served as associate head of the Department

of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University and was statewide program leader for wildlife and fisheries with AgriLife Extension. He joined Texas A&M in 1998 as an assistant professor, then became an associate professor and professor in the wildlife and fisheries sciences department. He also served as wildlife specialist for AgriLife Extension.

Prior to joining Texas A&M, Wilkins was the wildlife and fisheries program manager for Port Blakely Tree Farms, a forest landowner in the Pacific Northwest. He directed the wildlife and fisheries program across 150,000 acres of private forestlands in Washington and Oregon, and 40,000 acres of forest plantation in New Zealand.

Wilkins currently serves as vice president for the Texas Wildlife Association and is a professional member of the Boone & Crockett Club. He is a Governor appointee to the Texas Farm and Ranchlands Conservation Council and serves on the Board of Trustees for the Foundation for Economics and the Environment, Texas Wildlife Association Foundation, and Houston Wilderness.

Wilkins earned a bachelor's degree in forestry at Stephen F. Austin State University, his master's degree in wildlife and fisheries sciences at Texas A&M, and his doctorate in wildlife ecology at the University of Florida. 