14th International SWAT Conference in Spain draws large crowd

The 2011 International SWAT Conference drew nearly 200 attendees from 37 countries. More than 130 oral and poster presentations were given on the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT), a river basin-scale computer model developed to quantify land management practices in large, complex watersheds.

The public domain model, jointly developed by U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS) and The Texas A&M University System, is widely used in hydrology and water quality assessment.

SWAT is used to simulate the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater and predict the environmental impact of different land management practices. SWAT is used in soil erosion prevention and control, nonpoint source pollution control, and regional management in watersheds.

The conference, held June 15-17 at the University of Castilla La Mancha in Toledo, Spain, was the 14th international SWAT conference. Included were presentations on SWAT developments, climate change applications, environmental applications, and new model developments. More than 65 attendees participated in three SWAT workshops before the conference.

"The worldwide SWAT users' community has continued to contribute research and help improve the SWAT model through applications and issues resulting from those applications," said Dr. José María Bodoque del Pozo, environmental science faculty member at the University of Castilla La Mancha, in his welcoming address.

Dr. Raghavan Srinivasan, director of Texas AgriLife Research and Texas A&M University's Spatial Sciences Laboratory and member of the SWAT development team, said, "I strongly believe that these conference gatherings will continue to serve as a positive opportunity for our international research community to share the latest innovations developed for SWAT."

SWAT developer, Dr. Jeffrey Arnold, an agricultural engineer at the USDA-ARS Grassland Soil and Water Research Laboratory in Temple, said these conferences also offer networking experiences for fellow scientists and students around the globe. "It's a chance for SWAT users to meet and exchange research and seek advice on model issues," he said.

Conference participant Christine Kuendig, a doctorate student at Eawag, Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology in Switzerland, is using SWAT to research the impact of the relationship between sub-basin scale and climate stations resolution in the Rhine River Basin in Western Europe.

"Some presentations and subsequent discussions at the conference provided helpful insights, which I can relate to my own research, namely the importance of the representation of climate data on smaller scales in contrast to my large–scale study area," she said.

Natalia Uribe Rivera, a hydrologic modeler at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture in Colombia, said this was her second international SWAT conference and she appreciated the increased number of attendees from South America.

"The conference was excellent, and I met participants from my continent and communicated in regards to current SWAT applications in South America," Rivera said.

Conference presentations, photos, and more information can be found at *http://swatmodel.tamu.edu/conferences/2011*. Video presentations will be available in August.