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Law professor to discuss water issues at UN conference

By Andrew Bell/Staff Reporter

Texas Tech School of Law professor Gabriel Eckstein boarded a plane to go to Paris Wednesday. Although he will have the time to see the Eiffel Tower, Eckstein was invited to Paris to participate Thursday and Friday at a conference of water law experts.

The conference is an invitation-only event sponsored by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization. Thirteen experts will join the international meeting and discuss trans-boundary water issues, Eckstein said.

"We will talk about guidelines that apply to trans-boundary aquifer ground water. The rules are loose on an international scale. There's no basic understanding internationally," he said. "We can't have depletion or overexploitation of our water resources, and we can't use up our aquifers because then we would be out of water."

Eckstein is the only invitee from the United States. The law school hired him after a search that encompassed the en-

tire nation, Dean Walter Huffman of the law school said.

"We conducted a nationwide search for the best replacement. The result was Professor Eckstein. This invitation is validation that we hired the true expert of the world," said Huffman.

It was important to hire someone with Eckstein's expertise, Huffman said, because many professors at Tech have a vision for the future.

"Several at Tech have a vision for an institute of water policy and management," he said. "With an institute, we could take a comprehensive look at water in the region, the southwest, the U.S., and finally, globally."

This issue hits close to home, because Lubbock has a limited supply of water. Don McReynolds, technical director and geologist of the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, explained where a high percentage of Lubbock's drinking water comes from.

"Lubbock has two major sources of water. A high percentage comes from Lake Meredith. The other is Bailey/

Lamb County Well Ground water supply," McReynolds said.

The city of Lubbock takes water from both sources and mixes them to give the drinking water a better quality, McReynolds said. However, things need to be done in the near future to replenish the drinking water in Lubbock.

"We are starting to be at our maximum capability to get water from our supplies. We are going to need a back-up plan," McReynolds said.

For regions of the world that are in worse condition than Lubbock, the members of the conference will be discussing water management issues on a global scale. While at the conference, Eckstein will be participating in a meeting on shared ground water. He said the subject of ground water is not only important to Americans but to all people.

"Half of the world gets their water from ground water. It is the most important water source for the world population," said Eckstein.

Aquifers are on the list of ground water resources. Eckstein said aquifers are

tricky because, unlike nations, aquifers have no boundaries. The members need a major effort to begin applying regulations to trans-boundary aquifers.

"We need rules and policies to apply to trans-boundary aquifers. An example would be policies and regulations between the U.S. and Mexico and water use between the two," he said. "It has been an on-going process for a couple of years, but there need to be agreements."

The problem is that water has no national, state or political boundaries, and everyone needs it to survive.

"Water doesn't respect political boundaries; it flows," Eckstein said.

Although representatives from many countries will be at the conference, Eckstein said one country needs to set the standard for the rest of the world.

"The question is: What can one country do to ensure other countries can use their water resources responsibly," he asked.