

Ramesh L Shrestha, *NCALM Director*

Hugh Roy & Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Professor

Email: rlshrestha@uh.edu • Tel: (832) 842-8882 • Fax: (713) 743-0186

Dept. of Civil & Environmental Engineering, University of Houston, 5000 Gulf Freeway, Bldg. 4, Suite 216, Houston, TX 77204

December 20, 2020

Dear NCALM Community,

Greetings for NCALM!

After 35 years in academia, I am retiring on January 18, 2021. Over the last two decades or so I have been heavily involved in research using airborne Lidar. For me, having the honor of serving as the Director of the National Center for Airborne Laser Mapping (NCALM) has been the crown jewel of my career. NCALM has made major contributions to advances in science and education. The geosensing graduate program launched in 2010 at the University of Houston has become a vibrant program in a very short period. Judging by the success of NCALM as well as our graduates, I am proud to say that NCALM has done its job well.

I must say success didn't come easy. It was a long and hard fought process made possible by so many people like you. Without your participation NCALM does not exist. So thank you all for supporting NCALM to advance the science. I am indebted to all NCALM Steering Committee Chairs and Members by volunteering their precious times to make NCALM what it is today. Each and every one of you had a great impact on NCALM's success. I am especially thankful for the tireless effort of my two NCALM Co-Founders, Bill Carter and Bill Dietrich. Over the last two decades or so we have gone through some good times as well as some bad times but at the end the good has prevailed. For those of you who don't know, Bill Carter is my "*Wise Man*", and Bill Dietrich "*The Science Guru*", and they truly are. Without them, I am just a person from a tiny remote village in Nepal. So please take a minute to thank them to show your, as well as my, appreciation for their invaluable contributions to NCALM and science. Their email addresses are: carter4451@bellsouth.net (Bill Carter) and bill@eps.berkeley.edu (Bill Dietrich).

The foundations of NCALM were laid at the University of Florida in 1997, based on funds from state and local government agencies for engineering and environmental projects. The first attempts to gain NSF funding were unsuccessful, and it was not until 2003 that NSF Program Manager Russ Kelz, approved funds for two years, to evaluate the demand for, and scientific return from, having a source of research quality airborne Lidar observations available to the earth sciences community. That first grant was renewed for 3 years, and since then at five year intervals. Thank you, Russ, for your continued support, Including suggesting and funding the

NCALM "Seed Program" that has provided research quality lidar observations to graduate students, enabling them to do the cutting edge research required to earn MS and PhD degrees.

From 2003 through 2020, a total of 191 proposals were received by NSF from 90 PIs at 77 Universities. Ninety-two (92) proposals from 40 Universities led by 42 PIs were funded. In addition, requests submitted to other funding agencies requesting NCALM provide Lidar observations totaled 155 proposals submitted by 97 PIs, at 66 Universities, from which 94 proposals were funded from 44 Universities led by 60 PIs.

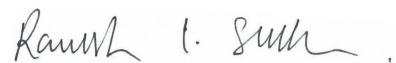
During the period from 2003 to 2019, 784 journal papers were published in high impact journals such as Nature, Science, Proceedings of National Academy of Science, and Physics Today, by PIs using NCALM lidar data. One paper every three days was published in 2019. According to Web of Science there were 12,750 citations and produced h-index number of 57.

All good things must come to an end and that time has come for me. It has been a great NCALM journey and I have enjoyed working with each-and-every one of you. Although I am retiring, if I can be of any help I will be happy to do so in any capacity you may think is appropriate.

Because of Covid-19, my next chapter is on hold, but I plan to travel with my wife, and play some golf. I am desperately waiting for this pandemic to be over so that I can visit and hold my first granddaughter in Atlanta, GA, who was born in July 2020.

Thank you all and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,



Ramesh L Shrestha
Hugh Roy & Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Professor
NCALM Director