

## Dennis O'Leary, PAg – Distinguished Agrologist Award

Dennis O'Leary PAg spent the first part of his career with the Government of Alberta working on ecological land classifications where he contributed to terrain and soil mapping in support of ecosystem management and was the lead author on numerous reports and maps. From 1984 to 1990 he was involved in land use studies that investigated the potential for agricultural land expansion in the Peace District. In 1991 he founded Geowest Environmental Consultants which specialized in Ecological Land Classification in the Prairies, Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping and terrain stability in British Columbia, and environmentally sensitive area studies in Alberta. Since 2002 Dennis has been the lead terrain scientist initially with Stantec and currently with Golder Associates. He has continued to complete terrain and soils mapping throughout western Canada on numerous projects (e.g., pipeline and mining) for environmental assessments and/or baseline studies while training and mentoring junior staff. In addition, he is a strong advocate of producing quality products for clients and insists on a strong QA/QC process.

Dennis contributed to numerous reports during his time with the Government of Alberta providing information on environmental conditions during the 1980s and 1990s, and these reports contributed to the Natural Regions and Subregions classification of Alberta (2006). He was one of the first to use softcopy mapping which has resulted in more accurate and detailed mapping, and this technique is becoming the standard for resource mapping globally. He continues to present and discuss the advantages of softcopy mapping to scientists, engineers and clients. He has presented at numerous conferences throughout the world (including the AIA conference in Banff) discussing the use of softcopy technology for soil and terrain characterization, and the importance of terrain and geohazard analysis for right-of-way planning (e.g., pipelines, railways, transmission lines). He is also the co-author on several peer-reviewed publications.

In addition, for the last three years Dennis has presented to the post-graduate geotechnical engineers at the University of Alberta in the Site Investigation Practice course, providing them with insight into the benefits of terrain mapping for engineering projects. As a Professional Agrologist he has been instrumental in demonstrating the value of Agrologists to other professions particularly engineers and foresters. His work with other professions has increased multi-professional interaction resulting in value-added benefits for clients. Dennis was also part of the expert committee that produced a document for AIA describing the knowledge, skills and training required for professionals practicing in Soil and Terrain Classification and Evaluation. The document will form the basis for the Biophysical Classification and Evaluation practice standard for the Agrology profession.