



Meet Michael O'Driscoll

Michael O'Driscoll, PhD

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Michael O'Driscoll has been a faculty member at East Carolina University since 2004 and is currently a Professor in the Department of Coastal Studies and the Associate Director of the Water Resources Center. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor of Water Resources at the Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University (2016-2018). He grew up in Stamford, Ct. and Co. Kerry, Ireland. He served in the US Navy (1990-1994) on the USS America during the Gulf War as an Aviation Structural Mechanic (Petty Officer 3rd Class) and was an environmental consultant in Stamford, CT (1996-1997). He is a first-generation college graduate and earned his B.S. (Cum Laude) in Geology from the University of Connecticut (1996), a Masters in Environmental Pollution Control (1999), an M.S. in Geosciences (2000), and a Ph.D. in Forest Resources (2004), from Pennsylvania State University.

His research focuses on the influence of surface water-groundwater interactions, geological setting, and land-use on contaminant transport. His recent work has focused on quantifying non-point source nutrient inputs in nutrient-sensitive coastal watersheds and estimating onsite wastewater nutrient inputs to surface waters. He has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and reports on water resources. His work has been funded by: the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Science Foundation, National Park Service, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, North Carolina Water Resources Research Institute, Albemarle Pamlico National Estuary Partnership and others. He has taught 13 different water-related courses including field courses and research-based undergraduate and graduate water resources courses. He has served on the US EPA Chesapeake Bay Onsite Wastewater Nutrient Attenuation Expert Panel, the North Carolina Nutrient Criteria Development Scientific Advisory Council, and was the UCOWR 2021 Conference Technical Program Chair and 2022 UCOWR Conference Chair.

“How do you plan on advancing UCOWR’s mission of leading in education, research and public service in water resources?”

I plan to advance the UCOWR mission by enhancing regional opportunities for collaborative research, outreach, and engagement, encouraging broader participation, and building on efforts to enrich student and early career opportunities. I have had the pleasure of serving on the UCOWR Board of Directors from 2021-2024. This experience has provided me with a growing appreciation of the value of UCOWR as an inter-disciplinary organization that supports its delegates to address complex water challenges. UCOWR’s major networking activity is its Annual Conference, I served as the 2022 Conference Chair, for the first in-person conference post-Covid, in Greenville, SC. Through teamwork our efforts helped to broaden participation from the southeastern U.S. and in the future, I would like to build on these efforts and enhance regional networking and participation. As part of UCOWR’s new strategic plan, we have started to formalize these efforts to encourage regional activities and networking to strengthen efforts to address critical water resources issues. This approach can help UCOWR keep momentum going between annual conferences and enhance regional collaborative outreach, education, and research efforts. There is a growing number of regional water resources centers across the US that are not formally linked to the National Institutes for Water Resources or UCOWR. I plan to further engage with these centers to help broaden participation and networking opportunities. I am interested in encouraging participation from regional/non NIWR Water Centers, to share experiences and best practices, funding approaches, and lessons learned, as well as encouraging their participation in the broader UCOWR community. To build on efforts to provide student and early career opportunities, I would like to grow student and early career faculty participation in the Annual Conference and provide additional career mentoring and networking resources at the conference and online. I plan to promote and contribute to efforts to create mentoring and career development opportunities that enhance student participation in UCOWR and encourage incentives for student engagement. These approaches would serve to support UCOWR’s efforts to build capacity for a diverse community of researchers, educators, and extension professionals to address complex water challenges regionally and globally.