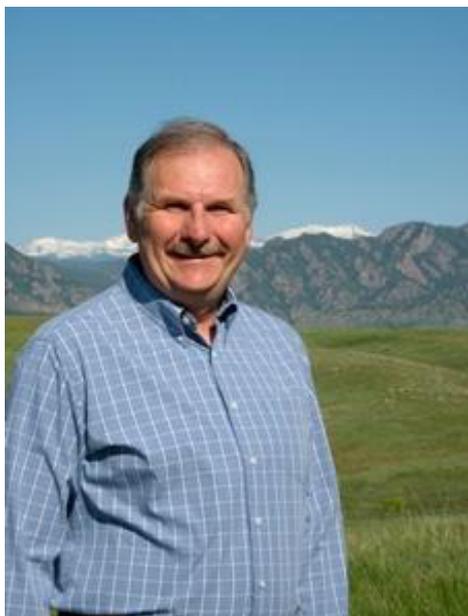


## PROFESSOR DR. GEORGE R. AIKEN – A DISTINGUISHED ORGANIC BIOGEOCHEMIST (1951-2016)

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Distinguished organic biogeochemist and long-time researcher with the U.S. Geological Survey's National Research Program (NRP), Dr. George Aiken passed away on December 7, 2016. George began his prominent 40-year research career studying many aspects of natural organic matter in the early 1980's, in the same period as the founding of the IHSS. In particular, George played a key role in the initial collection of the Suwanee River humic and fulvic acid samples, which have served as a great resource for innumerable environmental chemists, biogeochemists and ecologists over the years. Further, George was a co-editor of the book *Humic Substances in Soil, Sediment and Water* (Aiken et al. 1985). This book was planned at the first meeting of the IHSS in Estes Park, Colorado and served as a comprehensive introduction to the study of humic substances for many scientists entering the field.

After earning a B.A. degree in Chemistry from Rutgers University, George worked with Dr. Ronald Malcolm from 1976 to 1979 on the Organic Hydrogeochemistry Project of the NRP at the USGS's laboratory in Arvada, Colorado. During this time, he completed a M.S. in Analytical Chemistry at the University of Colorado. He then headed to Dartmouth College to



work with Prof. Chris Cronin on the effects of acid rain on soil solution, returning in 1981 to the USGS and the Colorado Rocky Mountains. In addition to his early work designing new chromatographic techniques for isolating humic substances from natural waters, George and colleagues carried out ambitious expeditions to characterize the seasonal and geographical patterns in aquatic dissolved organic carbon (DOC), traveling across the US in a customized mobile water quality lab. The team brought the same mobile lab to Stephen Foster State Park in Georgia near the outlet of the Suwanee River from the Okefenokee Swamp for the collection of

the first set of Suwanee River humic samples for the IHSS. Later on, George participated in two summer field seasons (1987-88 and 1990-91) in the McMurdo Dry Valleys of Antarctica to study aquatic humic substances from lakes and streams in an environment where

terrestrial plants had been absent for millions of years. In 1991, he completed his Ph.D. in Applied Chemistry (Minor in Geologic Engineering) from the Colorado School of Mines. Throughout his career, George generously shared his enthusiasm for the study of dissolved organic matter with his many colleagues and numerous students. George also was a great storyteller and loved to share anecdotes from his adventures conducting field research around the world. He advised over 20 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, served on many thesis committees and was a mentor to many young scientists whom he met in conferences and worked with in the field. He applied his deep insight into the fundamental chemistry underlying reactions involving dissolved organic matter to the interpretation of temporal and spatial patterns observed in diverse natural environments, ranging from the Everglades to the Yukon River and the Sacramento Bay Delta. During his distinguished career, he published numerous highly cited papers that have had a pronounced impact on humic substances research. In 2002, George received the Department of Interior's Meritorious Service Award, reflecting the outstanding quality of his work.

To honor to George's commitment to mentoring of young scientists in the field of humic substance research, his colleagues have established the George R Aiken Memorial Scholarship at CU Boulder. The scholarship was created to help graduate students in science who work with the U.S. Geological Survey. Please consider a one time or recurring donation here <https://giving.cu.edu/fund/george-richard-aiken-memorial-fund> or you can mail a check made out to The University of Colorado (Either in the memo section or with a corresponding note, please communicate it is for the George Aiken Memorial Fund):

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\*Aiken, G.R., McKnight, D.M., Wershaw, R.L., and MacCarthy, P (editors) 1985, Humic Substances in Soil, Sediment and Water: New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1092 p.

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