SUBJECT: Pioneering, Dark Ocean Explorer, Gerhard Herndl, has been selected by the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) to receive the 2014 G. Evelyn Hutchinson Award.

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Waco, Texas – Dr. Gerhard Herndl has received the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography’s (ASLO) G. Evelyn Hutchinson Award for his contributions to the development of oceanography and aquatic microbial ecology, for broadening our understanding of the interactions between microbes and marine biogeochemical cycles, for spearheading the exploration of the dark ocean, and for his excellence and dedication to training and community service.

The G. Evelyn Hutchinson award is given by ASLO to honor a limnology and oceanography scientist who has made considerable contributions to knowledge, and whose future work promises a continuing legacy of scientific excellence. The award was presented at the 17th biennial Ocean Sciences Meeting at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, on 26 February 2014.

“This is a premier ASLO award and it could have not been presented to a finer scientist,” stated ASLO President John Downing.

In the past 10 years, Herndl has been one of the driving forces in the exploration of microbial and biogeochemical processes and their interplay in the dark ocean, one of the last frontiers of human exploration. A common thread among his various research topics is that they were all ahead of their time, conceptually and technically risky, and addressed major scientific issues and questions.

He has led several research expeditions specifically targeting the relationship of dark ocean water masses and microbial ecology. Together with his team he has been a pioneer in the study of the distribution and activity of bacteria and archaea, exploring the importance of alternative microbial metabolic pathways in this vast biome. Since the advent of molecular tools in marine microbial ecology, Herndl explored the link between bacterial community structure and the physico-chemical environment in the ocean. He has also made significant contributions to the study of viral diversity and the influence of viruses on bacterial diversity and functioning. His group has developed microautoradiographic approaches, linked to phylogenetic identification. These approaches allowed the demonstration that deep-ocean Archaea take up bicarbonate exhibiting a chemolithoautotrophic lifestyle in oxygenated waters.

Herndl has also contributed significantly to a wide spectrum of other microbial oceanography research areas, such as the role of viral infections in microbial carbon processing, the chemical composition and bioavailability of dissolved and particulate organic matter, the microbial “rare biosphere,” just to name a few of significance. Technological innovation has been a key component of these achievements. With Herndl’s group leading, effective application and improvements of multiple cutting-edge research technologies have been made, such as the catalyzed reporter deposition fluorescence in situ hybridization combined with microautoradiography.

Herndl has also published over 100 peer-reviewed research articles, which have been cited over 4,000 times. Herndl’s studies have had a major impact on our understanding of the composition, metabolism and interactions of microorganisms in diverse marine environments. Herndl has also supervised over 40 PhD candidates and several students seeking master’s degrees, many of them from international origin. He has also supervised 16 postdoctoral fellows, most of them recipients of the very competitive Marie-Curie European fellowship.
Herndl is nominated by Javier Arístegui of the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, Thomas Reinthaler, from the University of Vienna, Austria, and Josep M. Gasol, research scientist at Institut de Ciències del Mar, CSIC, Barcelona. He is also endorsed by multiple colleagues, including Dr. Dennis Hansell, professor at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami, who stated, “I have been drawn to the quality, breadth and innovation of Gerhard’s science. He does not limit himself to seeing the ocean function as we have it modeled in our minds; he instead disrupts the paradigm by testing the system in almost illogical ways and illuminating surprising processes. I admire that risk-taking nature in Gerhard. Gerhard (Herndl) has made critically important advances in deep ocean ecosystem science … and so deserves this recognition of his achievements.”

ASLO is an international aquatic sciences society that was founded in 1936. For more than 50 years, it has been the leading professional organization for researchers and educators in the field of aquatic science. The purpose of ASLO is to foster a diverse, international scientific community that creates, integrates and communicates knowledge across the full spectrum of aquatic sciences, advances public awareness and education about aquatic resources and research, and promotes scientific stewardship of aquatic resources for the public interest. Its products and activities are directed toward these ends. With more than 4500 members worldwide, the society has earned an outstanding reputation and is best known for its journals, its interdisciplinary meetings, and its special symposia. For more information about ASLO please visit our website at www.aslo.org.

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