



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID GILLETTE

Environmental Studies Associate Professor David Gillette conducts research on the effects of climate change on Nepalese river systems.

David Gillette shares moments of his travels to Nepal

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The temperature in Nepal rose to over 100 degrees, public transportation was down due to strikes. Dehydrated from walking five hours each way to and from a village, David Gillette felt a sense of relief when he reached the main road.

Before making his trip to the village, Gillette forgot to pack iodine drops used to purify the water from hand pumps. By the time he reached the main road back to where he was staying, Gillette felt as if he was going to pass out.

"I remember they were selling bottles of Sprite, I remember distinctly it was so cold it was almost slush," Gillette said. "I will always remember drinking that Sprite."

Before coming to UNC Asheville, Gillette traveled to Nepal as a member of the Peace Corps in 1995 and worked to improve fisheries in

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local villages. He spent two years working with fish farmers and another year evaluating the impact the Peace Corps had on the area.

Gillette was accepted into the environmental studies department at UNCA in fall of 2008 as an associate professor.

Irene Rossell, professor and chair of the department of environmental studies, said the team who first interviewed Gillette knew right away

he was someone they wanted. She remembers interviewing Gillette and thinking he was a great person based on his answers to each question.

"All the questions we asked him, he was very thoughtful, articulate and just gave such great answers to our questions," Rossell said.

Since coming to work at UNCA, Gillette formed a good relationship with his students and colleagues. Kevin Moorhead, environmental studies professor, said Gillette is a great guy to work with and talk to.

"He is hard to rattle, very level-headed and very calm," Moorhead said. "Because of that calmness, I think that blends well with interaction with students."

Gillette and Moorhead co-taught a class together three years ago called Environmental Restoration. Because of their overlapping research and fields of study, Gillette being a river expert and Moorhead

being a wetland expert, the two worked well together.

After receiving research grants from the Fulbright Foundation, National Geographic and World Wildlife Fund, Gillette returned to Nepal in 2015 to conduct research on the effects of climate change on river systems. The project also looked at information gathered from previous studies conducted in the area during the '80s and '90s.

The Kali Gandaki River, located in central Nepal, served as the focus of Gillette's studies. Starting at the Tibetan Plateau, the Kali Gandaki flows down through the Himalayas to northern India.

"What is interesting, is just like the French Broad River here, which was flowing before the Appalachian Mountains rose, that river was flowing before the Himalayas arose," Gillette said.

Through his research Gillette

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