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Press Release

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Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys

ALASKA GEOLOGIST TO JOIN FAULT EVALUATION TEAM IN HAITI

(Fairbanks, AK) – Dr. Richard Koehler of the Alaska Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) in Fairbanks will join a team of scientists invited by the Haitian government to evaluate the fault system that ruptured in the magnitude 7 earthquake in Haiti on January 12. Koehler's invitation for the two-week Haiti fault investigation was based partly on his field experience working along the same fault zone in nearby Jamaica prior to his employment with the State of Alaska. One goal of the team is to assess any continuing motions along the fault that could lead to future large earthquakes in the region. It is critical to conduct these surveys immediately after the earthquake, before the effects on the landscape are erased by rebuilding efforts and erosion.

Koehler's experience in Haiti will be directly applicable to his work evaluating active faults in Alaska. Several faults, such as the Denali, Castle Mountain, Lake Clark, and Fairweather faults, have rupture styles similar to the fault system in Haiti.

Koehler has a master's degree from Humboldt State University and a doctoral degree from the University of Nevada, Reno. His specialty is neotectonics, also called paleoseismology, which is the study of geologic evidence of past earthquakes and fault movement to estimate long-term rates of motion and future earthquake hazard. In addition to his work in Jamaica, Koehler has extensive field experience in California, Nevada, Turkey, Taiwan, and Guatemala.

Travel expenses for Koehler's trip, which begins January 23, will be paid by a rapid-response grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation.

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