

EROS chief receives national award

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The chief of the EROS Data Center near Garretson has been given the nation's top scientific award for remote sensing.

Remote sensing is the practice of gathering data by such means as satellites. The EROS center has become a magnet for specialists who study such data.

The Department of the Interior and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration gave the award to EROS head Allen H. Watkins during

the William T. Pecora Memorial Symposium recently in Sioux Falls.

Watkins has been the EROS head since 1973. EROS stands for Earth Resources Observation Systems.

Before coming to Sioux Falls, Watkins was a manager for NASA from 1962 to 1973.

The Interior Department and NASA said Watkins was given the award "in recognition of the great breadth and depth of Mr. Watkins' achievements in fostering the use of remote sensing in the solution of national and international problems."

Watkins also has been involved nationally and internationally in making policies for the processing, analysis and distribution of satellite data.

One improvement at the center under Watkins was the Landsat EROS Digital Image Processing System, which was developed in-house. It improved the processing efficiency and quality of Landsat data.

The center employs about 350 people. It was hailed at its opening in the early 1970s as a key high-technology installation for the area.